Basics of MLA Works Cited Format for most common situations

The key to MLA style citations is the Works Cited page, which follows the text of your paper, on a new page. The hardest part is creating the entry for each source—some examples below. Once you have each entry, set up the list by

- formatting each entry with “hanging indent” and
- alphabetizing the entire list by the first word(s) in the entry.

When you use a source within the paper, add a citation in parentheses, consisting of the word (or words if necessary to distinguish entries) that begin the entry on the Works Cited page, followed by the page number (for prose) or line numbers (for poetry) of the specific thing you used.

Primary texts will usually be a work in an anthology:


Often it will be clear from the context what work you are citing. In that case, only the line or page numbers are necessary. Sometimes it will be necessary to include the author’s name (Milton 52-53), to distinguish this text from one by another author, such as a source text. At other times what’s needed is the title, to distinguish this text from other of Milton’s texts on your Works Cited list (“Lycidas,” 52-53).

Citing the Bible:

Include the version of the Bible you are quoting from on your Works Cited list. The first time you need to cite it, include the version in the citation, followed by the book, chapter and verse. Subsequent quotations can refer only to book, chapter, and verse.

Examples:

(alphabetized by “Holy”)

(alphabetized by “NSRV”)

First citation: (Holy Bible, Gen. 2.1-3) or (NSRV Bible, Gen. 2.1-3).

Later citations can just have book and chapter/verse (Gen. 3.2).
–Note that books of the Bible are not underlined or in quotation marks, and can be abbreviated.
Book by a single author (or multiple authors collaborating):
Notice: No page numbers are included, even if you did not read the entire book.
A citation of this source in your paper would look like this: (Kerrigan and Braden 47).

Essay in a collection (a book containing pieces written by various authors):
Notice: Page numbers are included here, since you are citing only the article by McColley, not the entire collection. If you will be citing more than one article from a collection, you will need a separate Works Cited entry for each one.
A citation of this source in your paper would look like this: (McColley 83).

How to know the difference:
Look at the table of contents. A regular book (single author or collaboration) will list chapter titles. A collection of essays will list authors’ names with essay titles.

Other information that may apply to some books:
- an edition other than the first
- a book in a series, a translation
- a book in more than one volume

An article in a journal:
Notice that one always includes page numbers for journal articles. Page numbers are inclusive (i.e., they cover the entire article, regardless of what pages you will cite in your paper).
A citation of this source in your paper would look like this: (Butler 136).
If you get an article electronically, add the name of the database (if any) and a URL or doi. Only include URLs if they are stable; look for a “permalink” when in a database. (Don’t copy and paste the address in your browser for articles in databases, as these are usually valid for your session only.)


If you get articles electronically as a pdf, you can still cite using page numbers. Don’t use page numbers for html documents, as these are not stable. Some online publications will number paragraphs; in this case, you can cite by paragraph numbers, e.g. (Doe, par. 12).

**Material on the Internet**

In general, treat materials found on the internet as much like more traditional sources as possible: author’s name first (you make have to do some exploring around a site to find this), title of page, title of larger site, etc. Include a date of publication/posting if available. If the material has previously been published, give that information (if available). End the entry with the URL and date of access.

Example:


Cite in your paper as (Loughlan). Don’t refer to page numbers, since these are not fixed.

**Resources:**

The UWSP library has a good handout with most of the basic models, at <http://libraryguides.uwsp.edu/ld.php?content_id=14750837>

The MLA’s MLA Style page at <https://style.mla.org/> has a quick guide, a page of answered questions, and a chance to submit your own question.