



MLA 8 CITATIONS: OVERVIEW

What is a citation?

Citations are the way you tell your readers that certain material in your writing came from another source, and give them all the necessary information to find that source themselves. Citing is about giving credit where credit is due, and not citing or not citing properly is plagiarism and not tolerated at ACAD.

What are the different kinds of citations?

There are two main styles of citations - documentary note style and parenthetical style. Within each of these are different specific styles, depending on whether you are writing for the sciences or humanities. ACAD uses the parenthetical MLA style of citations for most of their courses.

Within MLA style there are two parts to a citation - the parenthetical citation and the Works Cited entry. The parenthetical citation goes in the body of your essay - it is the quick clue you give to what source you are specifically referring. The related Works Cited entry provides more detailed information, which will allow your reader to find your source.

What is MLA style?

MLA was developed by the Modern Language Association in 1985 and is a widely accepted system of citations used in the humanities. This streamlined format gives the author and page in parentheses within the text of the paper, and then sets out full references in a Works Cited list. MLA is updated from time to time, and is currently on its eighth edition as of April 2016. There is a print version of the MLA style guide, called the MLA Handbook, which can be purchased directly from the Modern Language Association, but there are many online MLA guides that can be accessed for free. The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University has the most comprehensive online guide: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>

What do I include in my citation?

The specific information will vary depending on the source you have used, but MLA has suggested core elements that should be included in your citation. These are (in order):

- **Author.**
- **Title of the work.**
- **Title of container,**
- **Other contributors,**
- **Version,**
- **Number,**
- **Publisher,**
- **Publication Date,**
- **Location.**

What are these core elements?

Author - the author is the writer of your source. This will be either an individual, series of individuals, or a corporate author (in which case the corporate name would satisfy your author requirement). Some sources (such as websites) will not always have an obvious or apparent author listed. If no author is evident then you would leave this blank.

In your Works Cited entry the listing always goes by author last name, then first name:

Sutton, Ann.

Your parenthetical citation will contain ONLY the author last name, and the page number (if applicable to your source): (Sutton 41).

Title - the title of your source. This would be listed in italics if it is a book or in "quotes" if it is an article, chapter in a book, or page of a website.

In your works cited entry, the title will immediately follow the author name:

Sutton, Ann. *The Structure of Weaving*.

Container - this is a new element to MLA 8. A container is the larger whole in which your source is located.

For example, if your source is a chapter of a book, then your Title would be the Title of the Chapter, and your Container would be the book itself:

Sutton, Ann. "Chapter 2: Balance and Sett." *The Structure of Weaving*.

If your source is a page on a website, then the Title is the Title of the page, and the Container would be the full website:

"Biography." *Studio Olafur Eliasson*.

If your source is an article in a peer-reviewed journal, then your Title is the Title of the article, and your Container is the peer-reviewed journal:

"Anish Kapoor: Transcending the Object." *Sculpture*.

You will sometimes encounter sources that are a Container within a Container. It is important you cite all of these elements correctly, so that your readers can find the exact source that you did. For example, if you located that peer-reviewed journal on a scholarly database, such as *JSTOR*, then you must cite both the peer-reviewed journal and *JSTOR*. For example, the full citation of the peer-reviewed article above would be:

Cole, Ina. "Anish Kapoor: Transcending the Object."

Sculpture, vol. 29, no. 1, Jan./Feb. 2010, pp. 22-25.

Ebscohost, search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asu&AN=505284926&site=ehost-live.



Other Contributors - Other Contributors would be things like editors, translators, illustrators, etc. Whether or not you include this information is dependent on whether or not their contributions are relevant to your research. For example, if you are writing an essay about a graphic novel, it would be important to include the illustrator as a contributor. If you are using a source that was not originally published in English, then it would be important to include the translator as a contributor.

Version - This is only necessary to include if your source is an edition or version of a work. For example, your art history textbook most likely will have an edition, as this is updated periodically after the initial publication. If you were citing a source such as the Bible, it will have a version that identifies it. In our previous peer-reviewed journal article example, you can see that the version – vol. 29 - is included.

Number - You would only need to include this if your source is part of a numbered sequence, such as a journal with both volume and number listed, or a multi-volume book. This would also be included if your source was an episode of a television series, in which case your Volume would be the season, and your Number the specific episode. In our peer-reviewed journal example above, you can see that the number – no. 1 - is included after the version (volume) number.

Publisher - This is the publisher or distributor of your source. If your source is a book, then your publisher is listed in the front cover of the book. In previous versions of MLA you would have included the city of publication, but this is no longer required for MLA 8. Publishers can also be things like film distribution companies, museums, galleries, or websites.

‘ IF YOU ARE WRITING AN ESSAY ABOUT A GRAPHIC NOVEL, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO INCLUDE THE ILLUSTRATOR AS A CONTRIBUTOR. ,

Publication Date - This is used in MLA 8 because your source may have multiple publication dates; for example, books that have been returned to print from a long absence, or films that would have had an initial release date that were then released on a separate date on a streaming service such as Netflix.

Location – This is the specific location of your source; however, you will find it is not always necessary to include. With print sources, you will only include the location in the cases of essays in books, chapters, articles, or any other circumstance in which you are not citing the entire document. In this case, you would identify the location as the page range of your source.

For online sources, location is the specific URL or DOI of your source. If you are using the URL, you can copy and paste it into your essay directly from your browser window. Some sources, such as online journals and some databases, will provide a DOI; this stands for Digital Object Identifier, and can be used in place of your URL. Some databases, such as *JSTOR*, provide a stable URL – this would also be acceptable.

When do I need to cite?

- **When you are copying an exact word, phrase, sentence, or portion of another source**
- **When you are paraphrasing from another source**
- **When you are using words or ideas used in another source**
- **When you are using images, artwork, diagrams, or other visual information from another source**
- **When you are referencing information you have gathered from someone else - such as through a personal email or interview**
- **Anytime you use words, phrases, ideas, or other productions that came from someone other than you**

When don't I need to cite?

- **When you are using your own words to articulate your own ideas**
- **When you are writing up your own thoughts or research obtained through observation or field work**
- **When you are using images of your own, be it artwork, diagrams or other visual information**
- **When you are using “common knowledge”**

What is “common knowledge”?

“Common knowledge” is things like folklore, common sense observations, myths, urban legends, and historical events. If you are unsure if something is common knowledge, the general rule of thumb is that if you can find the same information in at least five credible sources, it is common knowledge and does not need to be cited. However, you may sometimes encounter things that could be considered common knowledge in one area, but may not be in others. For example, in an art history class, you may not have to cite that Picasso was a Cubist painter.

What if I have questions about citing that aren't covered here?

ACAD has numerous learning supports available, including the Writing Centre and Drop-in Tutoring. These services are available to you as a student for no additional charge. The Writing Centre is by appointment; please email writingcentre@acad.ca.

Drop-in Tutoring is available all semester long in the Luke Lindoe Library; please email tutoring@acad.ca for hours.



What if I need academic support or accommodations in my classes?

In-class accommodations and supports are available to students. This can include support services, assistive technologies, resources, and access to funding. For more information, contact the Learning Assistance Office:

learning.assistance@acad.ca

**WHEN
IN
DOUBT,
CITE.**