

Notes from *MLA Handbook*, Eighth Edition

Galesburg-Augusta High School English Department

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Provided by G-A HS English Department

Highlighting documentation principles and changes as outlined in 2016 edition (designed as an aid and overview, not as a replacement for the *Handbook* or the website)

MLA Handbook. 8th ed., MLA, 2016. [Please take note—this is correct for new format.]

“This edition of the *MLA Handbook* is accompanied by online resources (see style.mla.org)” (xiv).

“. . . methods and media may change, basic principles of research stay the same” (vii).

“Documentation is the means through which scholarly conversations are recorded, and the specifics of those conversations matter” (x).

“. . . documentation remains a core academic principle” (xiii).

“Good writers understand why they create citations. The reasons include demonstrating the thoroughness of the writer’s research, giving credit to original sources, and ensuring that readers can find the sources consulted in order to draw their own conclusions about the writer’s argument” (4).

“Documenting sources is an aspect of writing common to all academic fields” (5).

“Plagiarists are seen not only as dishonest but also as incompetent, incapable of doing research and expressing original thoughts. . . . The charge of plagiarism is serious because it calls into question everything about the writer’s work. . . . One instance of plagiarism can cast a shadow across an entire career” (7).

“Even borrowing just a few words from an author without clearly indicating that you did so constitutes plagiarism” (8).

“Avoiding plagiarism begins with being scrupulous in your research and note-taking” (9).

The Core Elements: Author.

If there is an author, every entry in works cited begins with the author’s last name, followed by a comma, then the rest of the name as presented in the work, followed by a period. If there are two authors, use a comma, *and*, and then “give the second name in normal order” (21).

“Pseudonyms, including online usernames, are mostly given like regular author names” (24).

“When a work is published without an author’s name, do not list the author as ‘Anonymous’” (24).

MLA 2

The Core Elements: Title of Source.

“Titles are given in the entry in full exactly as they are found in the source, except that capitalization and the punctuation between the main title and a subtitle are standardized” (25).

On page 29 of the *Handbook*, are examples for a Twitter entry and an e-mail message entry.

The Core Elements: Title of Container,

An example of a container is a Web site. See page 30.

Works may be found in “one container. A container can, however, be nested in a larger container. . . .Sometimes a source is part of two separate containers. . . .Documenting the containers in which sources are found is increasingly important, as more and more works are retrieved through databases. Your reader needs to know where you found your sources since one copy of a work may differ from other copies” (31).

This is where the container template, which also shows the necessary punctuation, becomes a necessary tool. There is one attached at the back of this handout and your teachers should have copies available in the classroom or you may find one at style.mla.org. Pages 32-36 in the handbook demonstrate the use of the container template.

Note: MLA “recommend[s] the inclusion of URLs in the works-cited list” and your G-A instructors agree. Permalinks and DOIs are even more preferable if they are available. Pointed carrot brackets are no longer used (48).

The date of access is now listed as an optional element, but your G-A teachers consider it an important element, “since online works typically can be changed or removed at any time” (53). Use the word Accessed followed by the date: Accessed 23 July 2017. This information would come at the end of the entry.

More Notes and Concepts

“Identifying the source in your text is essential for nearly every kind of borrowing—not only quotations but also facts and paraphrased ideas” (57).

“Remember that the goal of the in-text citation is to provide enough information to lead your reader directly to the source you used while disrupting the flow of your argument as little as possible” (58).

For a PowerPoint or other slide-based presentation, MLA “suggest[s] including brief citations on each slide that uses borrowed material (quotations, paraphrases, images, videos, and whatever else you copy or adapt) and adding a works-cited list on a slide at the end” (128).

MLA 3

More Details of MLA Style

“Copy the title without reproducing any unusual typography, such as special capitalization or lowercasing of all letters” (67).

“Use a colon and a space to separate a title from a subtitle” (68).

“Quotations are most effective in research writing when used selectively. Quote only words, phrases, lines, and passages that are particularly apt, and keep all quotations as brief as possible. Your project should be about your own ideas, and quotations should merely help you explain or illustrate them. . . . You must construct a clear, grammatically correct sentence that allows you to introduce or incorporate a quotation with complete accuracy” (75).

If you are quoting poetry, be sure to use “a forward slash with a space on each side (/) to indicate to your reader where the line breaks fall” (77).

“A quotation should never be presented in a way that could cause a reader to misunderstand . . .” (80). For precise use of ellipsis dots, please see pages 80-85 in *Handbook*. In general, do not overuse ellipsis dots, use them only for clarity.

Use square brackets for any additions or alterations to an exact quote (see page 86).

The *Handbook* has guidelines for alphabetizing (for Works Cited) on pages 112-115.

In-Text Citations

“The goals of the in-text citation are brevity and clarity, guiding the reader as unobtrusively as possible to the corresponding entry in the works-cited list” (116):

Example for two author entry (Curtiss and Pollard 36).

Example for three or more author entry (Cook et al. 42).

When abbreviating titles because they are the first item in the listing on the Works Cited page, “the abbreviated title should begin with the word by which the title is alphabetized” (117).

Listed below are several full titles followed by the shortened version in parentheses. These

samples are from the *Handbook* pages 117-118:

The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion (Double Vision)

“Traveling in the Breakdown Lane: A Principle of Resistance for Hypertext”
 (“Traveling”)

“You Say You Want a Revolution? Hypertext and the Laws of Media” (“You”)

MLA 4

And Quiet Flows the Don (And)

Can We Say No? The Challenge of Rationing Health Care (Can)

Under the Volcano (Under)

Further note, never use back to back parentheses (127) or back to back quotation marks. Also, never begin a sentence with a numeral.

Final note to all students: Please begin to utilize the Purdue Owl website or the MLA website (mentioned above) for all of your MLA questions. Do NOT rely solely on citation aids as they many times have errors or have not been updated as far as style. Learn to trust yourself rather than wasting time looking for the easy way out.