



## MLA Documentation: Overview

“Your paper is a collaboration between you and your sources. To be fair and ethical, you must acknowledge your debt to the writers of those sources. If you don’t, you are guilty of plagiarism, a serious academic offense” (Hacker 415).

Hacker, Diane. *Rules for Writers*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009. Print.

Writers in the humanities often use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style for documenting sources. MLA documentation consists of the following two components: In-Text Citations and a Works Cited page.

### In-Text Citations:

- If the author is mentioned in a “signal phrase,” only list the page number in the citation:

Christine Haughney reports that shortly after Japan made it illegal to use a handheld phone while driving, "accidents caused by using the phones dropped by 75 percent" (8).

- If the author is *not* mentioned in a signal phrase, then the author and the page number are both listed in the citation:

Most states do not keep adequate records on the number of times cell phones are a factor in accidents; as of December 2000, only ten states were trying to keep such records (Sundeen 2).

- When you do not have a page number, do not include one. Just give the author’s name.

Companies now routinely monitor employees through electronic means, but “there may exist less intrusive safeguards for employers” (Kesan).

- When you know neither the author nor the page number, include an abbreviated form of the title in the citation. (Put article titles in quotation marks and book titles in italics.)

As of 2001, at least three hundred towns and municipalities had considered legislation regulating use of cell phones while driving ("Lawmakers").

- Citing an Indirect Source: When a source quotes someone else’s words, and you want to quote those words in your paper, format the citation as you otherwise would, but put the phrase “qtd. in” before the author of the article or book.

According to Richard Retting, "As the comforts of home and the efficiency of the office creep into the automobile, it is becoming increasingly attractive as a work space" (qtd. in Kilgannon 23).

### **Format of Works Cited entries:**

- Title your list Works Cited – center of page. Do not bold, underline or enlarge font.
- Include only sources that you refer to in your paper, not everything you've read.
- Arrange your list alphabetically by author's last name.
- Double space the list. Do NOT number your list.
- Use a hanging indent so that the second (and additional) lines of each entry are indented by ½ inch (or 5 spaces).

Here are some common Works Cited entries:

#### **Book:**

Tan, Amy. *Saving Fish from Drowning*. New York: Putnam, 2005. Print.

#### **Journal Article:**

Kesan, Jay P. "Cyber-Working or Cyber-Shirking? A First Principles Examination of Electronic Privacy in the Workplace." *Florida Law Review* 54.2 (2002): 289-332. Print.

#### **Article from an online database:**

Langhamer, Claire. "Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England." *Historical Journal* 50.1 (2007): 173-96. *ProQuest*. Web. 27 May 2009.

#### **Page from a website:**

"How to Make Vegetarian Chili." *eHow*. Demand Media, Inc., n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.

#### **Article in a newspaper:**

Brubaker, Bill. "New Health Center Targets County's Uninsured Patients." *Washington Post* 24 May 2007: LZ01. Print.

### **Other pointers for MLA**

- When citing electronic texts, try to use pdf (they include page numbers) rather than html files.
- Use the active voice.
- Use the literary present tense when writing about literature.
- For additional style tips and models use:
  - Purdue OWL: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>
  - MLA section of *LB Brief* (a common writing handbook)
  - Diana Hacker: <http://dianahacker.com/resdoc/humanities.html>

All examples have been taken from <i>Rules for Writers</i> (6 <sup>th</sup> edition) by Diane Hacker (2009) or Purdue OWL: MLA Style and Formatting Guide
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