MLA Style: Quick Citation Guide

The MLA citation style was established by the Modern Language Association of America (MLA), and is most commonly used in the liberal arts and humanities, especially in the fields of language and literature. The examples below show you how to cite the most commonly used sources. For additional examples and further detail, please refer to the MLA Handbook, 8th Edition (2016). Copies of the handbook are available in Smith Library, Wanek Center Learning Commons and the SOE Resource Center.

The new edition of MLA Handbook was published in April 2016, and this “quick guide” reflects the updates introduced in the 8th edition. For a more detailed explanation of the updates, please see “MLA: What’s New in the Eighth Edition.”


MLA FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- Set one inch margins on all four sides of your document.
- Double-space your paper throughout, using a legible 12pt. font, such as Times New Roman.
- Use the tab key to indent the first line of each paragraph to one-half inch (5 spaces) from the left margin.
- Use only a single space after periods and other punctuation marks.
- Usually, there is no need for a title page (check with your instructor). Instead, include on four separate lines: your name, your instructor’s name, course number and date. Start one inch from the top of the first page, flush with the left margin, double-spaced.
- All pages (including the first) are numbered consecutively throughout the paper. Set up a header (one half-inch from the top of the page, flush with the right margin), with your last name and the page number in the upper, right-hand corner. Do not use the abbreviation p. for page or add a period, a hyphen, or any other symbol.
- e.g. Jones 1
- Center the title – do not underline, italicize, use all upper case, or quotation marks (unless you have included a quotation in your title). Do not use a period after the title or after any headings in your paper.

See the sample MLA paper at the end of this guide for an example of how to format your paper.

MLA QUICK GUIDE CONTENTS

The next four pages of this quick guide present examples of the following types of references (in this order):

1. BOOK (Single Author)
2. BOOK (Two Authors)
3. BOOK (Three or More Authors)
4. EDITED BOOK
5. CHAPTER or PART OF AN EDITED BOOK
6. E-BOOK
7. DICTIONARY or ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRY
8. SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLE (with DOI)
9. SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLE (no DOI)
10. MAGAZINE ARTICLE
11. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE
12. WEB PAGE (with Named Author)
13. WEB PAGE (No Author)
14. WEB PAGE (Group or Corporate Author)
15. ONLINE VIDEO
16. ONLINE IMAGE
17. LECTURE NOTES
18. PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS
1. **BOOK (Single Author)**


**In text:** (Lee 85)

2. **BOOK (Two Authors)**


**In text:** (Smith and Bartholomew 227)

3. **BOOK (Three or More Authors)**

For a book (or any source), with three or more authors, use only the name of the first author listed (see Single Author above), follow with a comma, and add *et al.* (Latin for “and others”):

*Example:* Constantine, Stephen, M. W. Kirby, and Mary B. Rose.

**Becomes:** Constantine, Stephen, *et al.*

**In text:** (Constantine et al. 88)

4. **EDITED BOOK**


**In text:** (Keeble and Wheeler 54)

**Note:** For a Single Editor, or Three or More Editors, follow for ‘Book’, as above.

5. **CHAPTER or PART OF AN EDITED BOOK**


**In text:** (Oppenheimer 446)
6. **eBOOK**


**In text:** (Cohen 76)

7. **DICTIONARY or ENCYCLOPEDIA ENTRY**


**In Text:** (Eswarin 798)

8. **SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLE (with DOI)**

DOI stands for Digital Object Identifier (written as: doi), a unique number assigned to an article to make it easier to locate on the web. If available, always add the DOI to the end of the entry.


**In Text:** (Hart et al. 64)

9. **SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLE (with no DOI)**

If your source does not have a DOI, don't panic! In place of the DOI supply the URL, but omit http:// or https:// (If in doubt, check with your instructor).


**In Text:** (Baader 429)

10. **MAGAZINE ARTICLE**


**In Text:** (Blum 160)
11. NEWSPAPER ARTICLE


In Text: (Chu 9)

Note: Full dates of publication are included for magazine and newspaper articles, whenever available. Use: Day Month Year e.g. 21 May 2005

12. WEB PAGE (with NAMED AUTHOR)


In Text: (Graber)

Note: Always provide the name of the author listed on a website, if available. If included in the source, add the time that the site was updated. Include the ‘date accessed’ only if the information on the website is likely to change. If no personal author is listed, look for a “corporate author” or named organization/agency.

13. WEB PAGE (No Author)

If no named author is listed, begin the citation with the title of the web page.


In Text: (“About Zika”)

14. WEB PAGE (GROUP AUTHOR or CORPORATE AUTHOR or GOVERNMENT AGENCY as Author)


In Text: (USGS)

Note: The names of groups that serve as authors are usually spelled out each time they appear in an in-text citation. However, some are spelled out in the first citation and abbreviated thereafter. If the name is long and cumbersome and if the abbreviation is familiar or readily understandable, you may abbreviate. If the name is short or if the abbreviation would not be easily identified in the reference list, write out the name each time.
Sometimes a corporate author/government agency/organization is both the author and the publisher. In that case, start with the “title” of the work and list the organization as publisher:


**In Text:** (“Sustainability”)

**15. ONLINE VIDEO**


**In Text:** (Sykes)

**16. ONLINE IMAGE**


**In Text:** (Gamble)

**17. LECTURE NOTES**

Allwood, Margaret. “Relativity.” 24 Jan. 2016, Notes from an ENG 1234 class, High Point University, High Point, NC.

**In Text:** (Allwood)

**18. PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

**Note:** When you cite an e-mail message, use the subject line as the title of the work.

Smith, Arthur. “Re: Lens Calibration for Prime Lenses.” E-mail, received by John T. Kemp, 10 Oct. 2015.

**In Text:** (Smith)


**In Text:** (Bennett)
What Makes a Great First Sentence?

The opening sentence of a great work of fiction is arguably the most important. It has to “hook” us in to the story, by saying: “… Listen. Come in here. You want to know about this” (Parham). The first sentence has to do so much more than simply “start” the story: “Opening lines of fictional art are the thresholds that take us into different worlds” (Weaver 1). George Orwell, with the very first words of Nineteen Eighty-Four, takes us over just such a threshold: “It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen” (3). Stanley Fish writes that first sentences should have an “angle of lean” (102). He suggests that successful first sentences must “lean forward and point to future, if presently inchoate, vistas; they draw readers in and equip them with quite specific expectations” (102). Orwell’s sentence is so powerful, because it “leans forward” into the story, hinting at an unsettling world, set in the future, that the reader slowly comes to realize is truly nightmarish.

William Gibson, the acclaimed science fiction author, describes in an interview the painstaking process of writing great first sentences. It is a fascinating insight into the mind of an author. Gibson describes that a reader must feel a “click” from the first moment they read the first words of one of his novels (Fassler). The first sentence offers “the handshake, on either side of the writer-reader divide. The reader shakes hands with the writer. The writer has already had to shake hands with the unknown. Assuming both have heard the click, we’ve got it going on” (Fassler).
“Call me Ishmael” (Melville 1). At a mere three words long, the famous first line of *Moby-Dick*, is one of the shortest (and most famous), in English literature. For Stanley Fish, one of the things that distinguishes great first sentences, is that they *should* be short; “Even the simplest first sentence is on its toes, beckoning us to the next sentence and the next, promising us insights, complications, crises, and, sometimes, resolutions” (100).

Great first sentences can sometimes trail unintended consequences. Many people mistakenly think that "I am born", was the first three word sentence of Charles Dickens’ *David Copperfield* (Beatty). Instead, it is actually the title of the first chapter:

> The [actual] first sentence – “Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show” – is not nearly so memorable. It seems, though, to have furnished the inspiration for this great first sentence by another writer: “If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap, but I don't feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth.” The writer is, of course, J. D. Salinger, and that is the beginning of *The Catcher in the Rye* (Beatty).

Jason Parham’s “The Fifty Best First Sentences in Fiction”, celebrates wonderfully the range and sheer inventiveness of a wide variety of authors. It is hard to resist the “hook” of a work that begins with: “It was a wrong number that started it, the telephone ringing three times in the dead of night, and the voice on the other end asking for someone he was not” (Parham).
Works Cited


Literature Resource Center.


The Atlantic Monthly Group,


Melville, Herman. Moby-Dick; or, the Whale. Harper and Brothers, 1851. Hathi Digital Trust,

hdl.handle.net/2027/dul1.ark:/13960/t3kw6ns1s.


28 Jan. 2015, 10.00 a.m.,


Weaver, Bruce L. Novel Openers: First Sentences of Eleven Thousand Fictional Works,