Introduction to MLA Citation

The disciplines of literature and some of the humanities use the MLA (Modern Language Association) system of documentation, set forth in the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th ed.

MLA recommends in-text citations that refer readers to a list of works cited. An in-text citation names the author of the source, often in a signal phrase, and gives the page number in parentheses. At the end of the paper, a list of works cited provides publication information about the source; the list is alphabetized by authors’ last names or by title for works without authors. If the author’s name does not appear in the text, only the page number appears in the citation. If more than one work by a single author is used, a shortened version of the title appears in the citation.

Examples of MLA in-text citation style:

1. Author named in text: Richard Z. Chesnoff argues that after World War II, the Allies “turned a blind eye to justice” for victims of the Holocaust. (2)

2. Author not named in text: In one form another writing centers have existed for about 125 years, as long as composition has been taught on the college and university level. (Gillespie and Lerner, 142).

3. More than one work by a single author:

Works Cited Page

The Works Cited page contains full information about all the sources you have cited in your text. The list simplifies documentation by allowing you to make only brief references to these works in your text. For example, if you have listed the following entry in your Works Cited page, you only need to make a brief reference in the text:


The Works Cited page appears at the end of the paper. Begin the list on a new page and number each page, using continuous pagination from the text.