

# MLA Basics

## Introduction to MLA citation



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# The Writing Center

We Provide:

- peer guidance with all steps in the writing process
- an interactive tutoring process
- help with all of the major citation styles including: APA, MLA, and Chicago

To register for our appointment system

– Visit: [utsa.edu/twc](https://utsa.edu/twc)

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**First visit?** [Register for an account.](#)

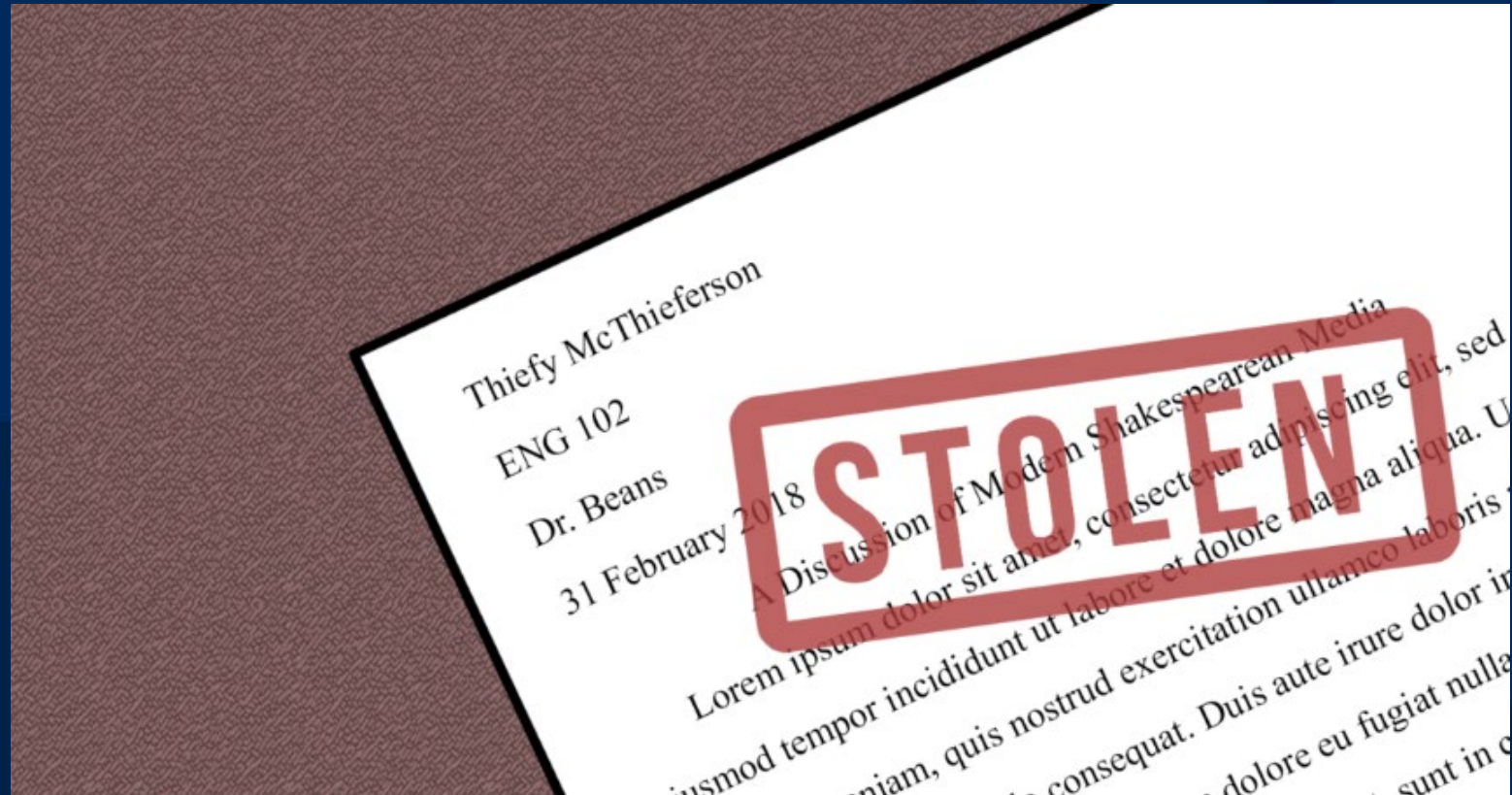
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# Why is documentation important?



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# Plagiarism

- Plagiarism is the unethical practice of using another person's work as if it were one's own
- Plagiarism can be intentional or unintentional
- When information is presented from an outside source – whether directly quoted or paraphrased – that information must be cited so that the authors get credit for their words and ideas.
- See UTSA's Code of Conduct for more information



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And documenting your sources also allows your readers to join the conversation.



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The Modern Language Association (MLA) explains, “The purpose of any documentation style is to allow authors to guide their readers quickly and unobtrusively to the source of a quotation, a paraphrased idea, [or] a piece of information” (19).

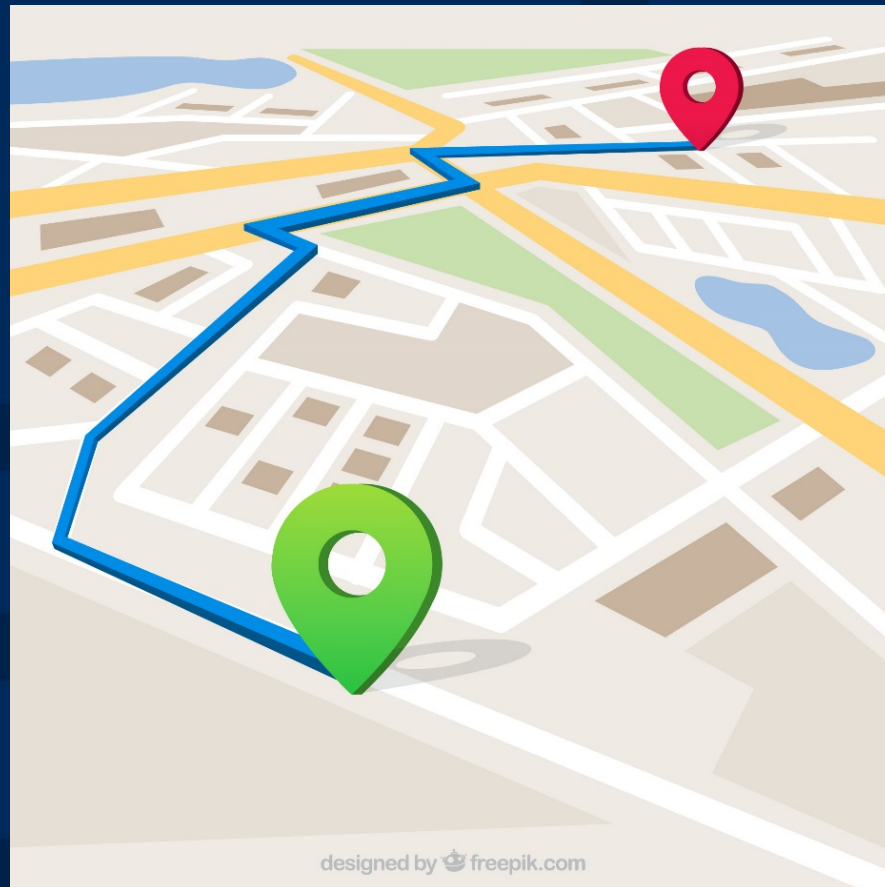
*MLA Handbook*. 8<sup>th</sup> ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016.



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Documentation is like a road map leading the reader to the source.



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# What is MLA?

- Stands for “Modern Language Association”
- Andrea Lunsford explains: “MLA citations appear in two parts—a brief in-text citation in parentheses in the body of your written text, and a full citation in the list of works cited” (121).

Lunsford, Andrea A. *Easy Writer*. 7th edition, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2019.



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# Four Concepts



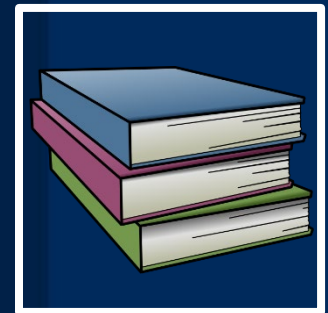
MLA Format



Signal Phrases



In Text Citations



Works Cited



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# Format

## Guidelines for the MLA-formatted paper

- the first page
- margins and spacing
- page numbers

There are also requirements for formatting long quotations (more than four typed lines) and for incorporating visual elements into your essay.



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Borchers 1 • Last name and page number.

1

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# What's a Signal Phrase?

The *Little Seagull Handbook* explains, "You need to introduce quotations, paraphrases, and summaries with a signal phrase, usually letting readers know who the author is and, if need be, something about his or her credentials" (Bullock et al. 103)

Bullock, Richard, et al. *The Little Seagull Handbook*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, W.W. Norton & Co, 2014.



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➞ UTSA President Taylor Eighmy explained, "It was 50 years ago today, on June 5, 1969, that Governor Preston Smith signed into law House Bill 42 and The University of Texas at San Antonio was born."



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The first time you use a source's name, you should use the first name and the last name (plus any information about the source's job title or background). After that, you can just use the source's last name.

Example:

First time:

UTSA President Taylor Eighmy explained...

Next time:

Eighmy observed...



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The Writing Center website from George Mason University advises you to “choose a verb that is appropriate to the way you are using your source.”

Examples of different verbs are : admit, argue, comment, confirm, note, report, respond. There are many others!

Signal phrases usually come at the beginning of a sentence, but for variety, you can also place them in the middle of a sentence or at the end.

“Signal Phrases.” *The Writing Center*, George Mason University,  
<https://writingcenter.gmu.edu/guides/signal-phrases> Accessed Aug. 5, 2019.



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# In-Text Citations

- appear in the body of your essay.
- must correspond to an entry listed on the works cited page.
- should be added to any sentence that contains information from a source, whether you quoted, paraphrased, or summarized the information.



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# So, what goes in the in-text citation?

- As little as possible! But it should provide just enough information to identify the source so that the reader can find it on the works cited list.





Often, you will mention the author's name in the signal phrase. Then, all you need in the in-text citation is the page number of where you found that information.

– Example:

Strunk and White explain, "Vigorous writing is concise" (23).

Strunk, William, and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*. Third Edition, Macmillan Publishing, 1979.



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Here the source title is mentioned in the signal phrase (not the author's name), so you would need the author's name and the page number in the in-text citation.

– Example:

According to the *Little Roadrunner Handbook*, "Brief documentation in your text makes clear to your reader what you took from a source and where in the source you found the information" (Bullock et al 96).

Bullock, Richard , et al. *The Little Roadrunner Handbook*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Norton Custom, 2017.



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# Why didn't the earlier example have an in-text citation?

UTSA President Taylor Eighmy explained, "It was 50 years ago today, on June 5, 1969, that Governor Preston Smith signed into law House Bill 42 and The University of Texas at San Antonio was born."

Because this quotation came from an email, it doesn't have a page number. The works cited entry would look like this:

Eighmy, Taylor. "A Day to Celebrate." Received by Martha Smith, June 5, 2019.



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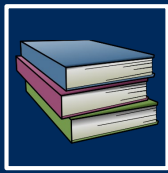


Sometimes, you can give enough information in the signal phrase that you don't even need an in-text citation. Some sources, especially online sources, don't have page numbers, so you can just identify the source in a signal phrase.



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# Works Cited Page

- includes an entry for every source cited in your text (Bullock 129)
- lists the sources in alphabetical order based on the first word in the entry
- uses the hanging indent
- is double spaced





# MLA template for Works Cited entries



## MLA Practice Template

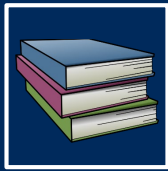
1	Author.	
2	Title of source.	
	Optional element.	
CONTAINER 1		
3	Title of container,	
4	Other contributors,	
5	Version,	
6	Number,	
7	Publisher,	
8	Publication date,	
9	Location.	
CONTAINER 2		
3	Title of container,	
4	Other contributors,	
5	Version,	
6	Number,	
7	Publisher,	
8	Publication date,	
9	Location.	
	Optional element.	

Adapted from the *MLA Handbook* (8th ed.), published by the Modern Language Association ([style.mla.org](http://style.mla.org)).



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# Core Elements for Works Cited Entries



## MLA Practice Template

1	Author.	
2	Title of source.	
	Optional element.	
CONTAINER 1		
3	Title of container,	
4	Other contributors,	
5	Version,	
6	Number,	
7	Publisher,	
8	Publication date,	
9	Location.	

Most sources won't include all of these elements

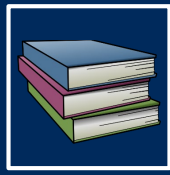
Also—

MLA explains, "An element should be omitted...if it's not relevant" (20).



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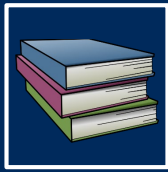
Create a works cited entry for this source:

- Title: "Writer's Roundtable: Weighing in on the Spurs and Team USA Basketball"
- No author is listed
- It appeared on the website [expressnews.com](http://expressnews.com)
- Publication date: Aug. 3, 2019



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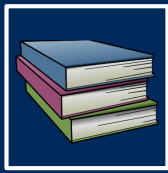




“Writers’ Roundtable: Weighing in on the Spurs and Team USA Basketball.”  
*expressnews.com*, Aug. 3, 2019,  
[www.expressnews.com/sports/spurs/article/Writers-roundtable-Weighing-in-on-the-Spurs-14278667.php](http://www.expressnews.com/sports/spurs/article/Writers-roundtable-Weighing-in-on-the-Spurs-14278667.php).



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Create a works cited entry for this source:

HINT:

This source has two containers (the essay is contained in the journal. The journal is contained in the database)



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Create a works cited entry for this source:

- Title: "The Truth About the Minimum Wage: Neither Job Killer Nor Cure-All"
- Author: Alan Manning
- Published in the journal *Foreign Affairs*
- Publisher is Council of Foreign Relations
- Publication date: Jan/Feb 2018
- Vol. 91 (1)
- Pages 126-134
- Accessed through the *ProQuest* database.



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Manning, Alan. "The Truth About the Minimum Wage: Neither Job Killer Nor Cure-All." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 97, no. 1, Council on Foreign Relations, Jan/Feb 2018, pp. 126–34. *ProQuest*, [www.proquest.com/docview/1980695185/](http://www.proquest.com/docview/1980695185/).



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# Four Concepts



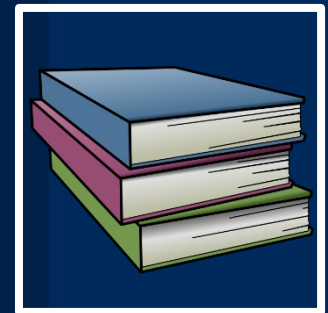
MLA Format



Signal Phrases



In Text Citations



Works Cited



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# Extra Tips & Resources

- If in doubt, it is always better to over cite than to under cite.
- Don't rely on citation generators. They are often incorrect! Create your own citations.
- Helpful resources:
  - *The MLA Handbook*, 8<sup>th</sup> edition.
  - MLA.org (for an interactive template for works cited entries)
  - Purdue Owl (online)
  - A Writing Center tutor!





# Questions?



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