

MLA Basics for High School Students

MLA concerns break down into two basic components: housekeeping and citations. Housekeeping includes margins, headings, font sizes, spacing, etc. Citation elements include required elements, and how those elements relate to the creation of in-text, or parenthetical, citations.

Housekeeping details

Margins: 1" all around

Spacing: Double spaced lines at all times. There are NOT extra spaces in between citations.

Example:

Double spaced lines ONLY

Works Cited

"History of the Monarchy The Yorkists Richard III " Welcome to the Official Website of the British Monarchy. The Royal Household. 2009. Web. 14 Mar. 2010.

<<http://www.royal.gov.uk/HistoryoftheMonarchy/KingsandQueensofEngland/TheYorkists/RichardIII.aspx>>.

Richard III " *World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras*. ABC-CLIO. 2010. Web. 14 Mar.

Font: Times New Roman 12 point (*Arial 12 pt., with instructor permission ONLY – check with instructor*) ; No bold or underline at any time.

Heading: Input your name and course information as follows in the upper left hand corner of the first page:

Example:

Your Name Jane Smith

Instructor Name Mr. Scanlon

Course Name Global

Date in MLA format 1 February 2010

Pagination: In the header, type your last name and then hit the # button so that MSWord will number the pages for you. Highlight and align to the right. *Note: make sure you are in the header.*

Example: Smith 10

Date Format: MLA is Day-Month-Year. There are two styles of month, fully spelled out and abbreviated. For the name header, fully spell out the month. For the citation, use the abbreviated form.

Examples:

Header 1 February 2010
Inside a citation 1 Feb 2010

Citations

Citations have two forms; one is used in the Works Cited, and the other is in the body of your paper, and is referred to as the parenthetical, or in-text, citation. The parenthetical citation is based on the Works Cited.

The easiest way to produce a citation for your Works Cited is to use a generator; here at CBA, high school students use EasyBib (www.easybib.com). EasyBib not only aids you in the creation of your citation, but if you do several citations in one session, it will alphabetize your citations for you.

Common citation errors:

Contributor (website) – people only, not organizations. If you don't see a person, leave it blank.

Autocite - organization, author, and date of electronic publication are required elements that will NOT be imported - you will need to input them yourself.

Database vs. web – original content from a database is NOT a web site.

Journals vs. magazines – Journals are scholarly, written and reviewed by persons with an advanced degree in the field; magazines can be bought at a bookstore.

Journals/Magazines in a database – If you accessed the article through a database, be sure to use the correct tab in EasyBib:

The screenshot shows the 'Journal citation form' with the following elements:

- Header: 'Journal citation form' and 'Just fill out what you know. We'll format it correctly.'
- Navigation tabs: 'MLA 6', 'MLA 7' (selected), and 'APA'.
- Progress indicators: 'Step 1: Choose a source', '» Step 2: Fill out fields', and 'Step 3: Finish and cite'.
- Form fields:
 - 'Article title:' with a text input field.
 - 'Contributors:' with a dropdown menu set to 'Author' and a text input field.
 - Below the contributors field, labels for 'First', 'MI', and 'Last / corp.' with corresponding input fields.
- Publication type tabs: 'In print', 'Online', and 'Online database' (selected and highlighted in blue).
- Below the tabs, a section titled 'Journal publication info' with a 'Journal title:' label and a text input field.

A callout box with an arrow pointing to the 'Online database' tab contains the text: 'If you accessed an article through a database, make sure you have clicked on this tab. You will need to know the title of the database.'

Journals/Magazines in a database – Use only the beginning of the URL: <http://ebshost.com>, <http://galegroup.com>, etc.

Creating the Works Cited before writing your paper will make the task far easier. Look at the following examples from a paper on Richard III, King of England:

Example 1: Journal from a database

Coote, Lesley, and Tim Thornton. "Richard, Son of Richard: Richard III and Political Prophecy."

Historical Research 73.182 (2000): 321-30. *Ebscohost*. Web. 14 Mar. 2010.

<<http://ebshost.com>>.

Parenthetical (Coote and Thornton)

Example 2: Book on the web

Coward, Barry. *The Stanleys, Lords Stanley, and Earls of Derby, 1385-1672 : the Origins,*

Wealth, and Power of a Landowning Family. Manchester, UK: Manchester UP, 1983.

Google Books. Google. Web. 14 Mar. 2010. <<http://books.google.com>>.

Parenthetical (Coward 1)

note: if there is a page number on the source material, use it. Web pages generally do not have page numbers, although books online frequently do.

Example 3: Book

Fields, Bertram. *Royal Blood: Richard III and the Mystery of the Princes*. New York: Regan,

1998. Print.

Parenthetical (Fields 1)

Example 4: Website

"History of the Monarchy The Yorkists Richard III." Welcome to the Official Website of the

British Monarchy. The Royal Household, 2009. Web. 14 Mar. 2010.

<<http://www.royal.gov.uk/HistoryoftheMonarchy/KingsandQueensofEngland/TheYorkists/RichardIII.aspx>>.

Parenthetical ("History")

note: Use the shortest clear form of the citation; keep all the original formatting for the shortened form, such as the quotation marks in this example. If there are two titles that are alike, you may need to use a longer form of the title. For example, if this paper also contained a citation for “History of the Monarchy The Lancastrians Henry IV”, the parenthetical citations would be (“History...Richard III”) and (“History...Henry IV”). Both of these are far shorter than the original titles.

Example 5: Original content from a database:

"Richard III." *World History: Ancient and Medieval Eras*. ABC-CLIO, 2010. Web. 14 Mar.

2010. <<http://www.ancienthistory.abc-clio.com>>.

Parenthetical (“Richard III”)

A sample paper and Works Cited page follow these tips.

Attribution:

Remember that you will need to give credit for both facts and opinions you found in outside sources. The rule of thumb: if it didn’t come from your own head, you need to say where you got it.

Credentialed sources:

Because papers are for academic credit, the sources used to create them must be of academic quality, holding academically acceptable credentials. Books and databases are checked by publishers. (*Note:* self-published books are not considered authoritative for academic use, unless the book is a first-person account of a historical event, such as a war.) Apart from books and databases, there are two paths to credential a source: as an individual, or an organization.

If an individual is identified as the source of the information, that person must either hold a degree in the field (Masters or PhD.), or be an acknowledged expert. Some topics may not have an academic degree, such as cooking or pro sports, but a well known person in that field would be an expert. (Example: Julia Childs and Mario Batali as experts in French and Italian

cooking; Peyton Manning as an expert in quarterback skills and strategy.) For an academic subject, the degree must be in the field of study; a chemistry professor who creates a philosophy webpage would not be considered credentialed in philosophy.

The credentials for an individual **MUST** be on the site itself, and include the degree earned, the subject area, and the institution that conferred it (example: Master of Arts degree in Music, from Indiana University). Many individuals will also include the year the degree was earned. If the individual teaches in a college or university, you may see a career history (*Curriculum Vitae*, or CV), a list of courses taught, and/or a list of articles published in scholarly journals. The presence of these items assures you that your source is credentialed.

Organizations fall into 3 categories: government agencies, well known organizations, and little known organizations.

Government agencies will have a .gov in the beginning of the URL – those are automatically credentialed.

Well known organizations would include major news organizations (example, CNN), professional groups (example, American Medical Association), the headquarters or leading division of a church (example, US Conference of Catholic Bishops), or organizations who have a track record of advocating on a certain issue (example, Mothers Against Drunk Driving).

Less well known organizations will need to be credentialed by checking the individual credentials of key persons, such as the CEO and other major officers of a corporation, or the editorial staff of an online newspaper/magazine. (Example, an organization about cloning should have a CEO with at least a Master's Degree in Biology. An online news editor must have a degree in Journalism, and print or broadcast experience.)