

# MLA: Modern Language Association

The **citation style** you use will be determined by the discipline in which you're writing, the requirements of a journal or publisher, or your professor's preference. The three most common styles of citation are **APA** (American Psychological Association), **MLA** (Modern Language Association) and **Chicago**.

In this guide, we will look at **MLA** in more detail.

MLA is often used by scholars in the fields of English language and literature, comparative literature, and cultural studies. Remember, you should use the citation style recommended by your instructor or by the publication where you are submitting your work.

## What does a MLA Citation Look Like?

For full instructions on how to cite in MLA format, please see the section "Where can I learn more about how to cite in MLA Style." In this section, let's look at a few examples of MLA Style citations, specifically **in-text citations** and those in a **reference list**.

### In-text citations

An in-text citation in MLA generally includes the author's name and the page number for the quote or paraphrase. Here is an example using Toni Morrison's novel, *Beloved*, in which the author is mentioned in the text of the sentence and therefore is not included in parenthesis.

Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* opens with the main character Sethe and her family in the midst of a haunting by the ghost of a young woman (5).

Here is another example in which the author is not mentioned in the text of the sentence and must be included in parentheses:

“Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another”  
(Morrison 111-12).

## Reference list

In MLA style, every source cited should be listed in alphabetical order at the end of the paper in a section called “Works Cited.” The references list should be double spaced, and each citation should have “hanging indents,” meaning that the first line is justified all the way to the left of the page and subsequent lines are indented half an inch. An MLA references list looks something like this:

### Works Cited:

Furman, Jan. “Remembering the ‘Disremembered’: Beloved.” *Toni Morrison's Fiction: Revised and Expanded Edition*, University of South Carolina Press, 2014, pp. 60–75.

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. Penguin, 1987.

Khawaja, Mabel, et al. “Toni Morrison's Beloved.” *PMLA*, vol. 112, no. 1, 1997, pp. 115–118. *JSTOR*, [www.jstor.org/stable/463060](http://www.jstor.org/stable/463060). Accessed 8 May 2020.

## Where can I Learn More About Citing in MLA Style?

The Columbia University Libraries recommend the following resources for more information.

### Purdue Owl

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL) is a great resource for learning more about citation styles. Below listed are a selected few guides and examples specific to APA from this website:

- Overview: Provides an overview of MLA style citation:  
<https://bit.ly/MLAOverviewB2B>
- Style guide: Walks through MLA citation style for different source formats:  
<https://bit.ly/MLAStyleGuideB2B>
- Sample paper: Demonstrates MLA style from cover page to references list:  
<https://bit.ly/MLASamplePaperB2B>

### MLA Citation Website

Free resources on MLA style: The Modern Language Association (MLA) also offers useful resources and references:

<https://bit.ly/MLAFreeResourcesB2B>

### MLA Handbook: The Official Guide to MLA Style

Although the resources listed above are great for quick reference, the official word on MLA citation style comes from a book published by the Modern Language Association called the MLA Style Book. You can find out where Columbia Libraries keeps its copies of the MLA Style Book in CLIO:

<https://bit.ly/MLAHandbookB2B>

## Other Citation Styles

Although APA, Chicago, and MLA are the most common citation styles, many other styles exist for scholars in particular disciplines. For example, engineers often use guidelines from the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), chemists often use a guide from the American Chemical Society (ACS), and journalists use the Associated Press (AP) Stylebook. You can find Purdue OWL's list of citation styles by discipline on their webpage:

<https://bit.ly/OWLCitationsListB2B>

---