

Student Success Tool

How to write a bibliography

I love being a writer. What I can't stand is the paperwork.
~ Peter De Vries

When writing a research paper, it is important to cite works (link to citing article) and to write a bibliography. A bibliography, also called a works cited page, provides source information, and helps keep all resources and references together and organized, and helps people know where you got your sources. Most important, it lets readers know that you did not plagiarize any part of your paper.

A bibliography should be placed at the very end of the paper. The title of this page should be "bibliography" or "works cited," and it should alphabetically list every source you used in your paper, such as a book, a movie, a website, an interview, or any information *that did not come from you*. Commonly known information, such as when Independence Day is, does not need to be cited, but anything more in depth than that, such as where the Declaration of Independence was signed and who exactly signed it, should be cited, however.

The most common citing format is the Modern Language Association (MLA) format. In high schools and colleges, most people will ask for MLA. Other examples of citing are American Psychology Association (APA), and Chicago. The citing examples we use are MLA, but there are links below that tell you how to cite in APA and Chicago.

*Sometimes, especially in English classes, you are asked to use only one or two works from an author to write about, thus the question arises, do you need to have a bibliography if you are using one source, the instructor knows that source, and everyone else in the class will be using that same source? This is a time when it is necessary to ask the instructor what s/he would prefer. S/he may say no bibliography is necessary, because s/he knows the sources and wants you to focus on writing the paper, or she may want you to practice setting up a bibliography page to get into the habit of doing so. When in doubt, *create the bibliography page*. Regardless, **you must cite these sources throughout your paper**. [See the article on citing, for more information on this topic.]*

Works on a bibliography page should be double-spaced, with all lines after the first one indented. The most common work cited, a book with one author, is set up like this:

Author's last name, author's first name. Title of the book. Publishing City:
publishing house. Year it was published.

[more...](#)

Here are a few examples of this: the first is a novel; the second is a book of critical essays written by one author:

Niffenegger, Audrey. The Time Traveler's Wife. Orlando: Harborcourt. 2003.

Note how the same format is used for both kinds of books. Other common sources you may need to cite are:

Multiple Authors - Books with two authors, where you cite the names in the order they appear:

If there are three authors, you can list them as shown above, in the order they appear in the book. For more than three, you can either list them again, or you can list the first author then follow it with *et al.* If the book has editors and not authors (books of critical essays on one subject often do) treat the editors like the authors and set the source up like this:

Magazine - To cite an article from a magazine, it is necessary to have "month year," or "week monthyear," depending on how frequently the magazine publishes.

Newspaper - For a newspaper, list the date the article was published. If the newspaper does not say where it is published in the title of the newspaper, like The Wall Street Journal, put in brackets after the title of the newspaper where it is published, e.g., [New York].

Film - To cite a movie, you may use shortened versions of words, to avoid having to fill out director, producer, written by, each time. Also, because there are so many names involved, it shortens the entry. The least you need is, in this order, Title of the movie, director, what company distributed it, and the year it was released. Other information, such as who wrote it, who produced it, and who starred in it, can be added between the title and the distribution company. This information can usually be found on the DVD or VHS box, or online. Here are examples of both approaches:

Minimalist:

The Color Purple. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Warner Studios, 1985.

With more information:

Babe. Dir. Chris Noonan. Prod. Bill Miller, George Miller, and Doug Mitchell. Narr.

Roscoe Lee Brown. Perf. Christine Cavanaugh and James Cromwell. Universal Studios, 1995.

Note that with movies, it is not necessary to use the last name first format, because you are using the title of the movie to cite, not a specific person.

For the Internet, it gets tricky. For this guide, only Internet articles will be explained, but for other online resources, see one of the useful guides found at the bottom of this page. Even if you use an article you found online and the article is from a magazine, you must

treat the article like an internet source. If the article has more than one author, see the examples above with one or more book authors:

Tayman, John. "The Stealth Hybrid." Business 2.0. June 22, 2005. July 21, 2005.

<<http://www.business2.com/b2/web/articles/0,17863,1075753,00.html?cnn=yes>>

The first date used is the date the article was written, and the second date is when you acquired the article. Also, if you must break up the web address, break it up in a place that best fits the address. Don't break up words. The best place is to break it up after a /. As in magazines, the article is in quotations but the website or online journal is underlined. Also, a lot of times in current word processing programs the page will try to make the web address a hyperlink for you. If this happens, right click on the link and press "remove hyperlink".

From a Database

To cite from a database, note the article title, journal name and standard bibliographic information listed in this guide, the database listing the article information, and the organization subscribing to the database. Note: When using a computer, indent all lines after the first with one tab or 5 spaces.

For examples on how to cite database sources using MLA format, and also how to cite in Chicago and APA:

MLA Basic electronic citation format

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of work." Article's original source and publication date: page numbers. Database name. Publisher. Location where site was accessed from. Date researcher visited the site <Electronic Address, or URL, of the publisher>

APA Basic electronic citation format:

Author (year of original sources). Article title. Original source of article, page numbers. (Retrieval date [month, day, year,] from [source] database ([name of database])).

There are many more sources you must cite, and to learn what is the proper format for those sources click on any of the links below.

Sources and Links:

eHow.com, "How to Write a Bibliography"

http://www.ehow.com/how_2859_write-bibliography.html

The Nuts and Bolts of College Writing, "Documentation Styles: MLA"
<http://nutsandbolts.washcoll.edu/mla.html>

Modern Language Association (MLA) homepage:
<http://www.mla.org/>

How to Write a Bibliography
<http://teenlink.nypl.org/bibliography.html>