Citation FAQ (MLA style)

When I use an article I found in a database, do I need to copy those desperately long URLs?

Fortunately, no! When you use an online database, give the full details of the original article, then add the name of the database (Infotrac, in this case), the date of access, and the URL of the home page of the database.


The long URL is meaningless, thrown up by the database server for your particular query. Another user, performing the same search later, or using a different computer, would probably get a different URL.

How do I cite a quotation of a quotation?

The best advice is to go to the original source whenever you can. This is because misquotation happens all too often. Author B makes a mistake in his quotation of author A (perhaps leaves out the word NOT in his quotation), and author C quotes author B, so “confirming” the error - and the mistake goes on and on and gets life of its own.

Even more important, if you cannot trace the path back to the original source, then you must make it clear in your parenthetical citation that what you are quoting is NOT the original, but another author's quotation of the original. Only cite the original source if you can actually track it down and check it!

Egoff's test for a "good" book, "A fine book sends me rushing to share it, with anyone I can find, child or adult; a mediocre books sets my teeth on edge, and a poor one makes me laugh," (qtd. in Spink: 82) suggests that there is no objective measure of quality.

Works cited:


How do I cite a paraphrase of a paraphrase?

Once again, track down the original if you can. If you cannot, then quote the source you actually use, and not the original source.
How do I cite an article reprinted in a book of readings?

You need to provide full guide to the original article, but also refer to the collection in which you found it.


How do I cite a work (poem, essay, play, short or long story) which is reprinted in an anthology?

The rules are slightly different to that for articles. If the original first appeared as a separate publication, italicize the title; if it was originally part of another work, then the title of the short piece, in quotation marks, is enough. If you wish to show the original year of publication of the original piece, you can, after the title.


Author. Title of play. Title of anthology. Comp. and ed. Compiler/Editor first Last. Place: Pub, year. 76-78.

Author. Title of novella. date. Title of anthology. Ed. Editor first Last. Place: Pub, year. 76-78.

Do I need to get permission to use pictures from the internet?

Normally, yes. You can use short extracts or paraphrase from articles, books, web pages, television programs, and so on, without seeking permission. It is different as soon as you start using whole works, or substantial pieces of whole works. Pictures are often considered whole in themselves.

Using a whole work without permission, even if you cite its source, may be considered infringement of copyright. This is a legal offense, and can cost serious money. As a rule of thumb, if you cannot find a statement giving free right to copy the piece, you should contact the author, artist, or publisher to obtain permission to use the piece – especially if you are going to publish your work, in hard-copy, on the Internet, anywhere. Very often and especially if you are not charging money for your publication, permission is given without question and without fee. When you write to obtain permission, make a note of this:

(reproduced by kind permission of the author).

Should I list my Works Used in the order in which they are used in my text?
Normally, no. You should list your works in alphabetical order of author's last name, with a hanging indent to make for easy scanning. If there is no author, then the title is used, ignoring initial definite and indefinite articles ('A' or 'The'). If there are several authors, only the first named author is named last name first; all other authors are in firstname lastname order.

In your list of works used, include all works which you refer to in the text, and only those works. Do not include works you might have used in your background reading, but have not referred to in your text.

Do not include here the page numbers of any quotations you have used; the place for those is in the text.

**If I use different pages from an article spread over several web pages, can I just cite the “front page” of the article?**

If the pages you refer to are contiguous, you may simply declare the first page and allow the reader to follow the same path you did to gather your information.

**If I use several pages from a single site, can I just cite the site home page?**

One of the purposes of the Works Cited list is to make it easy for future readers to access your information sources and deepen their own knowledge, Whereas it may be acceptable to declare the home page, it is not as helpful as providing clear references to specific pages.

**How do I cite a pop-up frame which has no (separate) URL?**

I would strongly recommend against using sites that have pop-ups, let alone the pop-up itself. How can you possibly check the authority of the writer and the accuracy and currency of the information?

**How should I use foreign language characters and accents?**

If your quotation is from a foreign language, you should reproduce the text, including letters, accents and marks, just as they are used in the original language. If you do not have the letters, accents, or marks, you should write them in by hand. However, "foreign" fonts are available in many word processing programs. Windows has a Character Map which can usually be found in the Accessories programs, often in the System Tools sub-folder.

Note that foreign is relative to the language of your own work. If you are writing an essay in English, then Turkish is a foreign language. On the other hand, if your essay is in Turkish, then your quotation from a piece in English is in a foreign language.
When the original quotation is in a language other than English, should I translate it?

This will depend on your readership. If your readers are likely to understand the quotation, then no translation is necessary. If there is any doubt, a translation might be kind. If you prefer not to interrupt the text, you can make your translation in a footnote.

When the original title is in a language other than English, should I translate it?

As with quotations, this might well depend on your readership.

Author. Title [eng translation]. Place [eng version]: Publisher, date.

When the original script is non-roman, should I use the original script or should I transliterate (use roman characters)? Should I translate it?

As with the above, this might well depend on your readership.

How do I cite a picture downloaded from the internet?

Pictures and other illustrative material should be labelled Figure or Fig., given an arabic numeral (thus: Fig. 1, Fig. 2 … Fig. 22), and include a label/ title, and a caption which gives full details about the source of the illustration. If your illustration is your own work, it should still have a figure number and a label/ title.

Note: Your in-text citation will say (See fig. 3).

Example:


Do I need to cite a picture photocopied from a copyright-free source?

Yes. Whether it is words, pictures, or any other original material, you do need to cite the source.

My document has disappeared from the internet; how can I cite it?

This is one of many reasons why it is important to keep track of your sources as you go. I’m going to assume you did that and therefore still have the URL. Go to the Wayback Machine and paste that URL into its search field. This Internet archive will find your old site for you. You should cite the webpage as you would normally, and then give the Wayback Machine information. MLA provides the following example:
If the date that the information was updated is missing, one can use the closest date in the Wayback Machine.

That said, you might want to wonder why the site was taken down. Has the author made something better that you could locate with a fresh search? Was it forced down by legal action? Do some more research before you use this site’s information.

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