This is a tutorial from the librarians at Lone Star College – North Harris. The purpose of this tutorial is to teach library users how to cite their sources according to MLA guidelines.

The best tool for your citing sources according to MLA is the MLA handbook. If you don’t own one, there are several available for you to examine at the library reference desk. You can’t check them out, but you can use them inside the library.

Whether or not you own a MLA handbook, you’ll probably find the library citation help page handy. Here’s how you get there.

Go to the library’s homepage and look for the section called “Research Guides.” Then click on “North Harris.” Then click on “Citation Help Guide – LSC—North Harris.”

Here is our citation help page. It’s divided into three sections: MLA style, APA style, and Chicago Style. The MLA resources are at the top.

These include a sample paper called “Herding Cats.” You can open it by clicking on the link. This sample paper shows you how to correctly format a paper, including how to write the heading, how to write a parenthetical citation, and what a Works Cited page looks like.

Returning to our citation help page, you can find links to good websites about citing your sources. There’s also a link to a pdf file of our 2-page handout. Print copies of this handout are available at the library.

You can also see a link to the video that you’re watching now, as well as a comprehensive video guide from Salisbury University.

Now let’s examine how to cite your sources in the MLA style.

MLA uses parenthetical citation, which means that as you write your paper, you should cite your sources in parentheses as you use them. At the end of a sentence or a few sentences in which you’ve used a source, place the author’s last name and the page number of that source in which you found the relevant information. If you have two authors, provide both authors’ names and the page number. If your source has no listed author, just provide a shortened title and the page number. If you are using two or more sources from the same author in the same paper, you have to distinguish between these sources. Provide the author’s last name, a shortened title, and the page number.

Sometimes your source will provide no pagination – that is, no page numbers. This is particularly common with database articles and web pages. When this happens, just provide the author’s name and no page number.
Although citations may appear to provide information randomly, most MLA citations follow a standardized format. First, the author or authors. Then the title. Then information about the publisher. Then the format of the source, such as one that you encounter in print or on the web.

Even if the source is online, as you might find using a library database, most MLA citations follow this same pattern. First, the author. Then the title. Then the publisher. Then the format.

Let’s say that our example is available in two formats – in print and online. The citations are exactly the same in title, author, and publisher. Only the format is different. If the source is in print, then you just write “Print”. If the source is online, such as one that you found using a subscription database, then you must provide the name of the database in italics, the word “Web” to indicate that it’s online, and the date on which you found the source.

Often, you’ll use sources that are republished. For example, you might use an essay that was originally an article in a journal, but later republished into an anthology of essays. Or you might encounter an article in a database that was originally published in a print newspaper or magazine.

When you encounter a republished source, you should first write the citation for the original format. Then you should write the citation information for the format that you are using. The example on your screen is a newspaper article. This is the citation for the article when it was available in print. This information that tells readers that you found the article online.

Writing a works cited page is a complex task, but here’s a step-by-step process that will help you.

First, determine what type of source you’re using. Is it a book by three or more authors? Is it a magazine article on a subscription database? Is it a speech? Until you have figured out what the source is, you’re not ready to write the citation. Do not proceed until you’ve completed this step.

Next, locate the instructions for citing that source on your MLA handout or MLA handbook.

Then follow that guide to compose your citation.

If you have questions about how to cite a source, please contact a librarian. We’ll be glad to help you.