This is a tutorial from the librarians at Lone Star College. The purpose of this tutorial is to teach library users how to cite their sources according to 8th edition of the MLA Handbook.

The best tool to help you cite your 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 an 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 “LSC-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 the Chicago Style. The MLA resources are located at the top.

These include a sample paper called “Herding Cats.” 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.

There’s also a link to a pdf file of our 2-page handout. Print copies of this handout are available at the library.

MLA uses parenthetical citation, which means that as you write your paper, you should cite your sources in parentheses. 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.

Sometimes sources have a corporate author—meaning it was written by an organization, such as a company or government agency—and has no person listed by name as the author. In this case, put the corporate author and the page number in parentheses.

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.

That’s a good start, but you’re just getting started. In MLA, you cite your sources twice. You’ll first provide parenthetical citations in the body of your paper as you use individual pieces of information. Then, on the last page of your paper, you’ll provide a complete list of your sources. This is called the Works Cited page. The citations that appear on your Works Cited page are different from the parenthetical citations within your paper. Let’s explore how these citations work.
Although citations may appear to provide information randomly, most MLA Works Cited citations follow a standardized format. First, provide the author. Then provide the title of the source.

Next, provide the container. What’s a container? The MLA Handbook explains that “When the source being documented forms a part of a larger whole, the larger whole can be thought of as a container that holds the source.” (30) So if you’re citing a magazine article, the larger magazine is your container. If you’re citing an episode of a television show, the television series is the container. If you’re citing a web page, the whole website is your container.

You will usually italicize the container.

After you list the container, provide other contributors to the work—if there are any—such as an editor or translator. Then provide the version, such as an edition, followed by the number, if there is any. Then list the publisher, the publication date, and the location of the source.

We should examine the term “location,” which has a particular meaning in the 8th edition of MLA. If you’re using a periodical or a section within an anthology, this could mean the page range in which your information source appears. If you’re using an online work, the URL is your location. Most library databases will provide a permalink to individual articles to serve as the location.

Many publishers provide DOIs for their works. DOI stands for digital object identifier. It’s a permanent numerical marker for an individual published work. Many library databases provide DOIs for individual articles. If your source has a DOI, you should list it as the location in your citation.

These are the 9 parts of an MLA Works Cited page citation. MLA has tried to create a uniform structure for its citations, but there is variation depending upon the type of source that you use.

That’s why, whenever you’re composing a Works Cited page citation, you should always consult a reputable source on the subject first. Your first pick should be the MLA Handbook itself. If you don’t have access to one, look at the library’s handout. Find the model that most closely fits the source that you need to cite.

And most importantly, ask for help. The librarians are here to help you succeed in college, and that includes helping you cite your sources correctly.