

**Remember that there is often more than one correct way to document a source.**

Different situations call for different solutions. A writer whose primary purpose is to give credit for borrowed material may need to provide less information than a writer who is examining the distinguishing features of particular editions (or even specific copies) of source texts. Similarly, scholars working in specialized fields may need to cite details about their sources that other scholars making more general use of the same resources do not.

**Make your documentation useful to readers.**

Good writers understand why they create citations. The reasons include demonstrating the thoroughness of the writer's research, giving credit to original sources, and ensuring that readers can find the sources consulted in order to draw their own conclusions about the writer's argument. Writers achieve the goals of documentation by providing sufficient information in a comprehensible, consistent structure.

This edition of the *MLA Handbook* is designed to help writers *think* about the sources they are documenting, *select* the information about the sources that is appropriate to the project they are creating, and *organize* it logically and without complication. Armed with a few rules and an understanding of the basic principles, a writer can generate useful documentation of any work, in any publication format.

Think

Select

Organize

## The List of Works Cited

The list titled “Works Cited” identifies the sources you borrow from—and therefore cite—in the body of your research project. Works that you consult during your research but do not borrow from are not included (if you want to document them as well and your instructor approves their inclusion, give the list a broader title, such as “Works Consulted”). Each entry in the list of works cited is made up of core elements given in a specific order, and there are optional elements that may be included when the situation warrants.

### THE CORE ELEMENTS

The core elements of any entry in the works-cited list are given below in the order in which they should appear. An element should be omitted from the entry if it’s not relevant to the work being documented. Each element is followed by the punctuation mark shown unless it is the final element, which should end with a period.

- 1 Author.
- 2 Title of source.
- 3 Title of container,
- 4 Other contributors,
- 5 Version,
- 6 Number,
- 7 Publisher,
- 8 Publication date,
- 9 Location.

In what follows, we’ll explain each of these elements, how you’ll find them, and how they might differ from one medium to another.

Select

## GATHERING INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR SOURCES

The source documentation in your finished project will be built from information you collect as you discover and read useful works. As you evaluated your sources, you asked yourself the following questions:

**Who** is the author of the source?

**What** is the title of the source?

**How** was the source published?

**Where** did you find the source?

**When** was the source published?

Each of these elements—author, title, publisher, location, publication date—has a place in your documentation, so keep track of them carefully. Be sure that you select the correct information about your sources. Examine the work itself for the facts about its publication. Do not rely on a listing found elsewhere, whether on the Web, in a library catalog, or in a reference book, because it may be erroneous or incomplete.

In general, you should look in the places where the source's publisher, editor, or author gives credit for or describes its production. The examples on pages 14–18 show where you can find publication facts about works in various media. We'll go into more detail about what information you need and what you do with it as we discuss organizing your documentation.

Facts missing  
from source  
see sec. 2.6.1