

What is MLA formatting?

It is a standard created by the Modern Language Association for writing and documenting research papers.

Why do we need a standard (like MLA) to document research?

1. MLA formatting lets the reader know SPECIFICALLY where you got your information from.

Example: In your research paper, you may state that “50 % of people between the ages of 18-34 voted” in the 2008 election. You are required to tell the reader EXACTLY where you obtained this information so that the reader can VERIFY that fact. Also the reader may want more information about it.

2. It prevents plagiarism. It prevents the writer from “stealing” someone else’s work. Please note that it is acceptable to use parts of someone’s work (in fact that is a big component of the research project) BUT you MUST give the original author or researcher credit.

MLA Formatting consists of two major components:

- **WORKS CITED PAGE**
- **INTERNAL DOCUMENTATION**

WORKS CITED PAGE

When you use information such as facts, statistics etc., from a source YOU must state SPECIFICALLY where you got that information from. You put this information on the Works Cited Page.

For example if you were researching on the CNN website and you found out that 50% of voters between the ages of 18-28 voted in the 2008 election, then you would need to let the reader know EXACTLY where you got the information.

You put this information on the WORKS CITED PAGE and you also put this information within the paper. (We will discuss where to put the within the paper later.)

It is not enough to tell the reader that you got the information from MSNBC.com. Imagine if the reader wanted to go back to the EXACT place where you got the information to verify it. The reader would be lost if they went to MSNBC.com and tried to find the article. For this reason, you need to give as much information as possible. In the case of a website, you need to let the reader know the following information:

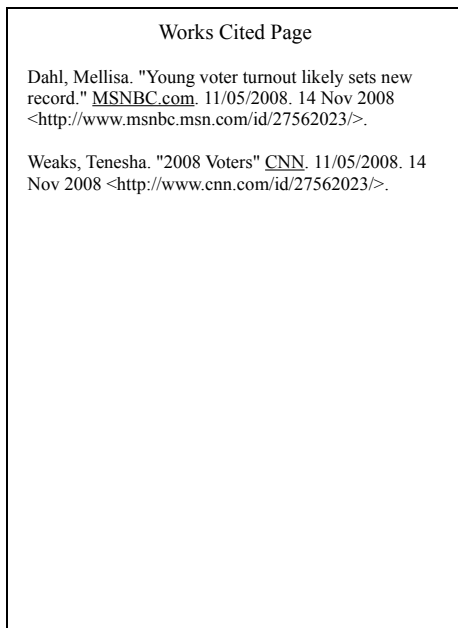
1. The name of the Author
2. The name of the Article
3. The name of the Website

4. The date the article was written
5. The date that YOU accessed the website
6. The EXACT address of the website.

On your works cited page you would put this information in the following format.

Dahl, Mellisa. "Young voter turnout likely sets new record." CNN. 11/05/2008. 14 Nov 2008
<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27562023/>>.

Look at the “page” below to see what a works cited page looks like. This works cited page has two sources: the MSNBC article that we just talked about and another article from CNN.



Dahl, Mellisa. "Young voter turnout likely sets new record." CNN. 11/05/2008. 14 Nov 2008
<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27562023/>>.

Internal Documentation

Now we have gone over how to cite (or tell the reader where you got your facts or information from) on the Works Cited Page, BUT we are NOT done. You still need to tell the readers within the paper where you got the information that 50 % of people aged 18-28 voted in the election.

For example suppose this is a section of my paper:

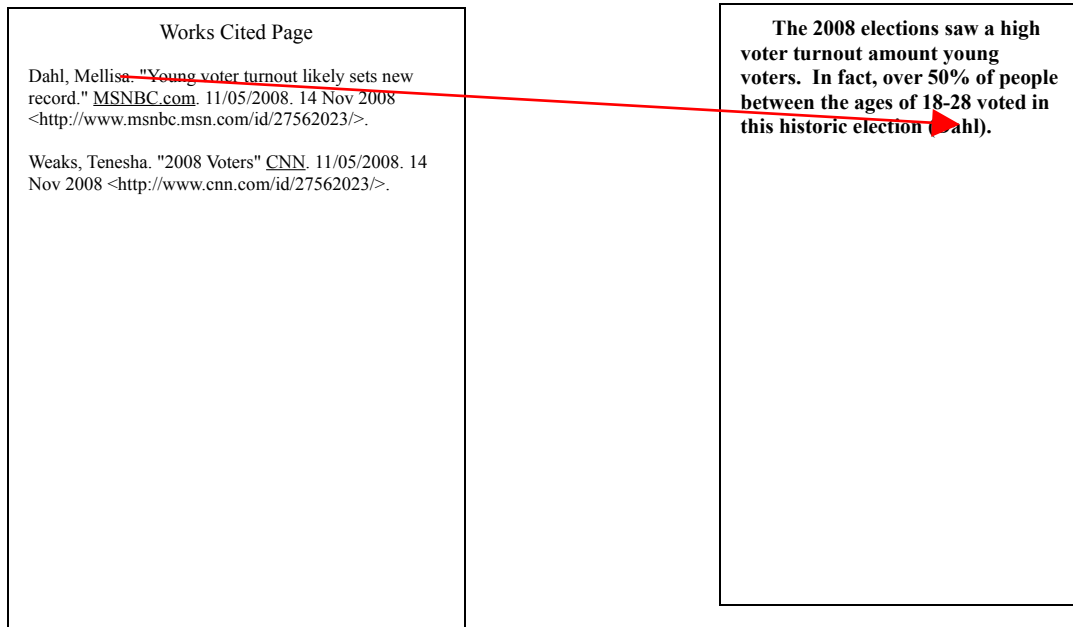
The 2008 elections saw a high voter turnout amount young voters. In fact, over 50% of people between the ages of 18-28 voted in this historic election.

You need to let the reader know WITHIN the paper where you got the information from. You do this simply by putting the authors last name after the information.

So your paper should look like this:

The 2008 elections saw a high voter turnout amount young voters. In fact, over 50% of people between the ages of 18-28 voted in this historic election (Dahl).

So if the reader wanted to verify the information, he/she would look for the author's last name Dahl on your work cited page, then the reader would know exactly where to find the information on the internet.



What if the article does not give the name of the author. If the article does not give the name of the author, then you would give information that is available. For example, if the MSNBC article did not have an author your would still give the following information:

1. **The name of the Article**
2. **The name of the Website**
3. **The date the article was written**
4. **The date that YOU accessed the website**
5. **The EXACT address of the website.**

The entry on the work cited page would look like the following:

"Young voter turnout likely sets new record." CNN. 11/05/2008. 14 Nov 2008
<<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/27562023/>>.

Your internal documentation (within your paper) would look like this:

The 2008 elections saw a high voter turnout amount young voters. In fact, over 50% of people between the ages of 18-28 voted in this historic election ("Young Voter Turnout").

Note: Since you do not have the author's name, you put the next piece of information that you have which is the title of the article. Since some times are very long, you are allowed to shorten the title.

URL where this was posted:

http://www.writenowplc.com/freeworksheets/MLA_Formatting_in_Laymen%27s_Term.pdf

For more information on MLA formatting visit:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>