

MLA Documentation Overview (2009 MLA Guidelines)

When using material from outside sources, we must document that use or else we are guilty of plagiarism. The Modern Language Association (MLA) has a 2-step process: parenthetical notation and a works cited page. The Troyka and Hesse *QA Compact* handbook presents more detailed information in Chapter 35. You can find a sample research paper on pp. 413-21 that shows not only how to use parenthetical notation but also how to format a works cited page.

Parenthetical Notation:

This is the in-text information you give the reader at the time you use outside material. At the end of the sentence or passage in which you have quoted, paraphrased, or summarized a source, you use a parenthesis to indicate author and page number.

- A quotation would look like this: "Anger and bitterness had preyed upon me continually for weeks" (Keller 147).
- A summary of Keller's words would look like this: Before Helen Keller met Anne Sullivan and learned about language, her life was full of rage and frustration (147).

Notice the difference in the parenthetical information. If I use Keller's name in my sentence and that clearly identifies her as the author of the information, then I only need to use the page number in parentheses. An exception to this rule is if I have more than one work by Keller that I cite in my essay. Look in Troyka and Hesse or more details on using parenthetical notation.

Works Cited:

The second step to complete documentation is the works cited page, which always appears as the last page in an essay. This page lists the complete publication information for each source you use in an essay. Without this page, we would have to put all the information in our text, which would be distracting. A works cited page has the following rules:

1. Always alphabetize by author's last name (or if no author given, the title of the source). So Helen Keller's piece would be listed under K for Keller.
2. Always double space, using NO extra space between sources.
3. Use hanging indent for each entry (first line is flush with the margin and subsequent lines in that entry are indented).
4. Include information concerning publication. This differs for the type of source, and those differences are listed in Troyka and Hesse, Chapter 35. For works from our class reader, you should follow example #11 on p.392 if you only refer to one essay from our book. If you refer to two or more essays, you should follow example #11. Here's how a work cited entry from Helen Keller would look:

Work Cited

Keller, Helen. "The Day Language Came into My Life." *The Power of Language; The Language of Power*. Ed. Jessica Isaacs, et al. 2nd ed. Boston: Pearson, 2006. 147-49. Print.

Because individual sources have different information that needs citing, you should refer to Quick Reference 35.1 on pp. 386-89 in Troyka and Hesse. This gives you all the information you *might* need for an entry. The list for electronically accessed databases, like Ebsco, is on pp. 397-98, and the list for a variety of Internet sources is on pp. 399-405. Please refer to these as you are assembling your works cited page.