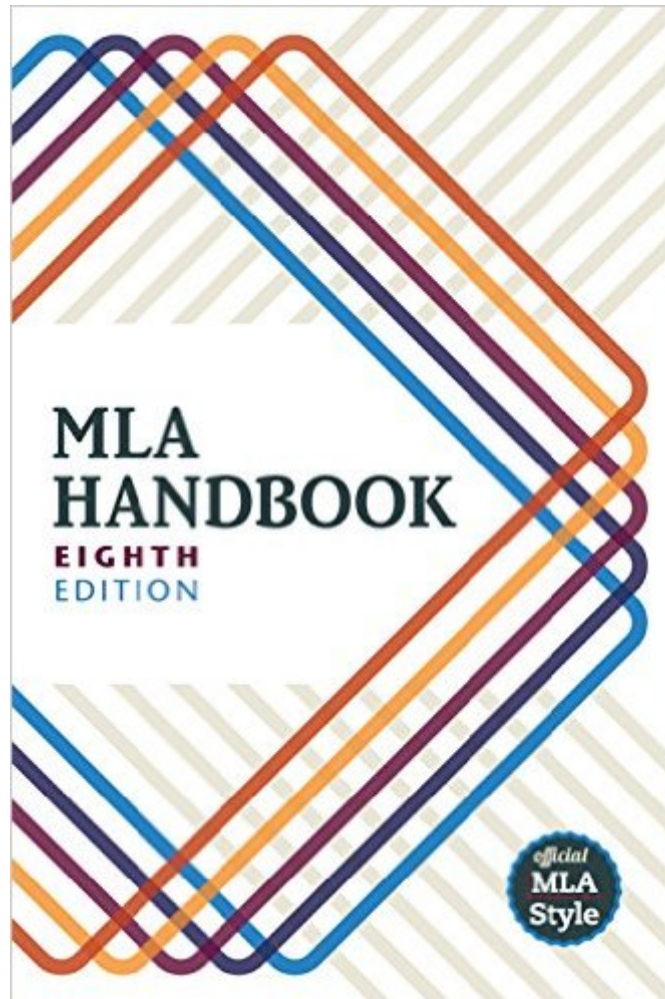


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MLA Handbook (Mla Handbook For Writers Of Research Papers)



Synopsis

The Modern Language Association, the authority on research and writing, takes a fresh look at documenting sources in the eighth edition of the MLA Handbook. Works are published today in a dizzying range of formats. A book, for example, may be read in print, online, or as an e-book—or perhaps listened to in an audio version. On the Web, modes of publication are regularly invented, combined, and modified. Previous editions of the MLA Handbook provided separate instructions for each format, and additional instructions were required for new formats. In this groundbreaking new edition of its best-selling handbook, the MLA recommends instead one universal set of guidelines, which writers can apply to any type of source. Shorter and redesigned for easy use, the eighth edition of the MLA Handbook guides writers through the principles behind evaluating sources for their research. It then shows them how to cite sources in their writing and create useful entries for the works-cited list. More than just a new edition, this is a new MLA style.

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Customer Reviews

"They're trying to make money." I received this comment immediately upon announcing to my colleagues that MLA was updating its handbook. The assumption of financial gain proved unfounded. The change in the title—the removal of the superfluous "for Writers of Research Papers"—symbolizes the general tendency of this volume to simplify and slenderize. The page count alone testifies to this change, from 292 to 160 pages. The loss of pulp and ink inaugurates a new pedagogical approach to documenting sources. Rather than treating sources as belonging to

particular categories for which there exists a singular format, the MLA Handbook now presents a single unifying and flexible framework for citing the diverse sources that exist in today's multifaceted media age. Whether citing Edgar Allan Poe's short story, "The Masque of the Red Death" accessed through the HathiTrust Digital Library, Sarah Michelle Geller's performance in an episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or a tweet from @persiankiwi in Iran during the Arab Spring—all of these sources serve as examples in the text—a single set of nine core elements provide the framework for identifying and organizing the relevant information for documentation. These general principles of citation, part 1 of the MLA Handbook, replace a long and complicated labyrinth of instructions where students frequently got lost, and understandably so. A set of prescriptive guidelines regarding the mechanics of prose, advanced aspects of the works-cited list, and a brief section about non-print modes of citation follow in part 2. These two sections of the book helpfully cross-reference each other and themselves.

I understand an earlier reviewer who said not to buy this book, but to buy the easier, more easy-to-understand version. I understand the sentiment, but it is not a viable option. Using the previous version will result in formatting works cited entries incorrectly according to current standards. While the entries in the new edition are simplified for the most part, the book itself is terrible. The approach for the container system of nine "core elements" is ridiculous. The core elements as presented follow: Author, Title of source, Title of container, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location. Title and author are clear, but the other elements? "Container"? "Location"? What these actually mean varies widely. "Publisher," by the way, does not always mean what we think of as a publisher, nor do the other terms always make sense as applied. The writers just wanted nine elements for everything, darn it, and didn't picture anything as basic as making sense to actual college students. I've taught for over twenty years, and grasping the basic concepts of MLA format is very difficult for some students. I have students who can't seem to understand the difference between italics and quotation marks at the end of a semester. Now I am supposed to try to get them to understand these nine badly-named "core elements" and how they apply? This book is just insane. "Location" can be any number of things, including page numbers. (Not exactly intuitively-named.) And some changes are just plain arbitrary, such as deciding to require "vol." and "no." for volumes and numbers, instead of the simpler approach used for years: we used to put 62.3, for example, instead of vol. 63, no. 3.

I don't know how to begin to convey my exasperation, my anger, my sense of betrayal in reading

the new MLA Handbook 8th edition. Let's start with the good news. 1. MLA hasn't touched in-text citation. Thank God for small favors. In parentheses Author-page number, no comma in between. 2. The odious, tack-on descriptors from 7th edition, Print-Film-Web, have vanished. Good riddance! Now, for the bad news. It's all about the Works Cited. Journal citation: 1. There is a proliferation of commas that have to be seen to be believed. Commas are appearing in places whence they were banished 25 years ago or more! A comma now must appear after a journal, for example. Why do this? 2. Out of the blue, "vol." and "no." and "pp." are baa-aa-ck in 8th edition. WHY? I fought the changeover when they were erased in 3rd edition (?) years ago. Then, I came to love the efficiency of using 3.2 instead of vol. 3 no. 2. Why are we going backwards? 3. Why use commas to set off the date? What was wrong with parentheses? 4. While we're on the subject, did I somehow miss expressing the date day-month-year in an earlier edition? It looks cool; I just didn't know it was required. Book citation: 1. MLA has declared the place of publication irrelevant. The logic of this decision escapes me. I want to know where a source is published. There's a note to say if you absolutely must, you can include it. Somehow it feels condescending. 2. Previously understood abbreviations such as "Ed.", "Trans.", "Dir." etc. now have to be spelled out!! "Edited by", "Translated by", "Directed by". WHY? 3. Ah, BUT university presses still have to be expressed: U of California P, Cambridge UP.

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