What to Cite

- Any time you quote, paraphrase, or summarize material from a source in a paper, you must document your research. You must also document any visuals that you borrow from a source (photographs, charts, tables, etc.).
- You do not need to cite sources for common knowledge—facts that most readers already know; facts available in a wide variety of sources, such as encyclopedias or almanacs.

How to Cite

MLA citations are made in the text of the paper, with the combination of a signal phrase or sentence and a parenthetical reference.

If you introduce the quotation with a signal phrase, use a comma before the quotation:
In the view of ethnomusicologist Terence O’Grady, “Lennon’s ‘In My Life’ evokes the passivity of a restrained folk ballad, eschewing both the blues-derived qualities of the typical pop-rock song and the harmonic suavity and sophistication associated with the slicker commercial ballads” (89).

If you introduce the quotation with a signal sentence, use a colon before the quotation:
Writing of the Beatles’ first visit to America, biographer Bob Spitz describes the area surrounding New York City’s Plaza Hotel: “Hundreds of fans showed up simultaneously, causing gridlock. A throng of girls swarmed over the fountain and statue in the tiny arcade along 5th Avenue” (463).

You can also weave short quotations into your own sentences:
Shirley Whitely contends that “She Loves You” is “a song that adheres to the advice formula of girl-group songs, a genre that presented an explicitly female perspective (girl-talk) and a variety of female viewpoints” (60).

Signal summaries or paraphrases as you do quotations:
Kenneth Womack and Todd Davis note that the Beatles’ handlers went to great lengths to ensure that the singers were perceived as free of romantic entanglements, believing that fans would be more devoted if they saw the boys as available (101-102).
If the author's name does not appear in the signal phrase—or if there is no signal phrase—the author's last name must appear in parentheses with the page number.

According to one recently published article, “An examination of the Beatles’ interviews reveals that they were fascinated with their sales figures from the start” (Decker 194).

In their songwriting, Lennon and McCartney utilized phrases and images from both antiquated and contemporary advertisements. “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite” quotes an old circus poster, for example, while “Good Morning Good Morning” borrows a Kellogg’s cereal slogan (Northcutt 143).

If your Works Cited list includes more than one work by the same author, either mention the full title of the work to which you are referring in the signal phrase, or use a short form of the title in the parentheses.

Many studies of the Lennon-McCartney songbook buy into stereotypes of Paul as the “naïve lightweight” and John as the “tough-minded realist”; in such analyses, “McCartney is found wanting while Lennon gets high marks” (Kimsey, “Spinning” 210).

Use the abbreviation “qtd. in” when you need to indicate that you are quoting from someone else’s report of a source, a presentation, or a conversation.

Lennon claimed he based the narrative of “Norwegian Wood” on an extramarital affair he was having with journalist Maureen Cleave; contradicting McCartney’s assertion of co-authorship, he also declared, “It was my song completely” (qtd. in Spitz 585).

Many works found online or in databases lack page numbers; you can omit the page numbers in these cases. Provide information that will allow your readers to locate the correct source on your list of Works Cited. When you can, use the name of the author and/or the title under which you list the source. You can also cite paragraph or section numbers in parenthetical references to electronic sources.

As one music historian has noted in assessing Paul’s work as a solo artist, “McCartney’s later career is noteworthy for the purposeful way in which he demystified himself as a rock star in the wake of Beatlemania” (Johnson).

Harrison’s philanthropy continues posthumously: “The George Harrison Fund for UNICEF supports programs that provide lifesaving assistance to children caught in humanitarian emergencies” (“Harrison Fund” par. 2).
How to Prepare the Works Cited List

- Center the phrase “Works Cited” (not in quotation marks) at the top of the page.
- Double-space the Works Cited list.
- Alphabetize the Works Cited entries by the authors’ last names (or by the first key word in the title when no author is listed).

PRINT SOURCES

Book by One Author

Book by More Than One Author

An Edited Collection

A Work in an Anthology or Collection

Article from a Daily Newspaper

Article from a Weekly Magazine

Article from a Monthly Magazine

Article in a Scholarly Journal
ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Note that MLA no longer requires URLs in citations of electronic resources.

Article from a Database Accessed through a Subscription Service
Provide all of the following elements that are available: the author’s name; the title of the article (in quotation marks); print publication information; the name of the database (italicized); the medium consulted (Web); and the date of access.


Article in an Online Magazine
List the name of the article’s author, then the title of the article and the title of the magazine. After the title of the magazine, give the sponsor of the website, the date of publication, the medium (Web), and the date of access.


Article in an Online Journal
Cite an online journal article as you would a print journal article. If an online article does not have page numbers, use the abbreviation “n. pag.” End with the medium consulted (Web) and the date of access.


Work from a Website
Provide all of the following elements that are available: the author; the title of the page or document, in quotation marks; the name of the website, italicized; the name of the publisher or sponsor, if available; the date of publication or latest update (if not available use “n.d.”); the medium consulted (Web); and the date of access.


PRIMARY RESEARCH

Interview or Correspondence
Stark, Steven. Telephone interview. 12 February 2005.
Tompkins, Jane. Personal interview. 5 December 2001.