



COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
OF RHODE ISLAND

# The MLA Documentation System

with 2016 Updates

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# Documentation

Documentation explains where borrowed words, statistics, ideas, pictures, charts, music, and other items came from.



heard in a song



found on a website

**statistics**



said in a speech



written in a book



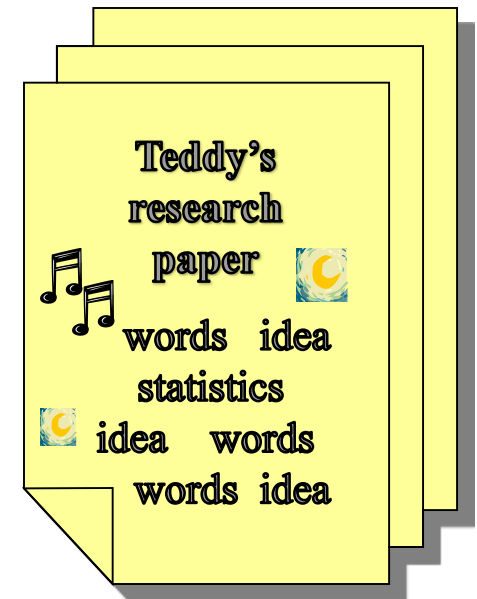
painted in a picture

**Teddy's  
research  
paper**

Source documentation  
is needed for  
borrowed ideas,  
images, statistics,  
and "words."

# Without documentation, readers and listeners will not know:

- Which words in the paper are Teddy's?
- Which ideas are Teddy's?
- Which words came from a book?
- Did the picture of the flower come from a website, a painting, or Teddy's camera?
- Where can someone find more information from the same source?
- Are the statistics from a recent source?
- Who sang the song? Who composed the song?
- Was the song heard on a CD, at a concert, or on a website?



# Quotations, Paraphrases, and Summaries

Source documentation is used while communicating borrowed words or ideas in quotations, paraphrases, and summaries.

## Quotations

**Include Source Information**

Borrowed words

Use quotation marks

## Paraphrases

**Include Source Information**

Borrowed ideas

Do not use quotation marks

## Summaries

**Include Source Information**

Borrowed, condensed ideas

Do not use quotation marks

# Documentation Systems

- A documentation system is used in research papers and other kinds of communication to describe the source(s) of borrowed information and words.

- Documentation systems include:

MLA

APA

Chicago

CSE

- The MLA System, from the Modern Language Association, is the documentation system for the arts and humanities fields.



# Components of the MLA System

For each borrowed word or idea, an **in-text citation** is placed in the paper.

The first word of the **citation** has to match the first word of a **Work(s) Cited entry**.

Writing is an important academic and career skill. An article discusses how “the quality of your writing can determine success or failure” (**Jacobs** 86).

## Work Cited

**Jacobs**, Paula. “Strong Writing Skills Essential for Success, Even in IT.” *InfoWorld*, vol. 20, no. 27, 1998, p. 86. *Academic Search Complete*, 0-search.ebscohost.com.helin.uri.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=818336&site=ehost-live.

# In-text Citations

An in-text citation can be formatted in two different ways:

with the author's **name** and the **page number** in parenthesis

An article discusses how “the quality of our writing can determine success or failure” (**Jacobs 86**).

with the author's **name** in a lead-in phrase and the **page number** in parenthesis

**Jacobs** discusses how “the quality of your writing can determine success or failure” (**86**).

# Clear Source Identification and Documentation

- To indicate a change from the writer of the research paper to one of the sources of information or words, a **lead-in phrase** is often used.
- Unless the author's words indicate otherwise, the **in-text parenthetical citation** shows readers the end of the source's ideas/words, as well as the page number.
- The words following a citation can show a continuation of the same viewpoint or a **change to a different viewpoint**.

According to the National Commission on Writing, writing is important. A survey shows that writing is a “threshold skill” needed to get hired and promoted at work (Natl. Commission on Writing 3). Also, this survey shows . . . .  
In addition to being important at work, writing is also important in . . . .



# What No Citation Means

Whenever a citation is not present, a reader will assume that the idea and the words are the research paper writer's.

Incorrect source documentation often results in plagiarism:

Writing is a threshold skill for both employment and promotion purposes.

Revision should include checking for places where additional source information is needed.

This revision has a citation documenting the source of borrowed ideas and words:

In a survey of 120 large American companies, writing was found to be a “threshold skill” for both employment and promotion” purposes (Natl. Commission on Writing 3).

# A Paragraph Citing Sources by Using the MLA System

Strong communication skills are important in today's professional careers. According to Jacobs, "Whether you are pitching a business case or justifying a budget, the quality of your writing can determine success or failure" (86). Police officers, for example, need to record information, write reports, and sometimes showcase their written documents in a courtroom. A single ineffective communication could result in a criminal being found innocent of a crime. In a survey of 120 large American companies, writing was found to be a "threshold skill' for both employment and promotion" purposes (Natl. Commission on Writing 3). People in all of today's careers need to be able to communicate effectively to interact appropriately with their colleagues, bosses, customers, and other people, as well as to communicate their knowledge and to showcase their accomplishments.



# Good Organization While Citing Sources

- The organization of a paper or speech should be focused on the writer's or the speaker's ideas.
- The **thesis** and **topic sentences** should convey the writer's or speaker's main ideas, rather than being **quotations from sources**.
- **Source material** is most often used to **support** a writer's or a speaker's ideas.

... Strong communication skills are important at work and in college.

When at work, an employee needs to be skillful in communication in order to successfully complete many tasks. For example, a person often has to write reports, send e-mails to colleagues, and speak with his/her boss. According to Jacobs, "[T]he quality of your writing can determine success or failure" (86).

Good communication is also important in college. . . .

# Correct Grammar When Using Source Material

Correct grammar, including correct sentence structures, is needed when using source material and citing sources.

Strong communication skills are important in today's professional careers. According to Jacobs, "Whether you are pitching a business case or justifying a budget, the quality of your writing can determine success or failure" (86).

If the use of a quotation results in unclear writing or grammatical errors, then revision of the lead-in phrase is needed, or the writer/speaker can use a paraphrase or a summary instead.

Jacobs states, "whether you are pitching a business case" (86).

**Revision**



Jacobs states that good writing can help when "pitching a business case" (86).

# Works Cited Pages

- The “**works**” that have been “**cited**” in the body of a paper or a speech are listed on a “**Works Cited**” page.
- The format of a Works Cited page includes:
  - Alphabetical order to organize the works
  - Hanging indents to format the second and later lines of each entry
  - Double spacing for most academic papers

# “Work” or “Works” Cited

- The singular word “**Work**” is used for a **Work Cited** page with only one entry.
- The plural word “**Works**” is used for a **Works Cited** page with more than one entry.
- If works have been looked at but not “cited” in the body of a paper, then a “**Works Consulted**” page can be done.

Work Cited

Works Cited

Works Consulted

# Core Elements for Works Cited

**Author** (or authors, company, organization).

**Title of Source.**

**Title of Container,**

Other Contributors,

Version,

Number,

Publisher,

Publication Date,

Location (page, DOI, and/or Web address).

Optional: date of access.

When a 2<sup>nd</sup> container is present:

**Title of 2<sup>nd</sup> Container,**

Other Contributors, Version, Number,

Publisher, Publication Date,

Location (page, DOI, and/or Web address).

Jacobs, Paula. "Strong Writing Skills

Essential for Success, Even in IT."

*InfoWorld*, vol. 20, no. 27, 1998,

p. 86. *Academic Search Complete*,

0-search.ebscohost.com.helin.

uri.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db

=a9h&AN=818336&site=ehost-

live. Accessed 18 May 2010.



# The Format of Titles

An italic font is used for the titles of independent items.

- Newspapers 
- Journals
- Books 
- Websites
- Databases 
- Films
- Paintings 
- Performances

Quotation marks are used for short works published as parts of longer works.

- Essays 
- Songs
- Stories
- Poems
- Webpages 
- Articles from websites, newspapers, and journals



# Commonly Used Abbreviations

ch. or chs.	chapter or chapters
DOI	digital object identifier
ed.	edition
et al.	and other authors
no.	number
p. or pp.	page number or page numbers
par. or pars.	paragraph or paragraphs
qtd. in	an indirect source quoted by a direct source
rev.	revised
UP	university press
vol.	volume

# A Works Cited Page Example

## Works Cited

Jacobs, Paula. "Strong Writing Skills Essential for Success, Even in IT."

*InfoWorld*, vol. 20, no. 27, 1998, p. 86. *Academic Search Complete*,

0-search.ebscohost.com.helin.uri.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=818336&site=ehost-live.

The National Commission on Writing. *Writing: A Ticket to Work. . . Or a Ticket*

*Out.* (Ellipsis in orig.), College Board, Sept. 2004,

www.collegeboard.com/prod\_downloads/writingcom/writing-ticket-to-work.pdf.



# More Information

The Writing Center at the Community College of Rhode Island has more online resources.



# Contact Information

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