

MLA Style

Electronic Sources

Frequently Asked Questions*

Q. I am using a source on the World Wide Web that has no page numbers. How do I cite it?

A. In parenthetical references in the text, works on the World Wide Web are cited just like printed works. For any type of source, you must include information in your text that directs readers to the correct entry in the works cited list (see the *MLA Handbook*, sec. 5.2). Web documents generally do not have fixed page numbers or any kind of section numbering. If your source lacks numbering, you have to omit numbers from your parenthetical reference.

If your source includes fixed page numbers or section numbering (such as numbering of paragraphs), cite the relevant numbers. Give the appropriate abbreviation before the numbers: “(Moulthrop, pars. 19-20).” (*Pars.* is the abbreviation for *paragraphs*. Common abbreviations are listed in the *MLA Handbook*, sec. 6.4.) For a document on the web, the page numbers of a printout should normally not be cited, because the pagination may vary in different printouts.

Q. Why does the MLA recommend putting angle brackets around URLs in the works cited list?

A. When special symbols are placed before and after a URL (Internet address), readers are always certain about where it begins and ends. A URL without such markers could be misread, for several reasons. URLs may contain letters, numbers, and other marks used in documentation, including periods. A long URL may have to be divided at the end of the line in your text and continued on a new line, but no hyphen or other mark of division should be inserted at the break. Finally, in a works cited list a URL is usually directly followed by the entry’s final period, which is not part of the URL.

Angle brackets have been widely used to surround URLs and are recognized for this purpose by the Internet Engineering Task Force, a standard body for the Web.

- Q.** My word processor omits angle brackets and turns URLs into links in my works cited list. Is that ok?
- A.** Some recent versions of word processors automatically turn network and e-mail addresses into hyperlinks, regardless of the document's intended use. Hyperlinks may be useful for documents that are read on-screen. When a document is printed, however, the linking has no purpose. A research paper or manuscript that will be printed should be free of the irrelevant effects of hyperlinks.

In *Word 97* and *Word 2000* you can turn off automatic hyperlinking by going to the menu "Tools" and choosing "Autocorrect." Then click on the tab "Autoformat as You Type," and remove the checkmark next to "Internet and network paths with hyperlinks." Alternatively, you can leave this function on but remove hyperlinking from each URL individually, by clicking with the right mouse button on the URL to bring up a shortcut menu. From this menu in *Word 97*, choose "Hyperlink" and then "Edit Hyperlink," and click on the button "Remove Link"; in *Word 2000*, choose "Hyperlink" and then "Remove Hyperlink." In *Word 98* for the Macintosh, turn off automatic hyperlinking as described above. To remove hyperlinking from an individual URL in *Word 98*, highlight the URL, choose "Hyperlink" from the menu "Insert," and click on the button "Remove Link."

*from www.mla.org