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MLA: Cite Like the Devil

ANTONIO: Mark you this, Bassanio,
The devil can cite. . . . (Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*).

Darkness Visible: Citation as a Black Art

Even if the Modern Language Association is not a satanic cult, MLA citation can seem devilishly tricky. But keep in mind that citation serves angelic ends: acknowledgement of the sources which have informed your work and sufficient information to find them.

A citation style attempts to say “My name is legion” in a single voice: personal letters and legal cases, journal articles and online books, television broadcasts and music downloads—all must adhere to a uniform code. You may be forgiven if you find the rules infernally fussy, but remember that Hell too is a bulwark against chaos.

Devil in the Details

For complete citation guidelines see the 2009 7th edition of the *MLA Handbook*.

Confession of a Justified Sinner:

I have single-spaced this guide for compactness. Remember the MLA requires
Works Cited lists to be entirely double-spaced.

Web and Multimedia Items

Web Sources:

(For print sources—books and articles—posted on the Web,
see my MLA guides for books or articles)

“What the Hell is Satanic Ritual Abuse?” *About.com: Mental Health*. About.com., 24 May 2006. Web. 12 Jan. 2009.

with optional URL:

“What the Hell is Satanic Ritual Abuse?” *About.com: Mental Health*. About.com., 24 May 2006. Web. 12 Jan. 2009. <<http://mentalhealth.about.com/cs/abuse/a/satan.htm>>.

“Satan.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 2 Jan. 2009. Web. 12 Jan. 2009.

Meade, George G. “Eavesdropping on Hell.” *Historical Publications*. National Security Agency/Central Security Service, 2005. Web. 12 Jan. 2009.

Kvanvig, Jonathan. "Heaven and Hell." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Stanford U., 6 Oct. 2008. Web. 12 Jan. 2009.

Caesar of Heisterbach. "Two Heretics Worked Miracles by the Aid of the Devil." *Internet Medieval Sourcebook*. Ed. Paul Halsall. History Dept., Fordham U., July 1997. Web. 12 Jan. 2009.

- The basic information for an MLA Web citation--where there is not a published print version—is (1) the name of the author/creator. If missing, begin with-- (2) the name of the specific item cited (usually in quotation marks, unless it is the name of the entire site). (3) The name of the overall Web site (in italics). (4) The publisher or sponsor of the site (followed by a comma). (5) The date of publication on the Web (preferably the most recent update if there is one). (6) The medium of publication—Web. And finally (7) the date you accessed it. Including a Web address or URL (8) is optional but no longer recommended by the MLA, so check with your instructor for his or her preference. If included, the URL is the final element, surrounded by angle brackets < >. (And remember: only divide a URL between lines of your citation **after** a slash /.)
- There are few rules governing the content of Web sites, so be prepared to hunt for the basic information listed above. Sometimes, for instance, finding the overall name of a site or the publisher/sponsor will require you to follow links back to a home page or to subtract elements from the URL (work from the right, removing file names between slashes).
- If there is no individual author or implied group author, begin with the title.
- If the title refers to a specific item on the site, put it in quotation marks and follow it with the name of the overall site in italics. If the only name is the page/site name, list only that—in italics.
- The name of the site and the sponsor of the site may be the same, but be sure to check for any variation. Note above, for example, that *Wikipedia* is a subsidiary of the less familiar Wikimedia Foundation. If there is no publisher, put N. p.
- For the date of publication give the date an item was posted or the most recent update—if that is available. Give as much date information as you can, whether a day, month, and year, a month and year, or just a year. If there is no date information put n.d.
- Some Web sites have editors, and this information may be included in your citation after the name of the site—see the last example above.

Films, Television Shows:

***Devils*. Dir. Ken Russell. Perf. Vanessa Redgrave, Oliver Reed. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1971. Film.**

"Heaven and Hell." *Supernatural*. Dir. J. Miller Tobin. WB Television Network. 20 Nov. 2008. Television.

- For a film, a television series/mini-series, or a one-episode television program, begin with the title in italics, but for a single episode of a television series, begin with the episode title—in quotation marks—followed by the series title.

- The people you list after a film or television show will depend in part on whether your discussion focuses on the whole production or on a writer, director, producer, or performer. For films, the director is usually cited, and sometimes lead performers—see above. But for some films the writer might be emphasized, and for a television series it might be the “creator”—see examples following.
- For films, the studio should be given, the year of release, and the medium—Film. For television shows the network and/or station responsible should be given, a broadcast date, and the medium—Television.

DVDs:

***Exorcist.* By William Peter Blatty. Dir. William Friedkin. 1973. Warner Home Video, 2000. DVD.**

***Buffy the Vampire Slayer: The Complete Fifth Season.* Created by Joss Whedon. WB Television Network, 2003. DVD.**

- For films and television viewed on DVD, begin with the title and appropriate credits—director, writer, performer, producer, etc. It may be helpful to follow this with the original release or broadcast date—especially if a number of years have elapsed before the DVD was issued—see *Exorcist* above. Then give the name of the company producing the DVD, the date of its release, and the medium—DVD.

Video from Database:

***Aeschylus. Eumenides.* Dir. Peter Hall. Oresteia Co., National Theatre of Great Britain. 1983. Theatre in Video. Web. 13 Jan. 2009.**

- Videos from databases use basic Web citation, though in this case the video of a filmed stage production will include information appropriate to a cited performance.

Video from Web:

“Devil Pitches Church.” Narr. Jeanne Moos. CNN.com. Cable News Network, 4 Dec. 2008. Web. 13 Jan. 2009. <<http://www.cnn.com/video/#/video/us/2008/12/04/moos.devil.pitches.church.cnn?iref=videosearch>>.

“Devil Sheep.” Dir. sleepingbad. YouTube. YouTube, 15 May 2007. Web. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NMSHvQa4SI0>>.

- Web video clips will usually begin with the title, in quotation marks (if there is no title, you may create a brief descriptive name which **must** be enclosed in brackets [] to indicate it is your title). As with films and tv shows, the title is followed by the name of creators and/or performers of the clip--depending on which seems most relevant to your discussion. In the first example above, it’s the reporter who narrates the clip (Narr.) who seems most relevant, while in the second it’s the creator or director of the clip

(“Dir.” or “Created by”). Follow this with the name of the Web site and any publisher/sponsor of the site, followed by a comma and the date the video was posted to the Web. End with the medium--Web--and the date of your viewing.

- Locating individual video files on the Web can be sufficiently tricky to justify including the optional URL to provide your readers another means of retrieval.

CDs and LPs:

Gounod, Charles. *Faust*. Orchestra of the Vienna Festival. Cond. Gianfranco Rivoli. VAI Audio, 1997. CD.

or

Rivoli, Gianfranco, Cond. *Faust*. Rec. 1963. By Charles Gounod. Libretto by Jules Barbier and Michel Carre. Orchestra of the Vienna Festival. VAI Audio, 1997. CD.

- Note the two very different citations for the same CD of this opera. Normally the entry element for a musical composition will be the composer, but this may vary according to whether your discussion of the CD focuses on the work itself, or the conductor, or a performer, etc.
- Not only will the entry element be determined by the use you make of the recording, but also the additional contributors you single out after the title. The first example above uses the most common approach for an opera/orchestral work: the name of the performing group and its conductor. But the second version implies that the discussion of the work focuses on the Conductor and also engages with the libretto. And note that if the original date of the recording seems significant in relation to the date the CD was produced, you may include that information after the title.

Gounod, Charles. *Faust*. Strasbourg Philharmonic Orchestra. Cond. Alain Lombard. RCA, 1977. LP.

- Standard media designations for sound recordings include Audiocassette, Audiotape, CD, and, as above, LP.

Audio Files from a Database:

Wagner, Richard. “A Faust Overture.” *Overtures*. Malaga Philharmonic Orchestra. Cond. Alexander Rahbari. Naxos, n.d. *Naxos Music Library*. Web. 13 Jan. 2009.

- The IC Library subscribes to the *Naxos Music Library* database, and above is an example of a citation for a particular track from one of the albums available there. Note that the *Naxos Music Library* often does not supply a date for recordings in its database, which is indicated with n.d. Standard information is followed by the name of the database—in italics—the medium—Web—and the date of access.

Audio Files from the Web:

“Devil’s Dream.” *American Memory*. Library of Congress, 30 Jan. 1996. Web. 13 Jan. 2009. <<http://memory.loc.gov/afc/afccmns/08/086005.mp3>>

Murrow, Edward R. “Orchestrated Hell.” Rec. 3 Dec. 1943. *American Rhetoric*. Web. 13 Jan. 2009. <<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/mp3clips/speeches/edwardrmurroworchestratedhell.mp3>>.

- In citing audio files from the Web, use the basic Web citation format (though in the case of music recordings, consult the examples under CDs and LPs above to see the kind of information typically included). In the first example above, the folk tune “Devil’s Dream” comes from the Library of Congress’s *American Memory* online collection. No details about the recording are provided beyond a “created/published” date. In the second example the speaker is identified, as well as the original date of the recording.
- Locating individual audio files on the Web can be sufficiently tricky to justify including the optional URL, which will also indicate by a file extension such as mp3 that the item is an audio file.
- Note that the second example above illustrates the MLA rule of dividing a URL **only** after a slash, even if that results in blank space at the end of the first line.