Introduction to MLA Containers

What is a Container?

Containers are generally the item that holds a source. Here are examples with the container underlined.

- Articles are in journals
- Songs are on albums
- Posts are on blogs
- A picture in a book

Containers were introduced in the 8th edition of MLA style and can often be found as the third item in an MLA citation.

Author’s Last name, First name. “Title of Source.” Title of Container, other contributors, Version, Numbers, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

Citing With One Container

Container titles are placed in italics, directly following the title of the source.

Here is an example of a citation with a container. This is for a specific chapter in a book. The book is the container that holds the source (the chapter).

Two or More Containers

There are times when a source has more than one container. Here are examples of sources with two containers. Each container is underlined.

- An article, in a journal, found on a database
- A song, on an album, from a music streaming service
- An episode, in a TV series, on an entertainment site

When a source has more than one container, the additional container’s information is at the end of the citation.

While this citation may seem long, not all elements of the source need to be included. Only include the information that will help readers find the exact source themselves.

Author’s Last name, First name. “Title of Source.” Title of Container, other contributors, version, numbers, publisher, publication date, location. Title of Second Container, other contributors, version, numbers, publisher, publication date, location.

Here is an example of the same chapter, from the first citation example, in the Peter Pan book, but this version was found on the website, Project Gutenberg.

No Container

Not every source has a container! Plenty of sources can be cited on their own.

When citing a source without a container, use the following format.

Author’s Last name, First name. Title of Source. Other contributors, Version, Numbers, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

Here is an example of a citation for the entire Peter Pan book, found in print.

Peter Pan
Book, no container