

CHANGES IN MLA DOCUMENTATION IN THE SIXTH EDITION:

The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* came out with a new *sixth* edition in July of 2003. That means poor students who had already learned MLA format from the old fifth edition must make a few minor adjustments in what they know. The list below gives revisions or changes that involve citing sources and writing style. The section numbers refer to the sixth edition rather than the fifth.

1.4.6d, 5.9.1, and 5.9.7. These sections explain what to do when the URL of a Web document is not evident or is too long to list practically in a paper.

3.5.6. The rule of abbreviating spans of years has been expanded (but not substantially changed).

3.5.7 Inclusive roman numerals are no longer abbreviated. Such spans are now written out in full.

3.7.5 In the fifth edition of the *MLA Handbook*, writers placed square brackets [like this] around ellipses [. . .] indicating omitted material. In the sixth edition of the *MLA Handbook*, the guidelines have returned to the older fourth edition rules, i.e., no square brackets appear around ellipses unless clarity requires it.

5.8.14 References to familiar historical documents (like the United States Constitution) are now to be documented entirely with parenthetical citations in the text; they do not need an entry in the "works cited" page. However, legislative bills and acts still should have entries in the "works cited" page.

5.8.14 Entries for law cases now include the case number instead of data about the law report.

5.9.2 A new format for the Web pages of academic courses and departments is now available.

5.9.7 A new section discusses what to do when an online database supplies only the starting page number of an article's original print version.

6.2-6.4.4 The new edition eliminates the earlier suggestion that page numbers may be omitted in parenthetical citations for entries in encyclopedias and other alphabetically arranged works. It also offers a solution for those rare cases when two or more anonymous works have the same title and a text citation giving the title would not be sufficient for a reader to distinguish them.

Note that many of the old abbreviations used in earlier editions of *MLA* for cities (NY, NJ, etc.) have now vanished. In the sixth edition, these words are written out in full. The abbreviation "eds." for plural editors has vanished. Now "Ed." is used for both a single editor and plural editors in *MLA* format.