

MLA Documentation: DOIs, permalinks, and URLs

This information is adapted from the MLA Handbook, 9th ed., 5.84–5.99: Location Element in Works Cited.

In an MLA documentation works cited entry, the final component is the “**location element**.” For works published or accessed in print, it is usually the inclusive page numbers. **For works accessed online**, it might be a **DOI** (digital object identifier), a **permalink**, or a **URL** (uniform resource locator).

- **DOI:** a unique alphanumeric string that identifies content and provides a persistent link to its location on the internet.
- **Permalink:** a persistent URL that will return the user to the same article every time (*also called a stable or permanent URL*). **It is NOT** the URL from your search in a library database.
- **URL:** specifies the location of digital information on the internet and can be found in the address bar of your internet browser.

When to use and how to format in works cited entries for online sources

DOI? Use the DOI	• Use the DOI even if you accessed the source another way. • The preferred format of the DOI has changed over time. Although older works use previous formats, standardize all DOIs into the current preferred format for all entries on your list. • Format as follows (“xxxxx” refers to the DOI number): https://doi.org/xxxxx • It is acceptable to use either hyperlinks display (e.g., blue font, underlined) or plain text that is not underlined.
NO DOI? Use the permalink	• Copy permalinks directly from the source.
NO permalink? Use the URL	• Omit the protocol (http:// or https://) unless you want to hyperlink the URL. • Omit the query string at the end, if there is one. • If a URL is more than three full lines on your page or is longer than the rest of the entry, truncate it. <i>Always include at least the host (the part before and including the domain name, e.g., skagit.edu).</i> • Add the date you accessed the material, e.g., Accessed 23 April 2025. This is not required but highly recommended if there is a change the page could change or do not have an evident copyright date.

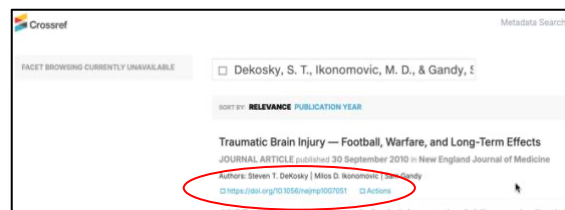
DO:	• copy and paste the DOI, permalink, or URL from your web browser directly into the works cited entry to avoid transcription errors. (<i>Be sure to change font and size to match.</i>) • add a period after the DOI, permalink, or URL. • include the final forward slash at the end, if there is one. (Deleting it sometimes creates access issues.) • It is acceptable to use either hyperlinks display (e.g., blue font, underlined) or plain text that is not underlined.
DO NOT:	• change the capitalization or punctuation of the DOI or URL. • allow line breaks or hyphens to be added to the DOI or URL. It is acceptable if your word-processing program automatically adds a break or moves the hyperlink to its own line, but turn off the automatic hyphen function.

How to find DOIs, permalinks, and URLs

DOIs: Most (but not all) current published works have a DOI number. It may or may not be readily located with your source.

- In **library databases**, the “Cite” function that provides a draft reference entry will include the DOI.
- In a **source found in an online index** (e.g., NIH/PubMed):
 - the DOI might be found near the top of the article with the author and title
 - or
 - there may be a “Cite” link (or  icon) on one side or the other of the page.

What to do if you don’t see a DOI: If you don’t see a DOI and/or one wasn’t included in a draft entry you were provided, **search for it at crossref.org**. Type in as much information as you have (e.g., authors, title, journal). If there is a DOI, crossref will find it for you.



Permalinks: Look for a “share” or “cite this” button to see if a source includes a permalink.

URLs: Copy a URL directly from the browser.

For more support, see the SVCWC Writing Guides “Works cited entries.”