

MLA Container Guide (MLA 9th Edition)

One-Page Reference for Understanding Containers in MLA Citations

What Is a Container in MLA?

A container is the larger source that holds the work you are citing. Examples include journals, websites, databases, books, or streaming platforms.

Why Containers Matter

- Many sources are part of larger works
- Containers help readers locate your source
- MLA allows one or two containers in a citation

Container 1 (Primary Container)

The source you are directly using.

Examples: Journal title, Website name, Book title, Streaming service

Example:

Johnson, Emily. "Renewable Energy Trends." *Energy Journal*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2023, pp. 45–60.

Container 2 (Secondary Container)

Used when the source is accessed through another platform, such as a database or website.

Examples: JSTOR, ProQuest, Google Books, Netflix

Example:

Smith, John. "Climate Policy Changes." *Environmental Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2022, pp. 22–40. JSTOR, www.jstor.org.

MLA Container Rules (Quick Checklist)

- Italicize container titles
- Separate elements with commas
- End containers with periods
- URLs come at the end of the container

Tip: If your source stands alone (e.g., a book), you usually only have one container.