

## MLA Formatting and Style Guide

### General Format

MLA style specifies guidelines for formatting manuscripts and using the English language in writing. MLA style also provides writers with a system for referencing their sources through parenthetical citation in their essays and Works Cited pages.

Writers who properly use MLA also build their credibility by demonstrating accountability to their source material. Most importantly, the use of MLA style can protect writers from accusations of plagiarism, which is the purposeful or accidental uncredited use of source material by other writers.

If you are asked to use MLA format, be sure to consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th edition). Publishing scholars and graduate students should also consult the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* (3rd edition). The *MLA Handbook* is available in most writing centers and reference libraries; it is also widely available in bookstores, libraries, and at the MLA web site. See the Additional Resources section of this handout for a list of helpful books and sites about using MLA style.

### Paper Format

The preparation of papers and manuscripts in MLA style is covered in chapter four of the *MLA Handbook*, and chapter four of the *MLA Style Manual*. Below are some basic guidelines for formatting a paper in *MLA style*.

### General Guidelines

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use a legible font (e.g. Times New Roman). Whatever font you choose, MLA recommends that the regular and italics type styles contrast enough that they are recognizable one from another. The font size should be 12 pt.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks (unless otherwise instructed by your instructor).
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. MLA recommends that you use the Tab key as opposed to pushing the Space Bar five times.
- Create a header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. (Note: Your instructor may ask that you omit the number on your first page. Always follow your instructor's guidelines.)
- Use italics throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis.
- If you have any endnotes, include them on a separate page before your Works Cited page. Entitle the section Notes (centered, unformatted).

### Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Do not make a title page for your paper unless specifically requested.
- In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Again, be sure to use double-spaced text.
- Double space again and center the title. Do not underline, italicize, or place your title in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case (standard capitalization), not in all capital letters.
- Use quotation marks and/or italics when referring to other works in your title, just as you would in your text: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as *Morality Play*; *Human Weariness* in "After Apple Picking"
- Double space between the title and the first line of the text.

- Create a header in the upper right-hand corner that includes your last name, followed by a space with a page number; number all pages consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. (Note: Your instructor or other readers may ask that you omit last name/page number header on your first page. Always follow instructor guidelines.)

Here is a sample of the first page of a paper in MLA style:



## MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics

### Basic In-Text Citation Rules

In MLA style, referring to the works of others in your text is done by using what is known as parenthetical citation. This method involves placing relevant source information in parentheses after a quote or a paraphrase.

### General Guidelines

- The source information required in a parenthetical citation depends (1.) upon the source medium (e.g. Print, Web, DVD) and (2.) upon the source's entry on the Works Cited (bibliography) page.
- Any source information that you provide in-text must correspond to the source information on the Works Cited page. More specifically, whatever signal word or

phrase you provide to your readers in the text, must be the first thing that appears on the left-hand margin of the corresponding entry in the Works Cited List.

### In-Text Citations: Author-Page Style

MLA format follows the author-page method of in-text citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation or paraphrase is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear on your Works Cited page. The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase, but the page number(s) should always appear in the parentheses, not in the text of your sentence. For example:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263). Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263). Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

The both citations in the examples above, (263) and (Wordsworth 263), tell readers that the information in the sentence can be located on page 263 of a work by an author named Wordsworth. If readers want more information about this source, they can turn to the Works Cited page, where, under the name of Wordsworth, they would find the following information:

Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads*. London: Oxford U.P., 1967. Print.

### Author-Page Citation for Classic and Literary Works with Multiple Editions

Page numbers are always required, but additional citation information can help literary scholars, who may have a different edition of a classic work like Marx and Engels's *The Communist Manifesto*. In such cases, give the page number of your edition (making sure the edition is listed in your Works Cited page, of course) followed by a semicolon, and then the appropriate abbreviations for volume (vol.), book (bk.), part (pt.), chapter (ch.), section (sec.), or paragraph (par.). For example:

Marx and Engels described human history as marked by class struggles (79; ch. 1).

### Citing Authors with Same Last Names

Sometimes more information is necessary to identify the source from which a quotation is taken. For instance, if two or more authors have the same last name, provide both authors' first initials (or even the authors' full name if different authors share initials) in your citation. For example:

Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 12), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

### Citing a Work by Multiple Authors

For a source with three or fewer authors, list the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation:

Smith, Yang, and Moore argue that tougher gun control is not needed in the United States (76).

The authors state "Tighter gun control in the United States erodes Second Amendment rights" (Smith, Yang, and Moore 76).

For a source with more than three authors, use the work's bibliographic information as a guide for your citation. Provide the first author's last name followed by et al. or list all the last names.

Jones et al. counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (4).

Or

Legal experts counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (Jones et al. 4).

Or

Jones, Driscoll, Ackerson, and Bell counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (4).

### **Citing Multiple Works by the Same Author**

If you cite more than one work by a particular author, include a shortened title for the particular work from which you are quoting to distinguish it from the others.

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children ("Too Soon" 38), though he has acknowledged elsewhere that early exposure to computer games does lead to better small motor skill development in a child's second and third year ("Hand-Eye Development" 17).

Additionally, if the author's name is not mentioned in the sentence, you would format your citation with the author's name followed by a comma, followed by a shortened title of the work, followed, when appropriate, by page numbers:

Visual studies, because it is such a new discipline, may be "too easy"

(Elkins, "Visual Studies" 63).

### **Citing Non-Print or Sources from the Internet**

With more and more scholarly work being posted on the Internet, you may have to cite research you have completed in virtual environments. While many sources on the Internet should not be used for scholarly work (reference the OWL's [Evaluating Sources of Information](#) resource), some Web sources are perfectly acceptable for research. When creating in-text citations for electronic, film, or Internet sources, remember that your citation must reference the source in your Works Cited.

Sometimes writers are confused with how to craft parenthetical citations for electronic sources because of the absence of page numbers, but often, these sorts of entries do not require any sort of parenthetical citation at all. For electronic and Internet sources, follow the following guidelines:

- Include in the text the first item that appears in the Work Cited entry that corresponds to the citation (e.g. author name, article name, website name, film name).
- You do not need to give paragraph numbers or page numbers based on your Web browser's print preview function.
- Unless you must list the website name in the signal phrase in order to get the reader to the appropriate entry, do not include URLs in-text. Only provide partial URLs such as when the name of the site includes, for example, a domain name, like *CNN.com* or *Forbes.com* as opposed to writing out <http://www.cnn.com> or <http://www.forbes.com>.

## When a Citation Is Not Needed

Common sense and ethics should determine your need for documenting sources. You do not need to give sources for familiar proverbs, well-known quotations or common knowledge. Remember, this is a rhetorical choice, based on audience. If you're writing for an expert audience of a scholarly journal, for example, they'll have different expectations of what constitutes common knowledge.

## MLA Works Cited Page: Basic Format – [Web site help – www.easybib.com](http://www.easybib.com)

According to MLA style, you must have a Works Cited page at the end of your research paper. All entries in the Works Cited page must correspond to the works cited in your main text.

### Basic Rules

- Begin your Works Cited page on a separate page at the end of your research paper. It should have the same one-inch margins and last name, page number header as the rest of your paper.
- Label the page Works Cited (do not italicize the words Works Cited or put them in quotation marks) and center the words Works Cited at the top of the page.
- Double space all citations, but do not skip spaces between entries.
- Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations five spaces so that you create a hanging indent.
- List page numbers of sources efficiently, when needed. If you refer to a journal article that appeared on pages 225 through 250, list the page numbers on your Works Cited page as 225-50.

### Additional Basic Rules New to MLA 2009

- For every entry, you must determine the Medium of Publication. Most entries will likely be listed as Print or Web sources, but other possibilities may include Film, CD-ROM, or DVD.
- *Writers are no longer required to provide URLs for Web entries.* However, if your instructor or publisher insists on them, include them in angle brackets after the entry and end with a period. For long URLs, break lines only at slashes.
- If you're citing an article or a publication that was originally issued in print form but that you retrieved from an online database, you should type the online database name in italics. You do not need to provide subscription information in addition to the database name.

### Capitalization and Punctuation

- Capitalize each word in the titles of articles, books, etc, but do not capitalize articles, short prepositions, or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title or subtitle: *Gone with the Wind, The Art of War, There Is Nothing Left to Lose.*
- **New to MLA 2009:** Use italics (instead of underlining) for titles of larger works (books, magazines) and quotation marks for titles of shorter works (poems, articles)

## MLA Works Cited Page: Books

### Basic Format

The first-give author's name or a book with a single author's name appears in last name, first name format. The basic form for a book citation is:

Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of  
Publication. Medium of Publication.

### Poem or Short Story Examples:

Burns, Robert. "Red, Red Rose." *100 Best-Loved Poems*. Ed. Philip Smith. New York:  
Dover, 1995. 26. Print.

## *MLA Works Cited: Electronic Sources (Web Publications)*

### **Important Note on the Use of URLs in MLA**

MLA no longer requires the use of URLs in MLA citations. Because Web addresses are not static (i.e. they change often) and because documents sometimes appear in multiple places on the Web (e.g. on multiple databases), MLA explains that most readers can find electronic sources via title or author searches in Internet Search Engines.

*For instructors or editors that still wish to require the use of URLs, MLA suggests that the URL appear in angle brackets after the date of access. Break URLs only after slashes.*

Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher. *The Internet Classics Archive*. Web Atomic and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 13 Sept. 2007. Web. 4 Nov. 2008.

### **Citing an Entire Web Site**

It is necessary to list your date of access because web postings are often updated, and information available on one date may no longer be available later. Be sure to include the complete address for the site.

Remember to use *n.p.* if no publisher name is available and *n.d.* if no publishing date is given. Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). *Name of Site*. Version number. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available). Medium of publication. Date of access.

### **A Page on a Web Site**

For an individual page on a Web site, list the author or alias if known, followed by the information covered above for entire Web sites. Remember to use *n.p.* if no publisher name is available and *n.d.* if no publishing date is given.

"How to Make Vegetarian Chili." *eHow.com*. eHow, n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.

## *MLA Works Cited: Other Common Sources*

### **An Interview**

Interviews typically fall into two categories: print or broadcast published and unpublished (personal) interviews, although interviews may also appear in other, similar formats such as in email format or as a Web document.

#### **Personal Interviews**

Personal interviews refer to those interviews that you conduct yourself. List the interview by the name of the interviewee. Include the descriptor Personal interview and the date of the interview.

Purdue, Pete. Personal interview. 1 Dec. 2000.

## MLA Sample Works Cited Page:

This handout provides an example of a Works Cited page in MLA 2009 format.

### Works Cited

- "Blueprint Lays Out Clear Path for Climate Action." Environmental Defense Fund.  
*Environmental Defense Fund*, 8 May 2007. Web. 24 May 2009.
- Clinton, Bill. Interview by Andrew C. Revkin. "Clinton on Climate Change." *New York Times*. New York Times, May 2007. Web. 25 May 2009.
- Dean, Cornelia. "Executive on a Mission: Saving the Planet." *New York Times*. New York Times, 22 May 2007. Web. 25 May 2009.
- Ebert, Roger. "An Inconvenient Truth." Rev. of *An Inconvenient Truth*, dir. Davis Guggenheim. *Rogerebert.com*. Sun-Times News Group, 2 June 2006. Web. 24 May 2009.
- GlobalWarming.org*. Cooler Heads Coalition, 2007. Web. 24 May 2009.
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- An Inconvenient Truth*. Dir. Davis Guggenheim. Perf. Al Gore, Billy West. Paramount, 2006. DVD.
- Leroux, Marcel. *Global Warming: Myth Or Reality?: The Erring Ways of Climatology*. New York: Springer, 2005. Print.
- Milken, Michael, Gary Becker, Myron Scholes, and Daniel Kahneman. "On Global Warming and Financial Imbalances." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 23.4 (2006): 63. Print
- Nordhaus, William D. "After Kyoto: Alternative Mechanisms to Control Global Warming." *American Economic Review* 96.2 (2006): 31-34. Print.
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- Shulte, Bret. "Putting a Price on Pollution." *Usnews.com*. *US News & World Rept.*, 6 May 2007. Web. 24 May 2009.
- Uzawa, Hirofumi. *Economic Theory and Global Warming*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.