

ABBREVIATED MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (MLA) STYLE GUIDE (UPDATED 10/16)

MLA (or Modern Language Association) style is a particular way of formatting a research paper as well as a particular way of citing sources. MLA is an “author page number” system which is most commonly used in the liberal arts and humanities. While this guide will provide some general tips for citing sources and offer a brief sample of some frequently used citations, it is not intended to be inclusive nor should it stand in for a good handbook or instruction in a particular course. For more advanced help, please consult *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th edition) or one’s instructor.

Both the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* and the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing* were updated the summer of 2009. These changes are intended to streamline how sources are cited significantly. According to the MLA, “In the past, listing the medium of publication in the Works Cited list was required only for works in media other than print (e.g., publications on CD-ROM, articles in online databases). . . .” What that means is that in the past only non-print media were differentiated because print texts were considered the default medium. However, the MLA “ . . . no longer recognizes a default medium and instead calls for listing the medium of publication in every entry in the list of Works Cited.” This means that all media are labeled (e.g., Print, Web, Film, etc.)

In addition, this new edition introduces simplified guidelines for citing works on the Web. The biggest change is that the MLA no longer recommends the inclusion of URLs in the Works Cited list entries for Web publications or publications obtained through the Web, such as a database. Instead, the MLA calls for the inclusion of both volume and issue numbers in listings for journal articles in the list of Works Cited.

The new edition also introduces revised guidelines for preparing a printed paper. One major change is that students will use italics, not underlining, for text that would be italicized in publication.

MLA: FORMATTING RESEARCH PAPERS

When using MLA style, margins are one inch all the way around and the document is double-spaced (including notes, quotations, and Works Cited page), but there are no extra spaces after a return. In addition, paragraphs are indented ½ inch. The font one uses should be readable. The most common is Times New Roman and the standard size font is 12 points. The text on the right-hand side is not justified. There is one space after a period or other end-stop punctuation, unless an instructor prefers two.

Papers written in MLA style **DO NOT** have a cover page. On the first page, only, in the left-hand corner, at the top of the page (the first line of text, approximately an inch from the edge of the page), one types his/her name first; the second line should have the instructor’s name. The third line is the course name (typically the course prefix and number—IDS 1600), and the fourth line is the date the paper turned in. (HINT: If multiple drafts are written, date each draft with the different due date; this will help to keep track of the various drafts.) On the fifth line, centered, the title appears. There are no extra spaces before or after this line. The words in the title have initial caps. The title is not bolded or underlined. Also, one does not use italics or quote marks unless there is a title within the title. For example:

Transforming the Role of the Instructor: “Can the Subaltern Speak?”

(The portion of the title “Can the Subaltern Speak” is the title of a published article, so the quote marks need to surround it as shown.)

OR

Relinquishing Parental Control of Female Children in Shakespeare’s *King Lear* and *The Tempest*
(The portion of the title mentioning the two play titles are italicized since they are titles.)

The text of the paper then begins on the next line. Simply indent ½ inch and begin.

Papers written in MLA style also have a header. That header should appear up in the upper right header of the document (approximately ½ from the edge of the page), and the header consists of one’s last name and the page number. For example:

Anderson 1

The Works Cited page is part of the paper, so it is numbered accordingly. The words “Works Cited” appear at the top of the page and are initial capitalized and centered. Since the document is double-spaced, there are no additional spaces between the words and the first source. The sources within the Works Cited are also double-spaced with no additional spaces between each space. Each source should have hanging indent.

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Typically, print, in-text citations contain the author’s (or authors’) last name(s) and the page number from the reference in parentheses and come directly after quoted or paraphrased material. Unless the end punctuation (i.e. question mark or exclamation point) belongs with the quote, always put the period after the parenthetical citation.

Example: Some like to think that poverty occurs because the poor are not working hard enough; however, “In the first quarter of 2000, the poorest 10 percent of workers were earning only 91 percent of what they earned in the distant era of Watergate and disco music” (Ehrenreich 203).

If one uses the author’s or authors’ name(s) in the attribution or lead in, then one does not need to include the author’s name or authors’ names in the parenthesis.

Example: According to Ehrenreich, the problem with poverty is not that the poor are not working hard enough, but rather, “In the first quarter of 2000, the poorest 10 percent of workers were earning only 91 percent of what they earned in the distant era of Watergate and disco music” (203).

If the article that one is quoting is obtained on-line through a database or the article only appears on-line, and the source is not downloadable as a PDF (i.e., the words from the article are reproduced, but one does not have page numbers that correspond to an original hardcopy of the text), one does not have stable page numbers, and thus, one cannot cite a page number. If there are paragraph numbers or section numbers, they may be used. However, if there is no

numbering, one may not use numbers, though one may indicate where the quote is found (In the last third of the article, Smith indicates, “Insert quote.”) The thinking here is that one can find where the quote is within the text by searching for keywords.

Example: Susan J. Douglas notes at the end of her article, “If there were real rats and snakes and downpours, if the ordeal was really ‘real,’ then the people—the masks they use to survive in civilization stripped off to reveal an essential, core inner self—were ‘real’ too. In this televisual version of sociobiology, women are once again defined by and reduced to their essential selves--too nurturing, too emotional, too untrustworthy, too jealous and too politically naive to become true leaders and winners.”

OR

Example: Labor activists believe that, “When a U.S. factory relocates to Mexico or China, helping people in those countries know their human value and rights could encourage those workers to help people here who may be threatened with loss of their jobs” (Lewandowski).

(Note that if the author’s name is used in the lead-in, the name will not be cited at the end of the quote; however, if the name is not used, then the name is listed at the end of the quote as the above example demonstrates.)

It is important to remember to use all of the authors’ names, listing the primary author first. If there are more than three authors, use the primary author’s last name and et al. followed by the page number (if there are page numbers). All of the authors will be listed in the Works Cited.

Example: According to Lei et al., “Schooling improvement interventions for culturally and linguistically diverse students from poorer communities need to solve a set of theoretical challenges relating to effective literacy instruction” (30).

Remember, parenthetical (in-text) citations should match each source listed on the Works Cited page. Also, if there is no author(s) listed, use the next piece of available information, such as the title of the article.

Example: It is clear that “Douglass became an invaluable figure in the abolitionist movement” (“Freedom”).

WORKS CITED PAGE

The Works Cited page should be placed at the end of the paper; it is not a separate document, so the numbering remains consistent. For example, if the paper ends on page nine, the Works Cited begins on page ten. More formatting considerations:

- The title, Works Cited, is centered, but it is not underlined, italicized, or bolded. It is also the same size and type font as the rest of the paper. Just as the entire paper should be double spaced, so should the Works Cited page and all entries.
- All sources are listed in alphabetical order by the primary author’s (the author that appears first on the title or first page) last name.
 - If there is more than one author, one must use all of their names. List all authors in the order they appear on the title page.
 - If there is no author listed, then move to the next piece of information (usually the title of the article or book, if one is using an entire book).

- Each citation begins flush with the left margin (one inch), but if the citation is longer than one line, the second (third, fourth, and so on) are indented an additional ½" from the margin. This is called a "hanging indention." The hanging indent makes it easier for a reader to skim the sources by the alphabetized list of authors' last names. In Microsoft Word 2007, one can set up a hanging indent clicking on the "Paragraph" box on the "Home" tab. Under "Special" (under "Indentation"), choose "Hanging."
- All dates are written in "military" or European style with no commas separating the day, month, and year. Example: 31 March 2001
- There are some changes in what information needs to be included in entries in the Works Cited. The *MLA Handbook* does not have definitive information on this; however, they do note that while the MLA aims for comprehensiveness, "writers much often settle for citing whatever information is available to them" (182). When in doubt, check the *MLA Handbook* first. The following list, however, offers some of those changes:
 - Author's (or authors') name (if included);
 - Title of article;
 - Title of the journal, newspaper, magazine, etc.;
 - Date that the piece was published (if that's available);
 - The volume and issue (again if it's there);
 - Page numbers (if given);
 - Database (if text is accessed through a database) (example: *Academic Search Premier*, *LexisNexis*, *JSTOR*, etc. (Please note: Ebsco is NOT a database);
 - identify texts as "Print," or "Web," or "CD-Rom," etc.;
 - The date the text was accessed (if text is accessed through the Web).

White, Edward M. "The Changing Face of Writing Assessment." *Composition Studies* 32.1

(2004): 109-16. *Academic Search Complete*. Web. 31 Aug. 2009.

SAMPLE SOURCES

Book with a Single Author

Author's last name, first name. *Title of Book*. Publication city: Publisher, year published.

Schlosser, Eric. *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal*. New York: Harper Perennial, 2006. Print.

Book with More than One Author

Primary Author's last name, first name, and Second author's first and last name. *Title of Book*.

Publication city: Publisher, year published.

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. "*They Say / I Say*": *The Moves That Matter in Academic Writing*. New York: W. W. Norton, 2006. Print.*

A Work in an Anthology

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Work." *Title of Anthology*. Ed. Editor's name.

Publication city: Publisher, year published. page numbers. Print.

Bierce, Ambrose. "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge." *Anthology of American Literature Vol. II, Ninth Edition*. Ed. George McMichael, James S. Leonard, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, David Bradley, Dana D. Nelson, and Joseph Csicsila. Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2007. 626-632. Print.

OR

O'Brien, Tim. "How to Tell a True Way Story." *Esquire Magazine*. 1987. Rpt. *The Bedford*

Introduction to Literature. Sixth ed. Ed. Michael Meyer. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002. 548-57. Print.†

*Please note that authors are NOT alphabetical within the citation. Both authors' names are used in an in-text citation. Three authors are listed. More than three and one uses et. al after the primary [first] author is listed. This is the same rule of thumb for magazine, journal, and/or newspaper articles.)

† Please note that in the second example, the story was first published in *Esquire* and was later reprinted in the anthology.

An Article in a Magazine

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Magazine* Publication date: page numbers. Print.

Lang, Jennifer. "Just the Two of Us." *American Baby* March 2004: 66-72. Print.

OR

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Magazine* Publication date: page numbers. *Database*. Web. Access date.

Franklin, Nancy. "Frenemy Territory: The Hills are Alive with the Sound of Girl Talk." *The New Yorker* 21 Apr. 2008: 136. *LexisNexis Academic*. Web. 31 Aug. 2009.

An Article in a Newspaper

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Newspaper* Publication date: section and page number(s). (Use + to indicate continuation of a story onto another page.)

Charles, Darline. "Women, Minorities are Still Denied Equality at Work." *Philadelphia Tribune* 15 Feb. 2005, sec. J6. Print.

OR

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Newspaper* Publication date: section and page number(s). *Database*. Web. Access date.

Pearson, Rick and Mike Dorning. "Clinton Unveils Health-Care Reform Plan." *The Chicago Tribune* 18 Sept. 2007. *Newspaper Source*. Web. 31 Aug. 2009.

An Article in an Academic Journal

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* volume and issue number as relevant (year published): page numbers. Print.

Nordlund, Willis J. "A Brief History of the Fair Labor Standards Act." *Labor Law Journal* 39.11 (1988): 715-728. Print.

OR

Goetz, Edward G. "Comment: Public Housing Demolition and the Benefits to Low-Income Families." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71.4 (2005): 407-409. *Academic Search Premier*. Web. 7 May 2008.

A Film

Title of Film. Director. Distributor, year of release. Film. (If pertinent, other information, like actors, writers, producers, can be listed between the director and year of release.)

The Philadelphia Story. Dir. George Cukor. Perf. Cary Grant, Katherine Hepburn, and James Stewart. MGM, 1940. Film.

An Interview

Person who has been interviewed last name, first name (or corporate author). Interviewer's name (if it is given). *Title of Media where the Interview was Read, Viewed, or Heard*. If the interview is part of a publication, recording, or program, list. If the city is available, list as well as the date and media.

Kay, Nancy. Interview by Terry Gross. *Fresh Air*. Natl. Public Radio. WHYY, Philadelphia. 31 Aug. 2009. Radio.

Obama, Barak. Interview by David Leonhardt. *New York Times*. 28 April 2009. Web. 31 Aug. 2009.

Professional Website

Author's last name, first name (or corporate author). *Title of the Site*. Date of publication or last update. Affiliation with parent company, institute, or organization. Date one consulted source. (If any of this information is not listed on the website, move to the next piece of information.)

"Thousands Rally to Draw Attention to Cancer Policy Celebration on the Hill Kicks Off."

American Cancer Society. American Cancer Society. 19 Sept. 2006. Web. 31 Aug. 2009.