**Formatting your paper using MLA Style**

*First Page Format*

Unless your instructor has specifically asked for one, don't use a title page. Instead, at the top left of your first page type the following:

Your full name

Your instructor's name

The course number and title

The current date

Each of these should appear on its own line, and the lines should be double-spaced. On the next line (double-spaced), center your title. Do not place your own title in italics or quotation marks. If your title contains the names of other works, use appropriate punctuation (italics, quotation marks, etc.) for the other work(s).

*Headers and Page Numbers*

Every page except the first page of your paper should have a header at the top right corner, one-half inch from the top edge of the paper. This header should contain your last name followed by a space and then the page number.

*Spacing and Indentations*

Your paper should be double-spaced throughout. Do not use the "Enter" key to double-space! It will make a mess of things when you add or change something in the paper. The paper should have one-inch margins on all sides. You'll need two tab settings, one for paragraph indentation and another (deeper) one for indented quotations.

*Format of Source Titles*

When you include a title of a short work like a newspaper or magazine article, an article on a website, a chapter in a book, a poem from a collection of poetry, an episode of a television show, or a song off a CD either in your text or on your works cited page, you should encase it in quotation marks.

When you include a title of a longer work like an entire newspaper or magazine, a whole website, a book, a complete collection of poetry, a television show, a CD, or a film either in your text or on your works cited page, you should underline or italicize it. It doesn't matter which of these two formats you use as long as you choose one and use it consistently throughout your paper.

Here are a couple of examples that might help you to visualize the correct way to format different types of sources titles: A startling headline on the front page of *USA Today* declared "Strategy That Is Making Iraq Safer Was Snubbed for Years."

*Rereading America: Cultural Contexts for Critical Thinking and Writing* contains a fascinating article written by Harvey Mansfield called "The Manliness of Men."

"And Maggie Makes Three," a particularly compelling episode of Fox's hit sitcom *The Simpsons*, demonstrates the strength of Homer's commitment to his family.

My favorite song on Wilco's new CD entitled *Sky Blue Sky* is "Either Way."

*Format of the Works Cited Page*

When you have finished your paper, create a new page. In Microsoft Word, a new page can be created by pressing the "Ctrl" key and the "Enter" key simultaneously. At the top of a separate page at the end of your paper, type the centered words Works Cited. Do not underline, italicize, or place quotation marks around these words.

Create a hanging indent format. The hanging indent format will indent all but the first line of each of the entries on your Works Cited page. Using this format makes it easier for a reader to scan the page in order to find the author (or title) s/he's looking for.

Like the rest of the paper, the Works Cited section should be double-spaced throughout, and it should have the header and continue with the page number(s).

**Citation Format**

To identify a source properly, it must be identified in two places:

* within your paper, just at the spot where you refer to or quote that source. This is called a "citation"
* at the end of the paper on a separate page or pages, in a bibliography. This is called the "Works Cited" page in MLA lingo

*Using Sources in the Text*

The in-text citation gives your reader the essential clues he/she needs to locate more complete information about the source in your Works Cited page. There are several ways to get the essential clues in the text of your paper without interrupting the point you are making too much. MLA format prefers that you introduce your source with a signal phrase to help accomplish this.

*Signal Phrase*

The signal phrase indicates that something borrowed from a source is about to be used. This phrase prepares your reader for a reference to material from a source, and it serves as a brief introduction to that source. Here's an example:

Hairston, Ruszkiewicz, and Friend encourage readers not to think of their work as "a collection of dusty rules" (3).

This idea was found in a book written by three people; therefore, their names are used to signal that the information that follows is an idea they created and that, in this case, a direct piece of their text is being placed in the sentence.

The signal phrase should make your reader aware of the source's author or authors (if no author is available, refer to the title). When you are mentioning an author for the first time in the essay, give the first as well as last name. Subsequent in-text citations should use only the last name.

*Parenthetical Citation*

In addition to using a signal phrase to introduce your source, you must usually include a parenthetical citation at the end of the quotation or paraphrase of that source. If your signal phrase has already identified the author or title of the work you are referring to, you can include only the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence. MLA style does not use "p." or "pp." before the page number(s).

Sometimes, using a signal phrase simply doesn't work well. In such cases, it's okay to place the author's name before the page number in the parenthetical citation. Here's an example:

Sometimes, teachers will shy away from teaching literature toward a goal of aesthetic reading because it is nearly impossible to measure accurately a student's personal responses to literature (Cline 96).

Notice that there is no punctuation between the author's name and the page number in MLA format. Notice also that the period comes **after** the citation.

Here are some special cases to note:

* if no author is available for a work: Use a shortened version of the work's title in the parenthetical reference. An article with the lengthy title, "Education is Top Priority in the Senate this Year" could be shortened to "Education is Top Priority" in the in-text citations
* if the work has one to three authors: List the authors in the order in which they appear on the work's title page, for example, (Stegner, Keats, and Bailey 145) or (Carver and Allen 112)
* if a work has more than three authors: List only the first author, followed by the italicized term "et al." Here is an example: (Carver et al. 371). Don't forget to place a period after "al," since it is an abbreviation of a Latin word

The example of a parenthetical citation given above refers to a paraphrase of Cline's work. But suppose you want to use a quotation instead of a paraphrase? The format varies depending on the length and type of quotation you are using.

*Format for short quotations*

Quotations fewer than four lines long are usually incorporated into your own sentences and paragraphs without the need for separate formatting.

The main character in Joanne Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* says: "We lived simple lives. We lived good lives. We lived in dignity" (28).

In addition to using a colon or a comma to separate the quotation from your writing, you can often incorporate a short quotation directly into your own sentence.

The main character in Joanne Greenberg's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* believes that she and her friends "lived simple lives" (28).

Notice that the period goes **after** the closing parenthetical mark while the closing quotation marks go **before** the parentheses.

Here's a common formatting error to avoid:

In the book *I Never Promised You A Rose Garden*, it states that ". . ." (20).

Taking out the "in" and the "it" makes this much smoother.

The book *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* states that ". . ." (20).

When you incorporate a quotation into your own text this way, be sure that the signal phrase and the quotation make a complete and coherent sentence.

*Format for long quotations*

Quotations that are longer than four lines of text should be block-quoted. That means they should be indented two tabs from the left margin. Here's an example:

According to Harris and Platzner, ancient Greek temples were different from modern houses of worship:

A Greek temple, such as the Parthenon, was literally the house of the god it sheltered, a holy place, where a supernatural power could reside among human beings. In contrast to modern churches, synagogues, and mosques, the temple was not intended to hold a congregation. (9)

Notice that:

* the parenthetical citation goes after the final period of a blocked quotation
* no quotation marks are used around a blocked quotation

*Quotations from poetry and song lyrics*

When you are quoting poetry, it's important to identify where each line ends. If you are including a short quotation within your sentence, use a slash (/) to indicate where a line breaks:

In his misery, King Lear exclaims, "How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is/ To have a thankless child" (King Lear III.iii. 23-24).

Notice that in addition to using the slash to show the line break, the first word of the new line is capitalized because it is traditionally capitalized in poetry.

If you want to quote more than four lines of a poem or song lyrics, block-quote the lines and cite them as you would for prose with one exception: retain the original line endings in the blocked quotation.

Robert Frost's poem "Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening" conveys the speaker's weariness:

The only other sounds the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.
The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go, before I sleep.
And miles to go, before I sleep. (44)

**Formatting the Works Cited Page**

The list of works cited includes all works actually referred to within the essay only. Here are some basic rules.

The list of works cited:

* appears on a separate page at the end of the essay
* lists each work actually cited in the paper in alphabetical order by author's last name
* gives author(s), title, and publication information for each work
* is titled Works Cited
* uses a "hanging indent" for each entry
* abbreviates "University" and "Press" to U and P

What you put in a citation is determined by what type of source you're citing. For example, you would include different information for a personal web page citation than you would for a novel written by one author. We'll include some examples here, but we can't include an example of every possible citation type. A good MLA style guide should give you examples of a wider range of citation types (see the introduction for more information about where to find such a guide).

Note: Sometimes you may need to combine formats for two or more separate types of sources in order to identify a source properly. Suppose, for instance, that you were citing an advertisement that appears on a professional website. You'd need to combine the formats for advertisements and professional websites to create the appropriate format for this entry.

**Citation examples -- books**

**I. Books, one author**

a. References

Saunders, George. *Civilwarland in Bad Decline: Stories and a Novella*. New York: Riverhead, 1997.

b. In-text

George Sanders, in his book *Civilwarland in Bad Decline: Stories and a Novella*, talks about what drew him to write these stories (22).

**II. Books, two or three authors**

a.

Dorris, Michael and Louise Erdrich. *Broken Cord*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.

b.

The authors of *Broken Cord* point out the difficulties Native Americans have had getting off reservations (*Dorris and Erdrich* 342).

**III. Books, more than three authors**

a.

Purves, Alan C, et al. *How Porcupines Make Love II: Teaching a Response-Centered Literature Curriculum*. New York: Longman, 1990.

b.

This study explains that student-centered methods of teaching literature offer exciting potential for effectiveness (Purves et al. 30).

**IV. Book with editor**

a.

Todd, Margo, ed. *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England*. New York: Routledge, 1995.

b.

The battle between church and state was no new phenomenon in the time of King Henry VIII (Todd 21-22).

**V. Book, edition not the first**

a.

Spatt, Brenda. *Writing From Sources*. 2nd ed. New York: Bedford, 1999.

b.

Many students fail to realize that a very close paraphrase, one that just replaces a few words with synonyms, is plagiarism (Spatt 112).

**VI. Classic work**

a.

Job. *The Oxford Bible*. Revised Standard Edition. New York: Oxford UP, 1979.

b.

The devil is merely allowed by God to tempt mankind (Job 3:7).

**Citation examples -- articles**

**I. Article from a reference book (encyclopedia, dictionary, etc.)**

a.

"Ragtime." *The Encyclopedia Americana*. 1994 ed.

b.

[Refer to the work in your own sentence within the text. No parenthetical citation is needed.]

**II. Article or chapter from an edited book or anthology**

a.

Hartog, Francois. "Self-cooking Beef and the Drinks of Ares." *The Cuisine of Sacrifice among the Greeks*. Eds. Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant. Chicago: U of Chicago, 1989. 170-182.

b.

Francois Hartog gives one explanation for the popularity of the war god in Thrace: Indeed, if Ares is capable of occupying a central place in Scythian space, it is because he is marginal in Greece. (182)

**III. Article in a scholarly journal**

a.

Brennan, Thomas. "Epicurus on Sex, Marriage, and Children." *Classical Philology* 91.4 (1996) 346-352.

b.

The philosopher Epicurus' views on education of children have been briefly discussed by Thomas Brennan (350).

**IV. Article in a monthly magazine**

a.

Newman, Cathy. "The Joy of Shoes." *National Geographic* Sep. 2006. 74-93.

b.

Cathy Newman, senior writer for *National Geographic*, claims that "[e]very shoe tells a story" (74).

**V. Daily newspaper article, with author**

a.

Thomas, Albert, and Stacy Alvarez. "Their War: Should Americans Fight?" *Washington Post* 14 Dec. 1998. A5; A17.

b.

According to Thomas and Alvarez, the question of whether Americans should participate in the war has a complex answer (A5).

**VI. Daily newspaper article, without author**

a.

"Unemployment Rises Suddenly." *New Brunswick Herald* 20 April 1927. A3, A7.

b.

In April 1927, New Brunswick citizens experienced dramatic unemployment as the paper processing plant "fell on hard times" ("Unemployment" A3).

**Citation examples -- electronic source**

**I. A personal website**

a.

Smith, Jonah. Home page. 12 Mar 2003 <http://geocities.com/jonahsmith/>.

b.

[Mention the name of the author in your text. No parenthetical citation is needed.]

**II. A professional website**

a.

*Purdue University's Online Writing Lab*. Purdue University. 20 Oct. 2006. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>.

b.

[Mention the name of the Web site in your text. No parenthetical citation is needed.]

**III. An article published in an online journal**

a.

Oren, Avigail. "Mooing Is More Than Writing." *Kairos* 1.2 (Summer 1996). 24 May 2006. <http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/1.2/binder2.html?coverweb/avigail.html>

b.

In an article published in the online journal Kairos, Avigail Oren observes: "In a MOO, the duality of immersion and interaction is more than clear."

[Since there are no page numbers and the author's name is given in the signal phrase, no parenthetical citation is needed.]

**IV. An online government publication**

a.

U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. *HUD Strategic Plan FY 2006-2011*. March 31, 2006. <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cfo/reports/hud\_strat\_plan\_2006-2011.pdf> 24 May 24 2006.

b.

According to its current Strategic Plan, "HUD works closely with Congress" (3).

[Even though this is an online site, it gives page numbers, so the page number is included.]

**V. An email message**

a.

Reed, Stacy. "Re: Documentation." Email to Kathryn Cuff. 22 May 2006.

b.

In her email response, Reed mentioned several key goals the document needed to achieve "in order to be useful to as wide a range of writers as possible."

[Since there is no page number, giving the author's name and indicating that this is an email communication is sufficient.]

**Citation examples -- miscellaneous**

**I. An advertisement**

a.

Volkswagen Cars by Volkswagen of America. Advertisement. *Life* 7 Jul. 1961: 4.

b.

In the July 7, 1961 issue of Life magazine, an ad by Volkswagen promises that "you could drive a VW all day at top speed through a desert."

**II. A work of art: painting, sculpture**

a.

Bernini, Gianlorenzo. *The Ecstacy of St. Theresa*. Church of S. Maria della Vittoria, Rome.

b.

[Refer to the author and the work in your text. No parenthetical citation needed.]

**III. Indirect Source (citation of a work discussed in a secondary source)**

a.

Hawthorn, Jeremy. *Narrative Technique and Ideological Commitment*. London: Edward Arnold, 1990.

[Cite the source you are actually looking at and taking the quotation from according to the appropriate format.]

b.

About women, the narrator of Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness says, "We must help them to stay in that beautiful world of their own lest ours gets worse" (qtd in Hawthorn 406).

**IV. Lecture or speech**

a.

Revard, Stella P. "Milton and the Tangles of Neaera's Hair." Eighth International Congress on Neo-Latin Studies. Copenhagen. 15 August 1991.

b.

[Mention the author's name in your text. No parenthetical citation is needed.]

**V. Movie**

a.

*Dr. Strangelove*. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Columbia Pictures, 1963.

b.

[Mention the name of the film in italics in your text. No parenthetical citation is needed.]

**VI. Personal interview**

a.

Brown, J. Harlan. Personal interview. 25 April 2000.

b.

[Mention the name of the person interviewed in your text. No parenthetical citation is needed.]

The sample citation formats given above should help you get an idea of what information MLA documentation requires and how it should be presented. But this is by no means a complete list of formats. There is an infinite variety of source types! Consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or the *MLA Style Handbook* (both in your school library) for information not included here.

*Summary and illustrations*

Remember that most citations occur in two places: in the text of the paper at the spot where you've inserted the borrowed information and on your Works Cited page, in a list of those sources to which you have referred.

*In the text of your paper*

At this spot, MLA usually requires a parenthetical citation. This will often include the last name of the author(s) followed by a page number. Of course, there are variations. If the author's name has been given in the paper, you don't need to repeat it in the parenthetical citation. And then again, not all sources give authors and page numbers. In those cases, you simply give enough information in the signal phrase so that the reader can locate the source's entry on the Works Cited page.

An example might make all of this a bit clearer, so let's take a look at what a typical paragraph from a paper using MLA documentation might look like.



At the end of your paper, on a separate page, you'll need to include a list of sources to which you have referred in your paper. Here's what our Works Cited page for the sample paragraph above would look like:



When using MLA style, remember to do the following:

* identify your sources using signal phrases and parenthetical citations
* include a Works Cited page at the end of your paper that gives full bibliographical information for every work that has been cited in your paper
* double-space everything: your text, the text of quotations, and the entries on the Works Cited page
* use page numbers (but not p.) in parenthetical citations rather than dates