

Modern Language Association (MLA) Format and Documentation

This handout covers the basics of MLA format and the documentation of sources students frequently use. For more complete information, refer to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed.*, available in the Writing Center and at the reserve desk at the Chester Fritz Library. The MLA has a brief FAQ page online at http://www.mla.org/handbook_faq

Formatting Your Paper

- ✓ **Margins:** One-inch on the top, bottom, and sides of each page.
- ✓ **Page Numbering:** Use your word processor to create a header that includes your last name and the page number in the upper right hand corner of the page, one half inch from the top of the page. Every page has this header.
- ✓ **Title Page:** MLA style does not require a title page; instead, the first page of the paper should begin with four lines, double spaced, indicating: your name, name of the course instructor, name of the course, and the date.
- ✓ **Spacing:** Double-space every line (including long quotes and the citations on the Works Cited page).
- ✓ **Indenting:** Indent the first line of every paragraph five spaces or one tab. Indent long quotations ten spaces or two tabs.
- ✓ **Font and Typeface:** Use a 12-point font in Times New Roman

In this example from the first page of an MLA-style paper, the student's name is Sarah Trude, her instructor is Jason Zevenbergen, and the course is English 120:

Trude 1

Sarah Trude

Jason Zevenbergen

English 120

6 May 2013

Censorship as an Act of Freedom

On September 22, 1995, within the same year that the film titled *The Indian in the Cupboard* debuted in the United States, Lynne Reid Banks' award-winning book of the same title was banned from the Bemidji, Minnesota school district. I first discovered this case of book banning on a web page that also describes other cases. The viewer is invited to click on a buried pumpkin and "harvest" books that have been banned.

Creating the Works Cited Page

- ✓ Continue the page numbering sequence from the main body of your paper.
- ✓ Center the words “Works Cited” one inch from the top of the page.
- ✓ Continue double-spacing.
- ✓ If the citation takes up more than one line of the page, indent the remaining line(s) one-half inch from the left margin.
- ✓ Reverse the name of the author: list the author’s last name followed by a comma and the author’s first name.
- ✓ Alphabetize the works you cite by the last name of the author. If there is no known author, alphabetize by the first word in the title of the work other than *A*, *An*, or *The*.

An MLA-style works cited page looks like this:

Johnson 12

Works Cited

“Americans Without Work.” Editorial. *New York Times*. New York Times, 22 Dec. 2009. Web. 23 Dec. 2009.

Didion, Joan. “On Going Home.” *The Beacon Book of Essays by Contemporary American Women*. Ed. Wendy Martin. Boston: Beacon, 1996. 3-5. Print.

Gould, Elizabeth. “Women Working in Music Education: The War Machine.” *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 17.2 (2009): 126-143. *Project Muse*. Web. 23 Dec. 2009.

Gregory, Phillipa. *The Other Boleyn Girl: A Novel*. New York: Simon, 2001. Print.

Han, Phil. “Jailbreak Fugitive Updates Facebook Page.” *CNN.com*. Cable News Network, 23 Dec. 2009. Web. 23 Dec. 2009.

Stewart, Maria W. “Two Texts on Children and Christian Education.” *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 156-165. Print.

Sample Works Cited Page Entries

✓ An Article in a Scholarly Journal

Author's Name. "Title of the Article." *Name of the Journal* volume number.issue number (year): page numbers. Medium of publication.

Stewart, Maria W. "Two Texts on Children and Christian Education." *PMLA* 123.1 (2008): 156-165. Print.

✓ A Book by a Single Author

Author's Name. *Title of the Book*. City of Publication: Name of the Publisher, year. Medium of publication.

Gregory, Phillipa. *The Other Boleyn Girl: A Novel*. New York: Simon, 2001. Print.

✓ An Anthology or a Compilation

Editor's Name, ed. *Title of the Book*. City of Publication: Name of the Publisher, year. Medium of publication.

Martin, Wendy, ed. *The Beacon Book of Essays by Contemporary American Women*. Boston: Beacon, 1996. Print.

✓ A Book by Two or More Authors

If the book has two or more authors, list their names in the same order they appear on the title page of the book. Reverse only the name of the first author.

Author's Name, and Author's Name. *Title of the Book*. City of Publication: Name of the Publisher, year. Medium of publication.

Witte, Stephen P., and Lester Faigley. *Evaluating College Writing Programs*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP. Print.

✓ A Work in an Anthology

Author's Name. "Title of the Part of the Book Being Cited." *Title of the Anthology*. Ed. Editor's Name. City of Publication: Name of the Publisher, year. Page numbers of the cited piece. Medium of publication.

Didion, Joan. "On Going Home." *The Beacon Book of Essays by Contemporary American Women*. Ed. Wendy Martin. Boston: Beacon, 1996. 3-5. Print.

✓ A Nonperiodical Web Publication (including web sites sponsored by newspapers, magazines, and news organizations)

Author's Name. "Title of the Work." *Title of the Overall Web Site*. Publisher or Sponsor of the Site, Date of publication. Medium of publication. Date of access.

Han, Phil. "Jailbreak Fugitive Updates Facebook Page." *CNN.com*. Cable News Network, 23 Dec. 2009. Web. 23 Dec. 2009.

✓ **A Journal Article in an Online Database**

Author's Name. "Title of the Article." *Name of the Journal* volume number.issue number (year): page numbers. *Title of the Database*. Medium of publication. Date of access.

Gould, Elizabeth. "Women Working in Music Education: The War Machine." *Philosophy of Music Education Review* 17.2 (2009): 126-143. *Project Muse*. Web. 23 Dec. 2009.

Citing Sources in Your Paper

In your text, you can mention the source in a phrase that introduces the quotation and place the relevant page number(s) in a parenthetical reference at the end of the paraphrase or quotation, before the end punctuation:

In "Hunger as Ideology," Susan Bordo claims that women are inundated with advertisements in which "food is constructed as a sexual object of desire and eating is legitimated as much more than a purely nutritive activity" (150).

Alternatively, you can cite both the information source and the page number(s) in a parenthetical reference at the end of the paraphrase or quotation, before the end punctuation.

We demand images of youth because "sagging flesh is almost the ultimate signifier of decay and disorder" (Bordo 176).

If the quotation is more than four lines, start a block quotation on a new line and indent it one inch (two tabs) from the left margin. Do not add quotation marks. The end punctuation is placed before the parenthetical reference.

Pratt explains how interactions are viewed through the lens of power:

When linguistic (or literate) interaction is described in terms of orderliness, games, moves, or scripts, usually only legitimate moves are actually named as part of the system, where legitimacy is defined from the point of view of the party in authority—regardless of what other parties might see themselves as doing. (508)

If a source has two authors, use both last names in the parenthetical reference.

In the end of *The Gold Rush*, the main character George was able to find his wife even though she was swept away by the current (Benson and Mumford 26).

If a source has three authors, use the last name of each person listed.

(Murphy, Stay, and Rafoth 22)

If a source has more than three authors, you may cite all authors or use the last name of the first author followed by "et al."

(Huang et al. 10)

If a source has no identified author, give the title of the work in your parenthetical reference. You may use a shortened version of the title as long as it directs the reader to the correct entry in the works cited page. This example cites information from *The Longman Guide to the Web*:

(*Longman Guide* 137)

Modern Language Association, New York. 149,837 likes · 1,892 talking about this. Founded in 1883, the MLA works to strengthen the study and teaching of... See more of Modern Language Association on Facebook. Log In. or. Create New Account. See more of Modern Language Association on Facebook. Log In. Forgot account? MLA (Modern Language Association) style is most commonly used to write papers and cite sources within the liberal arts and humanities. This resource, updated to reflect the MLA Handbook (8th ed.), offers examples for the general format of MLA research papers, in-text citations, endnotes/footnotes, and the Works Cited page. MLA is a style of documentation that may be applied to many different types of writing. Since texts have become increasingly digital, and the same document may often be found in several different sources, following a set of rigid rules no longer suffices. Thus, the current system is based on a few guiding principles, rather than an extensive list of specific rules. MLA Format is simple with our BibMe Ultimate MLA Citations Guide. Learn MLA citing for books, articles, websites, and more! Tons of examples and sample papers included. The Modern Language Association Handbook is in its 8th edition and standardizes the way scholars document their sources and format their papers. When everyone documents their sources and papers in the same way, it is simple to recognize and understand the types of sources that were used for a project. MLA stands for the Modern Language Association. Most papers that use MLA formatting and citation style are those written in the humanities, especially in languages and literature. In 2016, the MLA Handbook was updated in an effort to simplify much of the documentation process in MLA format. MLA Formatting: The Basics. Papers constructed according to MLA guidelines should adhere to the following elements: Double-space all of the text of your paper, and use a clear font, such as Times New Roman or Courier 12-point font. Use one-inch margins on all sides, and indent the first line of a paragraph Modern Language Association (MLA) style, used primarily in the humanities, emphasizes the authors of a source and the pages on which information is located in the source. Writers who use the MLA documentation system cite, or formally acknowledge, source information within their text using parentheses, and they provide a list of sources in a works cited list at the end of their document. For more information about MLA style, consult the MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition. Examples of MLA In-Text Formatting Rules. 1. Basic Format for a Source Not Named in Your Text. Format: If you have not mentioned the author in your sentence, you must place the author's name and the page number in parentheses after the quotation, paraphrase or summary.