



# Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Format

A WMU WRITING CENTER HANDOUT

All information for this handout was taken from *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6<sup>th</sup> edition)*.

If asked to use MLA format, the book to consult is the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th edition)*. Copies of this book are on the reference shelves in the Writing Center (1071 Moore Hall) and in Waldo Library; it is also widely available in bookstores. Included here is a brief summary of MLA style for the research paper:

- ◆ Paper Format
- ◆ Formatting In-Text Citations
- ◆ The Works Cited List (Basic Rules)
- ◆ Formatting Sources in the Works Cited List (Specific Examples)

## Paper Format

The essay should be typed, double-spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5 X 11 inches) with margins of 1 inch on all sides. Unless requested, a research paper does not require a title page. Instead, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date, all on separate, double-spaced lines. Double space again and center the title (if the title is longer than one line, continue double-spacing). Make sure, also, to double space between the title and the first line of the text. **Note: DO NOT UNDERLINE OR ITALICIZE THE TITLE, AND AVOID USING ALL CAPITAL LETTERS.** Number all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin and type your last name before the page number (there is no need for this on the first page).

### **EXAMPLE:**

	⌘ 1" margin	⌘ 1/2" from top (on 2 <sup>nd</sup> page) Smith 2
⇄ 1"	Laura Smith Professor Bennet Humanities 2710 9 December 2001	} double-space } double-space } double-space } double-space
	Ellington's Adventures in Music and Geography	} double-space
	This is the first line of text. Notice it is double spaced from the title, and indented using the <b>TAB</b> button.	

The works cited list should begin on a separate page from the text of the essay under the label Works Cited (with no quotation marks, underlining, etc.), centered at the top of the page. Remember to continue numbering the pages; so, if the last page number of the paper is six, then the Works Cited page is numbered seven. Double-space all source entries, with no extra skipped spaces between entries. Notes, if any, should be formatted similarly and should appear on a page before the works cited page. **Keep in mind that underlining and italics are equivalent; select one or the other to use throughout the essay.** Also, all Works Cited entries are alphabetized. For more information, see the Works Cited section of this handout.

## Formatting In-Text Citations

MLA format follows the author-page method of citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation is taken (or a shortened form of the title, if not author, and page number) must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear in the Works Cited list (see The Works Cited Page below). **NOTE: References in the text must clearly point to specific sources in the list of works cited.**

When citing quotations in text, put the parentheses directly after the end of the quote and **BEFORE** any punctuation (period, comma, semi-colon) setting off the quote from the rest of the text (see Example 1); the same goes for paraphrasing (minus the quotation marks). Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage, but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text. It is also always important to lead in to, or set up, the quoted passage. In other words, introduce the quote, and then incorporate the quote into the text (See Example 2 below).

### Author's Name

The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation, but the page number(s) should always appear in the parentheses, not in the text of the quoted/paraphrased sentence. Example on shows this clearly.

Example 1:

**For Charles Dickens the eighteenth century was both "the best of times" and "the worst of times" (35).**

Example 2:

**According to the book *Heart of Darkness*, "he inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect" (Conrad 87).**

### \*Indirect Quotations (i.e. quote of a quote)

Sometimes you may have to use an indirect quotation--for example, someone's published account of another's spoken remarks. In other words, it is someone's quotes published by a different person. For such indirect quotations or paraphrases, use the abbreviation *qtd. in* ("quoted in"), before the indirect source cited in the parenthetical reference.

Example 3:

**Milroy described himself as "a non-political politician" (qtd. in Newley 18).**

**NOTE: Newley is the author of the source, and Milroy is the person who stated the quotation.**

### \*Two Authors with the Same Last Name

If more than one author has the same last name, provide both authors' initials (or use the full name if different authors share initials) in your citation.

Example 4:

**Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 342), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 23).**

### \*Two Works by the Same Author

In a parenthetical reference to one of two or more works by the same author, put a comma after the author's last name and add the title of the work (if brief) or a shortened version and the relevant page reference. If the author's name is stated in the text, give only the title and page reference in parentheses. In the same way, if the author's name and the title of the work are stated in the text, include only the page numbers in the parentheses.

Example 5:

**Shakespeare's *King Lear* has been called a "comedy of the grotesque" (Frye, *Anatomy* 237).**

Example 6:

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children ("Too Soon" 19), though he has acknowledged 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" 23).

Example 7:

In his *Autobiography*, Benjamin Franklin states, "I prepared a list of thirteen virtues" (135-37).

## Short Quotations

To indicate short quotations (four or fewer typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks. Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text (as previously shown), and, as always, include a complete reference in the works-cited list.

Example 8:

It may be true, as Robertson maintains, that "in the appreciation of medieval art the attitude of the observer is of primary importance" (Robertson 136).

Example 9:

According to Foulkes's study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (184). Is it possible that dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184)?

## Long Quotations

If a quotation runs over four lines in your paper, set it off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin, and typing it double-spaced, **WITHOUT** quotation marks. Instead, use a colon to introduce a long quote (see Example 10). Your parenthetical citation should come **AFTER** the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. Remember to maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.

Example 10:

At the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies*, by Golding, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

## Citing Verse (Poetry)

Citing verse is handled a little differently than citing prose (not poetry). If you quote part or all of a single line of poetry, put it in quotation marks within your text. If you are quoting **more** than **one** line but **less** than **four**, use a slash with a space on each side to separate them. Instead of using page numbers in the parenthetical citation, use the line numbers (See Example 11). If you are quoting **four or more** lines of poetry, begin the quote on a new line (as in Example 10) and double space the entire quotation; however, you must end each line as done in the poem itself. In other words, your quote should look like the actual poem. The parenthetical reference for a verse is set off from the text, following the last line of the quotation (See Example 12).

Example 11:

According to the poem, "Of all the things that happened there / That's all that I remember" (Cullen 11-12).

**NOTE:** The / indicates a new line of poetry, and that new line is capitalized.

Example 12:

Elizabeth Bishop's "In the Waiting Room" is rich in evocative detail:

It was winter. It got dark  
early. The waiting room  
was full of grown-up people,  
arctics and overcoats,  
lamps and magazines. (6-10)

**NOTE:** Here the quote uses the same punctuation as the poem. Because the author of the poem's name is included in the sentence, only the line numbers are put in parentheses.

## The Works Cited List

This list, alphabetized by authors' last names (or title, if no author), should appear at the end of your essay. It provides the information necessary for a reader to locate and be able to read any sources you cite in the paper. Each source you cite in the essay must appear in your works cited list; likewise, each entry in the works-cited list must be cited in your text.

### Basic Rules

- Authors' names are inverted (last name first); if a work has more than one author, invert only the first author's name, follow it with a comma, then continue listing the rest of the authors. If you have cited more than one work by a particular author, order them alphabetically by title, and use three hyphens in place of the author's name for every entry after the first. When an author appears both as the sole author of a text and as the first author of a group, list solo-author entries first. If no author is given for a particular work, alphabetize by the title of the piece and use a shortened version of the title for parenthetical citations.
- The first line of each entry in your list should be flush left. Subsequent lines should be indented one-half inch. This is known as a hanging indent.
- All references should be double-spaced.
- Capitalize each word in the titles of articles, books, etc. This rule does not apply to articles, short prepositions, or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title or subtitle. Underline or italicize titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and films, and put the title of journal, newspaper, or magazine articles in quotes.

## Formatting Sources in the Works Cited List

### Book with one author

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

### Two books by the same author

(After the first listing of the author's name, use three hyphens and a period for the author's name. List books alphabetically.)

Basila, Martin. Commercial Uses of Communication: Today's Evolving Marketplace. New York: Dutton, 1997.

---. Media Advertising for the Masses. Philadelphia: Merton, 1995.

### Book with more than one author

Gesell, Arnold, and Frances L. Ing. Child Development: An Introduction to the Study of Human Growth. New York: Macmillan, 1960.

Note: If there are more than three authors, you may list only the first author followed by the phrase et al. (the abbreviation for the Latin phrase "and others") in place of the other authors' names, or you may list all the authors in the order in which their names appear on the title page.

### Book with a corporate author

American Allergy Association. Allergies in Children. New York: Random, 1998.

### Book or article with no author named

Encyclopedia of Photography. New York: Crown, 1984.

"The Decade of the Spy." Newsweek 7 Mar. 1994: 26-27.

Note: For parenthetical citations of sources with no author named, use a shortened version of the title instead of an author's name. Use quotation marks and underlining as appropriate. For example, parenthetical citations of the two sources above would appear as follows: (Encyclopedia 235) and ("Decade" 26).

### Anthology or collection

Rueschemeyer, Marilyn, ed. Women in the Politics of Postcommunist Eastern Europe. Armonk: Sharpe 1994.

### Essay in a collection

Krutch, Joseph Wood. "What the Year 2000 Won't Be Like." Finding a Voice. Ed. Jim W. Corder. Glenview: Scott Foresman, 1973. 21-36.

Cross-referencing: If you cite more than one essay from the same edited collection, you should cross-reference within your works cited list in order to avoid writing out the publishing information for each separate essay. To do so, include a separate entry for the entire collection listed by the editor's name. For individual essays from that collection, simply list the author's name, the title of the essay, the editor's last name, and the page numbers. For example:

Asante, Molefi Kete. "What is Afrocentrism?" Atwan and Roberts 11-17.

Atwan, Robert and Jon Roberts, eds. Left, Right, and Center: Voices from Across the Political Spectrum. Boston: Bedford, 1996.

Bennett, William J. "Revolt Against God: America's Spiritual Despair." Atwan and Roberts 559-71.

### Article from a reference book

"Mandarin." Encyclopedia Americana. 1980 ed.

### Essay in a journal with continuous pagination

Flanigan, Beverly Olson. "Peer Tutoring and Second Language Acquisition in the Elementary School." Applied Linguistics 12 (1991): 141-58.

**Essay in a journal that pages each issue separately**

Barthelme, Frederick. "Architecture." Kansas Quarterly 13.3-4 (1981): 77-80.

**Magazine or newspaper article**

Nimmons, David. "Sex and the Brain." Discover Mar. 1994: 26-27.

Goodman, Laurence. "New Discoveries in AIDS Prevention." New York Times 27 Mar. 1998, late ed.: C3.

**Government publication**

United States Dept. of Labor. Bureau of Statistics. Dictionary of Occupational Titles. 4th ed. Washington: GPO, 1977.

**Pamphlet**

Your Health. New York: Modern Woman, 1996.

**Interview that you conducted**

Lesh, Philip. Personal Interview. 12 Nov. 1996.

**Television or radio program**

"The Blessing Way." The X-Files. Fox. WXIA, Atlanta. 19 Jul. 1998.

**Film**

It's a Wonderful Life. Dir. Frank Capra. Perf. James Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, and Thomas Mitchell. RKO, 1946.

**Advertisement**

Acura. Advertisement. Rolling Stone 16 May 1996: 8-9.

McDonald's. Advertisement. CNN. 4 May 1998.

**Basic Forms for Electronic Sources**

**A web page**

Author(s). Name of Page. Date of Posting/Revision. Date of Access. <electronic address>.

**Note:** It is necessary to list your date of access because web postings are often updated, and information available at one date may no longer be available later. Be sure to include the complete address for the site. Also, note the use of angled brackets around the electronic address; MLA requires them for clarity.

**An article in an online journal or magazine**

Author(s). "Title of Article." Title of Journal Volume. Issue(Year): Pages/Paragraphs. Date of Access <electronic address>.

**Note:** Some electronic journals and magazines provide paragraph or page numbers; include them if available. This format is also appropriate to online magazines; as with a print version, you should provide a complete publication date rather than volume and issue number.

**E-mail**

Author. "Title of the message (if any)" E-mail to the author. Date of the message.

Note: This same format may be used for personal interviews or personal letters. These do not have titles, and the description should be appropriate. Instead of "Email to John Smith," you would have "Personal interview."

**An electronic database (such as NewsBank, Ethnic NewsWatch, or Broadcast News)**

Author. "Title of Article." Relevant information for the database. Date of access <electronic address for retrieval>.

**Online Posting**

Lin, Michael. "Compressing Online Graphics." Online posting. 27 Apr. 1999.

MacWeb. 29 Apr. 1999. <<http://www.graphica.com/digitizing/intro.html>>.

**Information on CD-ROM**

The CIA World Factbook. CD-ROM. Minneapolis: Quanta, 1992.

**Article in a reference database**

"Fresco." Britannica Online. Vers. 97.1.1. Mar. 1997. Encyclopedia Britannica. 29 Mar. 1997

<<http://www.eb.com/180>>.

**Article in NewsBank**

Derks, Sarah A. "Binge Drinking and College: New Pressures for an Old Mixer." Commercial Appeal 8 Dec. 1997:

A1. NewsBank NewsFile Collection, Vers. 2.40.

**Article in Ethnic NewsWatch**

Reed, William. "Whites and the Entertainment Industry." Tennessee Tribune 25 Dec. 1996: 28. Ethnic NewsWatch,

Vers.2.1.1.

**Article in Broadcast News**

"Condom Distribution Does Not Increase Sexual Activity." Newsnight. CNN. 1 Oct. 1997. Broadcast News, trans. 950172877.