MLA Style Formatting – Quick Start Guide

Paper Requirements:

MLA Style papers should include 3 major parts:

- Title Page
- Body of the Paper
- Bibliography Page as a “Works Cited” listing

Style

- Use active voice.
- Use present tense when referring to events that happen within the literature.
- Keep verb tense consistent throughout the paper (especially when writing about historic events)

Formatting

- Margins: 1” margins
- Font: Times New Roman
- Font size: 12 font
- Spacing: Double-spaced
- Page Numbers: number each page in running header

Formatting -- Running Headers:

- Always follow your instructor’s directions should they differ from these.
- Locate in upper, right-hand corner of each page.
- Place ½ inch from top of page
- Place flush with right margin (right align)
- Begin each header with YOUR last name.
- Include the page number (consecutively number) on each page.
Formatting – Endnotes:

- Endnotes should be placed in a separate page placed before the Works Cited page.
- Endnotes are used to avoid long, explanatory notes in the body of the text.
- Notes page should be titled, “Notes” (centered, not bold, not italicized, not underlined)
- If there is only one note, page should be titled, “Note”
- Double space endnotes.
- Each note should be “matched” to its use in-text by an arabic number to correspond to the in-text notation
- Each instance of a new note should be numbered consecutively.
- A period and a space should be used after each endnote number.
- Indent notes 5 spaces
- Subsequent lines within an endnote should be flush with the left margin.

Title Page:

- A title page is not used for MLA style formatting of a paper -- unless specifically instructed otherwise.
- First page of paper should include information that identifies the paper and author.
- In upper, left hand corner of the first page, double-space following information:
  - Your name
  - Your instructor’s name
  - Course name
  - Date
- Double space below this list.
- Type and center the title of the paper.
- Do not underline, italicize, use all caps, underline or use quotation marks on title.
- If Title Case is available on your word processor, use it for the title of the paper.
- If you refer to other works in the title of your paper, use quotation marks to specify the title referred to.
  - Example of quoted title within the title of a paper:
    - Picking up the Pieces in “Five Easy Pieces”
- Double space between the title and the first line of text of the body of your paper.
Main Body

- **Capitalization** -- Follow standard capitalization rules for titles.
- **Thesis Statement** – Make sure your paper includes a thesis statement.
  - Your thesis sentence should be a single sentence that formulates both your topic and your point of view.
  - Your thesis statement should state and be used to answer to the central question or problem you have raised in your paper.
- **In-text Citation** – Always direct your reader to the works of others when referring to words or ideas of another person.
  - Use of parenthetical citations to direct your reader to the works of others within your paper.
  - Within each parenthetical citation, include author’s last name and page reference:
    - (Anderson 12). See p. 175, 6.1.
  - Only include necessary information in parenthetical citations (p. 216).
  - If you refer to the work of an author by name within a sentence, you don’t need to re-state the author in a parenthetical quotation.
  - When referring to plays or poetry, use the line number rather than page number.
  - Use block quotes only when the prose quoted exceeds four lines.

AVOID Plagiarism

- Plagiarism -- Intellectual theft; using the words, information or ideas of another without crediting the actual author.
- Consequences –
  - As a student: a failing grade; possible expulsion from university.
  - As a professional: loss of prestige and credibility; potential loss of a job or position.
- Unintentional plagiarism is still plagiarism.
- Common causes of unintentional plagiarism:
  - Not understanding the concept of plagiarism.
  - Poor research and/or note-taking skills.
  - Copying text (especially from any web site) without proper attribution (not using quotation marks or not using proper documentation).
  - Writing a paper in a language different from the quoted paper, but keeping the original author’s sentence structure for the sake of grammatical accuracy while failing to properly attribute the work.
- Typical forms of plagiarism –
  - Repeating or paraphrasing wording of another without properly documenting the attribution.
  - Using a good turn of phrase found in the works of another without proper attribution.
  - Paraphrasing an argument or a line of thinking without proper attribution.
NOTE: For ideas or information that is widely known and understood (example: historical dates or biographical information), no documentation or attribution is required.

Cite in our paper whenever you –

- Use a direct quotation, even if it is in quotation marks.
- Use facts that are not common knowledge
- Paraphrase the author's ideas.
- Have changed some of the author's words.
- Use phrases provided by an author.
- Write a sentence in your own words BUT refer to an author's idea or ideas.
- (When in doubt – CITE!)

Works Cited

- Works Cited – list of references used to research and write your paper – is placed at the end of your paper.
- Title -- Works cited page should begin on a new page, with the title “works Cited” appearing at the top.
  - Title of Works Cited should be:
    - Centered
    - Margin -- 1 inch from top of page.
    - No NOT bold, italicize or underline.
- Spacing -- Double Space
- Indent –
  - Do NOT indent the first line of a citation (reference) in the Works Cited list. (Left align; place flush to left.)
  - DO indent the second line -- and all subsequent lines of each item -- on the reference list.
  - Indent should be 5 to 7 spaces to form a “hanging indent” (½ inch).
- Pagination -- Do not use the abbreviations p. or pp. to designate page numbers.
- Italics – Choose a font in which the italic style contrasts clearly with the regular style.
- Capitalization -- Capitalize the first word and all other principal words of the titles and subtitles of cited works listed. (Do not capitalize articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, or the “to” in infinitives.)
- **Publisher** – Shorten the publisher’s name; for example, omit articles, business abbreviations (Co., Inc.), and descriptive words (Press, Publisher).
  - Multiple publishers – include all of them, placing a semicolon between each.
  - Multiple cities for publisher – use only the first city.
  - Use the conjunction "and," spelled out and not an ampersand – & -- when listing multiple authors of a single work.

- Arrange entries in alphabetical order by authors' last names (surnames), or by title for sources without authors.

- Author's names are written last name first, then first name, then middle initial.

- List Sequence –
  - Alphabetically by **author’s last name** OR **editor’s last name** (for collection of edited works)
  - If list includes works where there are multiple works by a **first author of the same name**, all works within that category are alphabetized by the **last name of the 2nd authors**.
  - In works where the **author is not known**, alphabetize within Works Cited list by **title**.
  - When alphabetizing by **title**, ignore stop words (example: A, An, The)
  - For referencing **multiple works by a single author**, include primary citation for that author, selecting as primary by **alphabetizing by title of work**, then for all subsequent works listed for that author use three hyphens (---) in place of the author’s name, listing works in sequence alphabetically by title.

---

**Bibliography Style**

**Book --**

Last name, First name. Title of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

References to an entire book should include the following elements:

- author(s) or editor(s)
- the complete title
- edition, if indicated
- place of publication
- the shortened name of the publisher
- date of publication
- medium of publication
Basic Format, Book:

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

One author:


Another work, same author:


Two authors:


Three authors:


More than three authors:


Corporate author:

**Multivolume work:**


**No author or editor given:**


**Editor (anthology or collection of essays):**


**Essay or Chapter in Edited Books or Anthologies:**

References to an essay or chapter in an edited book or compilation must include the following elements:

- essay or chapter author(s)
- essay or chapter title
- book title
- book editor(s) or compilers
- place of publication
- the shortened name of the publisher
- date of publication
- inclusive page numbers of the cited piece
- medium of publication
Article –

Standard format for an article:


Article in a book:


Reprinted article:


Articles or entries from reference books:

If the article or entry is signed, place the author's name first; if it is unsigned, give the title first. For well-known reference works, it is not necessary to include full publication information. Include only the title of the reference source, edition, and date of publication.

Dictionary entry:


Encyclopedia entry:


Article from a less familiar reference book:

For articles from less familiar reference sources, include the full publication information.

Article in Journals, Magazines, and Newspapers --

References to periodical articles must include the following elements:

- author(s)
- article title
- publication title (journal, magazine, etc.)
- volume number
- publication date (abbreviate months, if used)
- the inclusive page numbers
- medium of publication

- Issue numbers should be stated as decimals to a given volume number.
- In the example below, the number 25.4 reads as Volume 25, issue 4.
- When citing newspapers, it is important to specify the edition used (e.g. late ed.) because different editions of a newspaper may contain different material.

Journal article, one author:


Journal article, two authors:


Magazine article:


Newspaper article, no author:


Newspaper article, one author, discontinuous pages:

Citing Materials from Online Sources --

Citations for online sources, like those for print sources, should provide information that both identifies a source and allows that source to be located and retrieved again. All citations should include the medium of publication (Web) and the date the content was accessed. If the source is difficult to locate or your instructor requires a URL, list the complete address within angle brackets after the date. In many cases, it is also necessary to identify the Web site or database that has made the material available online.

Because there are currently few standards that govern the organization and presentation of online publications, the information that is available to fulfill these objectives can vary widely from resource to resource. In general, references to online works require more information than references to print sources.

See sections 5.6.1-4 in the MLA Handbook for more complete information on creating citations for online sources.

Web page:

This example includes the optional URL. All other examples below use the shorter citation format.


(Remember to use n.p. if no publisher name is available and n.d. if no publishing date is given.)

Whenever possible, include the following elements from the web site --

- 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.

Personal Web site:

If a work is untitled, you may use a genre label such as Home page, Introduction, etc.

Entry in an online encyclopedia:

Article from a less familiar online reference book:

Article in an online periodical:
If pagination is unavailable or is not continuous, use n. pag. in place of the page numbers.

Article in a full-text journal accessed from a database:

Online book with print information:

Audio Visual Materials --

Film or video recording:

Sound recording:
Counting Crows. August and Everything After. DGC, 1993. CD.

Sound recording, specific song:
Counting Crows. "Mr. Jones." August and Everything After. DGC, 1993. CD.

**CD-ROM**

Citations should include the medium of the electronic publication (CD-ROM), the name of the vendor that made the material available on CD-ROM, and publications dates for the version used, if relevant.


**Government Documents** –

References to government documents vary in their required elements. In general, if you do not know the writer of the document, cite the government agency that issued the document as author.

**State document:**


**Federal document:**


**International document:**


**For more information, please see:**


Call number:  LB 2369 .G53 2009

1 copy permanently held at Reference Desk (3rd floor, entrance, Thompson Library, UM-Flint)

1 copy in Main Collection (2nd floor) – available for checkout.

Multiple copies of previous editions available (same call number, Main Collection, 2nd floor)

Digital (ebook) copy available online via Mirlyn (online library catalog)