MLA Formatting and Style Guide

The MLA (Modern Language Association) format is the writing and documentation system used primarily in the Arts and Humanities. Like any referencing system, the MLA outlines the specific ways to number your pages, create your title page, and establish headings, in addition to citing material from other authors. Always check with your professor to find out how closely he or she wants you to follow these guidelines. For complete guidelines for MLA format, as well as for specific issues not covered here, see:

MLA Handbook. 8th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2016.

1. General Formatting Notes
2. The First Page of Your Essay
3. Parenthetical Citations
4. Formatting Quotations
5. Works Cited Page

1. General Formatting Notes

- Use 8.5 by 11 inch white paper.
- Print on one side of the paper only.
- Set all the margins (top, bottom, and sides) to 1 inch.
- Use a standard font (e.g., Times New Roman) and type size (e.g., 12 point).
- Double space the entire text of your essay (including the information on the first page, block quotations, and the Works Cited page).
- Do not include a separate title page (unless specifically requested by your instructor).
- Include your last name and page number on the top right-hand corner of every page. Use a header and ensure that your name and page number are 0.5 inches from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Indent the first line of each paragraph by 0.5 inches.
- Leave one space after punctuation.

2. The First Page of Your Essay

- Include your name, instructor's name, course code, and date 1 inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin on separate double spaced lines.
- Type and centre your title using regular font formatting (no italics, bold, or quotation marks) after the date. Use title case: only capitalize the first letter of important words.
- Indent 0.5 inches from the left margin and begin the body of your essay.

The first page of your essay should look like this:

Doe 1

John Doe

Dr. Smith

English 101

December 1, 2007

Postcolonial Adventures in Shakespeare's *Othello*

The politics of postcolonialism did not begin in the 1960s. Many of the same concerns

and issues we see in contemporary postcolonial literature and criticism are present in Elizabethan

drama.

A good example of an Elizabethan play that…

3. Parenthetical Citations

When you use MLA style, use parenthetical citations to acknowledge other people's work. Each of the parenthetical citations in your text is "keyed" to an alphabetical list of texts (the Works Cited page) included at the end of your essay. A parenthetical citation includes the author's last name followed by a space and the appropriate page number or numbers.

(Last name #)

You must include a citation after every quotation or paraphrased idea from another source.

There are three different ways to provide the necessary information for a citation in MLA style. In all three options, you need to include both the author's name and a page number. The following are examples of the different ways to cite your source in MLA style:

a) Use a direct quotation and mention the author in the sentence

Weedon argues that the "power of fiction lies in its ability to construct for the reader ways of

being and of understanding the world" (144).

b) Use a direct quotation in the sentence

Contemporary feminist critics insist that the "power of fiction lies in its ability to construct for

the reader ways of being and of understanding the world" (Weedon 144).

c) Paraphrase and mention the author in the sentence

Weedon promotes the idea that fiction is a powerful political tool that helps readers understand

their place in the world (144).

In each of the examples above, the reader knows that the relevant information can be found on page 144 of a text by Weedon. The reader can consult the Works Cited at the end of the essay to get more information about the source. In the Works Cited, the reader would find the following entry:

Weedon, Chris. *Feminist Practice & Poststructuralist Theory*. Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Parenthetical Citations for a Print Source with No Known Author

If you have a source with no known author, the parenthetical citation should include a shortened title in place of the author's name.

The trade international trade in waste electronics is illegal under the terms of the Basel Ban

("Briefing Paper" 2).

Parenthetical Citation for a Classic or Literary Work with Multiple Editions

When citing classic or literary works which have multiple editions, additional information should be included in the parenthetical citation. The parenthetical citation should still contain the page number, but also the abbreviation for volume (vol.), book (bk.), part (pt.), chapter (ch.), section (sec.), or paragraph (par.), as appropriate.

W. E. B. Dubois argued that "the color line" continued long after the American Civil War ended

(16; ch. 2).

Parenthetical Citation for Authors with the Same Last Name

When using works by authors with the same last name, include the first initial for both author's first names.

3

Gender performance can be understood as a series of actions that produce the illusion of a stable

gender identity (J. Butler 12).

Lilith is saved by an alien species called the Oankali (O. Butler 14).

If the authors share a first initial, use the entire first name of both authors.

(Ove Butler 14), (Oliver Butler 43)

Parenthetical Citation for a Source with Multiple Authors

If you have a source with three or fewer authors, list all the authors' names. If your source has three or more authors, use the name of the first author followed by "et al". See the examples below.

a) Two authors: Paraphrase information and mention their names in the sentence

Hand and Sandywell demonstrate the importance of the internet to the information economy

(198).

b) Two authors: Paraphrase information in the sentence

The internet has become central to the workings of the economy in the information age (Hand

and Sandywell 198).

c) Multiple authors: Paraphrase information in the sentence

The use of *manga* to teach safety in some universities in Japan, Taiwan, and Thailand showed

that students were more able to identify hazards and hazardous behaviours (Kumasaki et al 591).

Parenthetical Citation for Multiple Sources by the Same Author

If you are using multiple sources with the same author, include an abbreviated title to indicate which work you are referencing. The examples below show how to use a parenthetical citation for multiple books by the same author.

a) Multiple sources by the same author paraphrased or quoted in two sentences

Halberstam considers how masculinity can be performed by male and female bodies ("Female

Masculinity" 2). In a later work, Halberstam shifts her focus to notions of "queer time" ("In a

Queer Time" 1).

b) Multiple sources by the same author paraphrased in one sentence

Both male and female bodies can perform masculinity (Halberstam, "Female Masculinity" 2).

Parenthetical Citation for an Indirect Source

An indirect quotation is a source quoted by another source. Use the abbreviation "qtd. in" to indicate an indirect quotation. See the example below.

Discussing human responsibility for environmental problems, Baichwell notes "we have to live

with the uncomfortable ambiguity of our role" (qtd. in Bozack 71).

Parenthetical Citation for Multiple Sources

If you are referencing multiple sources, separate the works with a semi-colon in the parentheses. The example below illustrates how to cite multiple sources.

… as many theorists have noted (Razack 23; Malkki 389).

4. Formatting Quotations

Short Quotations

Are you using a quotation that is less than four lines long in your essay? If yes, put it in double quotation marks and incorporate it into the text of your paper. Provide the parenthetical citation immediately following the quotation.

All punctuation, except question marks and exclamation marks, should appear after the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamation marks that appear in the original source should be within the quotation marks. Consider the following example:

Pi emphasizes that the most dangerous animal in existence is "the animal as seen through human

eyes" (Martel, 34). This is in contrast to what the Pi's father thinks. Pi's father created a zoo

exhibit that asks visitors, "DO YOU KNOW WHICH IS THE MOST DANGEROUS ANIMAL

IN THE ZOO?", the exhibit contains only a mirror (Martel, 34).

Long Quotations

If you include any quotations that are over four lines long, type them into a block quotation, indented 1-inch from the margin, double spaced, and **without** quotation marks. Block quotations are typically introduced by a colon. Place your parenthetical citation after the final punctuation mark of the quotation. Consider the following example:

The narrator highlights the importance of setting in the novel through her detailed description of

the area around Kitamaat. She begins her story by providing a visual map of the terrain where

most of the action in the novel occurs:

> Find a map of British Columbia. Point to the middle of the coast. Beneath Alaska, find the
>
> Queen Charlotte Islands. Drag your finger across the map, across the Hecate Strait to the
>
> coast and you should be able to see a large island hugging the coast. This is Princess Royal
>
> Island, and it is famous for its kermode bears that are usually white. Princess Royal Island
>
> is the western edge of traditional Haisla territory. During land claim talks, some of this
>
> territory is claimed by both the Haisla and Tsimshian nations – this is called an overlap and
>
> is a sticky topic of discussion. (Robinson 4)

Note: When using a block quotation, do not indent the first line of the quotation; however, if the quotation includes a new paragraph, the new paragraph should be indented.

Quoting Poetry

If you are quoting a single line of verse (or less), place it in quotation marks and incorporate it into the text of your essay.

If you quote two or three lines of verse, you must separate each line with a forward slash [/], place the passage in quotation marks and incorporate it into the text of your essay. When you use slashes to separate lines of quoted verse, be sure to put a space before and after the slash. If your quotation includes a stanza break, use two forward slashes to indicate the break. Include a parenthetical citation for the author (unless the author's name is in the text of your essay immediately before the quotation) and for the line number(s) of the poem. Consider the following examples:

a) Quoting less than one line of poetry

The persona of Plath's poem is "poor and white" (3) and feels claustrophobic. She has "always

been scared of" (41) her father.

b) Quoting three lines of poetry

Sylvia Plath's poem "Daddy" opens with a metaphor that conveys the speaker's sense of

claustrophobia. She compares herself to a "black shoe / In which I have lived like a foot / For

thirty years" (2-4).

c) Quoting two lines of poetry with a stanza break

Sylvia Plath's "Daddy" has no set rhyme scheme; however, the poet uses assonance and end

rhyme to create sound patterns that hold the poem together. The "oo" sound is particularly

prominent: "Barely daring to breath or Achoo. // Daddy, I have had to kill you" (5-6).

If you are quoting more than three lines of verse, you should type them into a block quotation indented 1 inch from the left margin. Block quotations of poetry should accurately reproduce the line breaks, spacing, and punctuation found in the original. Do not use quotation marks for block quotations unless they appear in the original. Your parenthetical reference should appear at the end of the last line of poetry. If the parenthetical reference cannot fit on the last line of poetry, place it on the following line, flush with the right margin of your essay. The following is an example of a blocked verse quotation:

d) Quoting more than three lines of poetry

In his poem "i have found what you are like," Cummings uses unconventional line breaks and syntax but traditional images and rhyme patterns:

>   deeds of green thrilling light
>   with thinned
>   new fragile yellows
>   lurch and press
>   – in the woods
>   which
>   stutter
>   and
>   sing (8-16)

Here, Cummings uses pastoral imagery combined with fragmented syntax to…

Quoting Drama

If you are quoting the words of a single character in a prose play, follow the guidelines for a standard prose quotation.

If you are quoting the words of a single character in a verse play, follow the MLA guidelines for quoting poetry.

a) Quoting the words of one character in a verse play

> Some of Lear's greatest insights come when he discusses metaphysical issues with Kent
>
> and the Fool. For example, when these three characters take refuge from a storm in a hovel, Lear
>
> notes that "When the mind's free / The body's delicate" (3.4.11-12). He elaborates on this point
>
> by observing that the "tempest in my mind / Doth from my senses take all feeling else, / Save
>
> what beats there" (3.4.12-14). This metaphor suggests . . .

If you are quoting dialogue between two or more characters, you should type the passage into a block quotation indented 1 inch from the left margin.

Characters' names should be in capital letters followed by a period and then followed by the text as it appears in the original. Subsequent lines of the character's dialogue should be indented an additional amount. When the dialogue shifts to another character, start a new line indented 1 inch from the left margin. Follow this pattern throughout the block quotation. As with all block quotations, do not include quotation marks unless they appear in the original.

b) Quoting the dialogue of two characters in a drama

> Some of Lear's greatest insights come when he discusses metaphysical issues with Kent and the
>
> Fool:
>
>   LEAR.   Let me alone
>
>   KENT. Good my lord, enter here.
>
>   LEAR.   Wilt break my heart?
>
>   KENT. I had rather break mine own. Good my lord, enter.
>
>   LEAR. Thou think'st tis much that this contentious storm
>
>   Invades us to the skin: so 'tis to thee;
>
>   But where the greater malady is fixed,
>
>   The lesser is scarce felt. (3.4.3-9)

Adding or Changing Words in Quotations: If you need to add a word or change a word in a quotation, you must indicate this by placing square brackets around the words that are not part of the original text. Consider the following example:

Jones argues that "the voting structure of the [United Nations] Security Council" renders it

incapable of resolving international conflict (45).

The words "United Nations" were added here to clarify the argument; the square brackets indicate that they were not part of the original text.

Omitting Words in Quotations: If you omit words from a quotation, you must indicate this by using ellipsis marks (…). Ellipses must be used any time you omit material from a quotation that appears to be a sentence or a series of sentences. Consider the following example:

Original Text: "Every space is filled with life: delicate, poisonous frogs war-painted like

skeletons, clutched in copulation, secreting their precious eggs onto dripping leaves. Vines

strangling their own kin in the everlasting wrestle for sunlight. The breathing of monkeys. A

glide of snake belly on branch. A single-file army of ants biting a mammoth tree into uniform

grains and hauling it down to the dark for their ravenous queen." (Kingsolver 5)

Quotation with ellipsis: Kingsolver addresses the reader in second person, telling her to imagine

a violent forest "with . . . frogs . . . secreting their precious eggs…[v]ines strangling their own

kin…[and] ants . . . hauling [a tree] down to the dark for their ravenous queen" (5).

(from Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible*. HarperCollins, 1999.)

5. Works Cited Page

Your MLA-formatted essay must have a Works Cited page that begins as a separate page at the end of your essay. The basic formatting features of the Works Cited page are as follows:

- Use same 1 inch margins and same last name and page number header as the rest of the essay.
- Centre the title "Works Cited" in standard font formatting (no italics, bold, or quotation marks) on the first line of the page.
- Double space everything; do NOT put extra lines between entries.

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- Capitalize every word in the titles of texts except articles, prepositions and conjunctions.
- List entries alphabetically.
- End each citation with a period.
- Use italics for the titles of independently published works like books and journals.
- Use quotation marks for the titles of texts published as part of collections like poems and articles.
- Use a hanging indent (second and following lines of each entry indented 0.5 inches) for each entry.

The MLA uses a list of core elements for the Works Cited Page which are common to most works. This is the list with the punctuation that follows each element:
1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Other contributors,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication date,
9. Location.

An element that is not applicable to the source being documented should be omitted.

Common Entries in a Work Cited Page
The following are common entries likely to be used by undergraduate students writing research essays. For more details or other, less common entries, consult the MLA Handbook.

1. Book with One Author:
Last Name, First Name. *Title of Work*. Publisher, Date.

Smith, John. *Great Dogs of North America*. Dog Press, 2003.

2. Book with Two Authors:
Last Name, First Name, and First Name Last Name. *Title of Work*. Publisher, Date.

Gaiman, Neil, and Terry Pratchett. *Good Omens: The Nice and Accurate Prophecies of*

Agnes Nutter, Witch. HarperTorch, 2006.

3. Book with Three or More Authors:
Last Name, First Name, et al. *Title of Work*. Publisher, Year.

Evans, Julie, et al. *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous Peoples in British Settler*

    Societies. Manchester UP, 2003.

4. Journal Article:

Last Name, First Name. "Title of article." *Title of Journal*, volume number, issue number,

    date, page range.

Smith, John. "Great Labradors." *Dogs Illustrated*. Vol. 14, no. 3, 1994, pp.12-50.

5. Work in Anthology or Edited Collection:

Last Name, First Name. "Title of Chapter." *Title of Work*, edited by First Name Last

    Name, Publisher, Date, Page Range.

More, Hannah. "The Black Slave Trade: A Poem." *British Women Poets of the Romantic*

    Era, edited by Paula R. Feldman, Johns Hopkins Press, 1997, pp. 472-482.

6. Entire Anthology or Edited Collection:

Last Name, First Name, editor. *Title of Work*. Publisher, Date.

Weisser, Susan, editor. *Women and Romance: A Reader*. New York U. Press, 2001.

7. An Introduction, Preface, Foreword, or Afterword:

If you are citing an introduction, preface, foreword, or afterword, you must name the author of the text and the name of the part being cited. Do not italicize or put quotation marks around the part being cited.

Last Name, First Name. Part of book. *Title of Work*, by Last Name, Publisher, Date, Page

    Numbers.

Allan, Stuart, et al. Introduction. *Environmental Risks and the Media*, by Allan, et al.

    Routledge, 2000, pp. 1-26.

If the author of the part being cited is different from the author of the text, include the complete name of the author.

Last Name, First Name. Part of book. *Title of Work*, by First Name Last Name, Publisher,

   Date, Page Numbers.

Beck, Ulrich. Foreword. *Environmental Risks and the Media*, by Stuart Allan, et al.,

   Routledge, 2000, pp. xv-xiv.

8. Book by a Corporate Author:

Corporate Author. *Title of Work*. Publisher, Date.

Canada Research Council. *Canadian Business in 2010*. Academic Publishing House, 2007.

9. Government Publication:

Governmental Author. Title. Publisher, Date.

United States, Department of State Bureau of International Narcotics and Law

   Enforcement Affairs. *Nigerian Advance Fee Fraud*. Department of State Publication

   Bureau, 1997.

10. Article with No Author in Reference Book:

"Entry Name." *Title of Work*. Edition, Publisher, Year.

"Postmodernism." *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed., Oxford UP, 1998.

11. A Review:

Last Name, First Name of the review author. "Title of Review (if applicable)." Review of

   Title of Work, by First Name Last Name. *Title of Periodical*, day month year: page.

Cole Susan. "Sly Fox." Review of *Mr. Fox*, by Helen Oyeyemi. *Now Magazine*, December

   2011: pp. XX.

12. Published Conference Proceedings:

Last Name, First Name, editor. *Title of Conference*. Conference Date, Conference

   Location, Publisher, Date of Publication.

Rudner, Stuart, E., editor. *Employment Law 2010: Proactively Managing Legal Risk in Challenging Times*, 29 September 2009, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, Toronto, Osgoode Professional Development, 2010.

13. Film or Movie:

Film Title. Directed by First Name Last Name, performances by First Name Last Name, Name of Studio or Distributor, Date.

Trouble Every Day. Directed by Claire Denis, performances by Vincent Gallo, Tricia Vessey, and Beatrice Dalle, Canal +, 2001.

14. Film or Video Recording:

Name of Film or Video Recording. Directed by Director First Name Last Name, performances by Important Actors' Names, Distributor, Release Date.

It's a Wonderful Life. Directed by Frank Capra, performances by James Steward, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, and Thomas Michell, RKO, 1946.

15. Recorded Television Episode:

"Title of Episode." *Title of Collection of Recordings*, written by First Name Last Name, directed by First Name Last Name, season number, episode number, Name of Distributor, Date of Distribution, disc number.

"Never Kill a Boy on the First Date." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Complete 1-7 Box Set*, written by Rob Des Hotel and Dean Batali, directed by Davide Semel, season 1, episode 5, Fox Home Entertainment, 2004, disc 3.

16. A Work of Art

Includes a painting, sculpture, or photograph.

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Work*. Date of Compositions, medium of the piece, *Name of Institution*, City.

Thomson, Tom. *Evening, Canoe Lake*. 1915-1916, oil on canvas, *Art Gallery of Ontario*,

Toronto.

If the name of the city is part of the institution name (e.g., Art Institute of Chicago), it is not necessary to include it as a distinct element in your citation.

Online Sources in a Work Cited Page

Here are the common features you should look for when you are citing online sources:
- Author and/or editor names
- Article name
- Title of website, project, or book
- Version numbers, editions, revisions, posting dates, volumes, or issue numbers
- Publisher name and publishing date
- Page and paragraph numbers
- URL, DOI (Digital Object Identifier), or permalink
- Date you accessed the information

If possible, provide each of the following pieces of information about the online source you are citing:

Author and /or editor names. "Title of Document." *Title of Website*. Any version numbers

including editions, revisions, posting dates, volumes, or issue numbers. Publisher

information, including publisher and publishing date, page or paragraph numbers (if

available), URL (without https://), DOI, or permalink, Access Date.

The MLA recommends that you include URLs or DOIs (Digital Object Identifier) in your Works Cited list. If you can, cite the DOI assigned to an online publication instead of the URL.

The Access Date is now considered an optional element of MLA style citations. However, it should be used if required by your professor and can by useful when the online work lacks a publication date.

If you are using peer-reviewed authoritative sources, most of this information should be available. If information, such as the publisher or the date, is missing, you may find a reliable external source and include the information in your citation in square brackets. Otherwise, it may be omitted.

1. Course or Departmental Website:

Department Name. University Name, Publishing Date. URL. Date of Access.

English Department. University of Toronto, 6 December 2011. www.english.utoronto.ca

Accessed 21 December 2011.

Last Name, First Name. *Name of Course*. University, Date of Publication. URL. Date of

Access.

Brym Robert and Lesley Kenny. *Introduction to Sociology 101Y*, University of Toronto,

December 2011, projects.chass.utoronto.ca/soc101y/brym/. Accessed 5 December 2011.

2. A Work of Art:

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Work*. Date of Creation. Institution, City. *Name of Website*.

URL. Date of Access.

Thomson, Tom. *Evening, Canoe Lake*. 1915-1916. Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto. *Art

Gallery of Ontario*. ago.net/agoid69248. Accessed 23 November 2011.

3. Document from Online Academic Journal:

Last Name, First Name. "Article's Name." *Title of Journal*. Volume number, issue number

(or Date of Publication): page numbers, if any. URL or DOI. Date of Access.

Zeki, Semir. "Artistic Creativity and the Brain." *Science*, vol. 293, no. 5527, 2001, pp. 51-

52. *Academic OneFile*, doi:10.1126/science1062331. Accessed 18 Aug. 2017.

4. Document from Online Scholarly Journal That Also Appears in Print:

Last Name, First Name. "Article's Name." *Title of Journal*. Volume number (or Date of

Publication), page numbers. URL or DOI. Date of Access.

Zeki, Semir. "Artistic Creativity and the Brain." *Science*, vol. 293, no. 5527, 2001, pp. 51-

52. *Academic OneFile*, doi:10.1126/science1062331. Accessed 18 Aug. 2017.

5. Article from Online Dictionary or Encyclopedia:

Ross, Don. "Game Theory." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N.

Zalta. Plato.stanford.edu/entries/game-theory. Accessed 1 Oct. 2002.

6. An Entire Internet Site:

Name of Editor, Author, or Compiler of Site. *Title of Website*. Version Number. Name of

Institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource

creation, if available. URL. Date of Access.

Brawley, Lisa and James F. English. *Postmodern Culture*. University of Virginia, 2000.

pmc.iath.virginia.edu. Accessed 1 Oct. 2002.

7. An Online Book:

Author's Name. *Title of Work*, name of editor, compiler, or translate. *Title of Website*

(including date of electronic publication, name of sponsoring institution, revisions, if

available). URL. Date of Access.

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*, edited by Henry Churchyard. *Jane Austen Information*

Page, 1996. www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/pridprej.html. Accessed 6 Sept. 2002.

More resources for citations and research
Do you want to discuss your research paper? Book an appointment with an Instructor:
http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/appointments-undergraduate.

Check out these resources to get more help and information on citations and research:
Reference and Research Help – University of Toronto Mississauga Library
https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/ReferenceUTML/ReferenceUTML

Citing Sources – University of Toronto
https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/citing

MLA Formatting and Style Guide – Purdue Online Writing Lab
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Looking for more learning strategies? Visit us at: http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/.