

Modern Language Association (MLA) Style

Modern Language Association (MLA) is one of the top three citation styles used by editors, professors, and publishers as an aid to preparing manuscripts in English. MLA style is used in academic writing in

- Cultural studies
- Humanities
- Languages
- Literature & literary criticism
- Media studies

When you use the MLA style to cite your sources, you use parenthetical references in the text of your paper. Once you start using the MLA style, you'll quickly pick up how to use it. Remember that even experienced writers have to refer to a style guide for the correct way to cite their sources.

Knowing What to Cite

When in doubt, cite your source. You should include citations for

- Direct quotes
- Statistics
- Websites you use for quotes
- Visuals like pictures, graphs, diagrams, or tables
- Summarized or paraphrased ideas that aren't your own

Understanding Plagiarism

When you write a paper for a class, you must cite the sources you use. If you don't cite your sources, the university and your professor could interpret that as plagiarism. The University of North Texas considers plagiarism as the use of another's thoughts or words without proper attribution in any academic exercise, regardless of the student's intent, including but not limited to:

- The knowing or negligent use by paraphrase or direct quotation of the published or unpublished work of another person without full and clear acknowledgement or citation.
- The knowing or negligent unacknowledged use of materials prepared by another person or by an agency engaged in selling term papers or other academic materials.

Plagiarism and/or academic dishonesty are grounds for expulsion from the university. For more information on the university's policy on this topic, go to: <http://vpaa.unt.edu/academic-integrity.htm>

Using Electronic Resources for the MLA style

The UNT Library has multiple online resources for the MLA style:
<http://www.library.unt.edu/help/tutorials/mla-style-humanities>

Checking That You've Cited Your Sources Correctly

You can check that you've used MLA style citations correctly by using the Citation Machine website:

<http://www.CitationMachine.net/>

You may also want to check with your professor to see if you've cited your sources correctly and if your paper format looks correct.

Formatting Your Paper in Accordance with the MLA style

On the next pages, we'll show you how your paper should look, and we'll give you tips on how to set up the formatting. We'll also show you how to cite the most common sources for papers.

We will not address every type of citation you might use. Use the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* for citations we don't address in this handout.

Your First and Last Name

Your Professor's Title and Last Name

Title of the Course You're Taking

Date

An Interesting and Informative Title

This is how your paper should look. You should have 1" margins on top, bottom, and sides. Double space. Use Times New Roman typeface in a 12-point font.

You should paginate your paper (that means put page numbers on it). To be in proper MLA format, you should number every page, including page one and the Works Cited page. If you are using some version of Windows, go to the "Insert" ribbon. Go to the header and footer section, which is in the middle. Hit the # mark. Put the curser in front of the number and type in your name. Hit tab to make your name and the page number go to the upper right hand corner. Close the header ribbon.

Use a title. You may not simply use the title of the piece you are analyzing. Do not underline your title. Do not put it in quotation marks. Do not bold or italicize it. Do not put it in all capital letters. That is for papers that are published.

Indent ½" from the left margin of the paper each time you start a new paragraph. Indicate that you've quoted something by enclosing it in quotation marks. When you use a quote, embed it in a sentence of your own

commentary. For instance, “look at what we just did here. We started the sentence with ‘for instance’ and then went on with the quote. Sophisticated writers do this because a quote really should not be floating around unanchored in your paper. You are a college writer now, and you are ready to demonstrate a masterful technique” (Author 4). The information in the parenthesis is called a parenthetical citation, which is how you cite the author and page number of the material you quoted. Notice that the punctuation goes after the close of the parenthesis.

If you are using a quote that is longer than three lines, set it off from the rest of the text by tabbing over once, like this

When you tab over for this longer quote, you do not use quotation marks. Setting off the quote by tabbing the text indicates that you have just quoted something. Make certain that you continue your paper by commenting on the quote. It is up to you to explain to your reader how and why this quoted material fits into your paper. The reader cannot ask you questions, and the reader also cannot read your mind. If you think to yourself, “They will know what I mean,” you are dead wrong. That is your job. Make it crystal clear how the quote fits into your paper. (Author 5)

If you are quoting less than three lines of a poem, you’ll want to introduce the poem, “Then you will type the poem. / Put a backslash in between each line. / Make sure to put a space on either side of the back slash. / Also, include the punctuation exactly as it appears in the poem” (11-14).

Notice that the parenthetical citation includes the lines of the poetry you've just quoted. If you are quoting more than four lines of poetry, set the poem off the same way you would a longer prose quote.

I never saw a purple cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you anyhow,
I'd rather see than be one.

(Burgess 210)

Notice that there's no punctuation after the parenthetical citation; you also don't need to put quotation marks around the poem because setting it off lets your reader know that it's a quote. Once again, remember to comment on this quote so your reader understands how it relates to your paper.

Once you have concluded your paper, you will move on to the Works Cited page, which is where you will provide the complete information about all the sources you used for your paper. Center the words "Works Cited" about 1" from the top of the page. Then list the citations in alphabetical order by the author's last name. Double space between each entry. The Works Cited page is numbered sequentially with the rest of your paper; if the last page of your paper is page 5, the Works Cited will be on page 6.

Works Cited

Book with One Author

Last Name, First Name. *Title*. City: Publisher, Year.

Book with Two or More Authors

Last Name, First Name and First Name Last Name. *Title*. City: Publisher, Year.

Multiple Books by the Same Author

Last Name, First Name. *Title*. City: Publisher, Year.

---. *Title*. City: Publisher, Year.

Anthology (collection of works edited by one or more people)

Last Name, First Name, ed. *Title of the Anthology*. City: Publisher, Year.

Work in an Anthology

Last Name, First Name, "Title of the Piece," in *Title of the Anthology*. Editors of
 Anthology. Edition #. City: Publisher, Year, Page Number. Print.

Article in a Printed Journal

Last Name, First Name, "Title of the Article," *Title of the Journal* Volume #
 (Year): Page Numbers.

Article from a Website

Last Name, First Name. "Title of the Article," <URL>, Date You Accessed the
 Site.

Some Notes about the Works Cited Page

- List all the works you cited.
- Put the list in alphabetical order by the author's Last Name, First Name.
- Include works you consulted but did not cite if you would like to do so.
- Start the first line of each entry at the left margin.
- Indent the second line of each entry ½" from the left margin.
- Double space each entry.
- Consult the online the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* for citations other than the ones listed on this handout