Guide to the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers

This guide describes the format recommended by the Modern Language Association (MLA) for preparing a research paper. Examples of references are listed on the reverse side. For questions not answered by this guide, consult the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th ed.) at the Reference Desk.

Basic Format:
- Use standard-sized paper, 8 ½ x 11 inches.
- All margins (top, bottom, and sides) should be one inch wide.
- Type the paper double-spaced.
- Do not justify the right margin.
- Indent the first line of each paragraph five spaces.
- There is no separate title page. On the first page, beginning in the upper left corner, at the margin and one inch from the top of the page, type the following information double-spaced.
  - Your name
  - Your professor’s name
  - Course title and number
  - Date
  - Center the Title, use upper and lower case letters.
  - Double space, then begin the text of the paper.

- Number each page in the upper right corner, ½ inch from the top of the page and flush with the right margin. Include your last name before each page number.
  
  Example: Smith 2

- Italicize titles of books, plays, Web sites, online databases, films, magazines, journals, etc.
  
  Example: Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet will be presented at the College Theater in October.

- Use quotation marks for titles of works published within a larger work: titles of essays, poems, an article in a journal, a short story in a collection, a chapter in a book, a Web page on a larger Web site, etc.
  
  Example: The importance of provenance is addressed in Pfeiffer’s essay “Masterpieces of Art and Prior Ownership.”

Citing Another Person’s Ideas or Work:
- Give credit for ideas you have paraphrased by including the author’s last name and page number from the original source in parentheses.
  
  Example: Bradford’s research indicates that the Elizabethan era was a fashion-conscious age, and clothing indicative of one’s wealth (153).

- Place quotation marks around words and sentences quoted directly. Include the author’s last name and page number in parentheses.
  
  Example: One historian states that the “Elizabethan era was a highly fashion-conscious age, and clothing was a primary indicator of wealth” (Bradford 153).

Works Cited (Examples on Back)

In MLA style, the Works Cited list appears at the end of your paper, beginning with a new page which is double-spaced. Center the title, Works Cited, one inch from the top of the page. Citations are arranged alphabetically, by author, or by title if there is no author. The first line of each citation begins at the left margin and all additional lines of the citation are indented five spaces or 1/2 inch. Double space each entry and double space between entries. (To save space, examples on the next page are not double-spaced. Your list should be double-spaced.) The Works Cited list includes only those works you have actually cited in the text of your paper. If you read additional sources when conducting your research but do not make reference to them in the text of your paper, do not include them.
EXAMPLES OF WORKS CITED  (Examples on this page are not double-spaced.  Your list should be double-spaced.)

MAJOR WORKS: Books, Chapters in Edited Books, Entry in an Encyclopedia, Film or DVD

One Author

Two or Three Authors

More than Three Authors: Use et al. or list all names in full in the same order as in the original work.

Editor

Unknown author

Work in an anthology or collection

Entry in an encyclopedia or dictionary

PERIODICAL ARTICLES

Journal

Magazine

Newspaper

Anonymous

PERIODICAL ARTICLES FOUND IN A LIBRARY DATABASE

Begin the entry as you would for citing an article in a print publication (see above), but do not include the word “Print.” Instead, include the title of the database (italicized), the medium (Web), and the date of access (day, month, year).

Examples of Articles from Library Databases: *Academic Search Premier, Project Muse* and *JSTOR*


WEBSITE, WEB PAGE OR SCHOLARLY JOURNAL ARTICLE ON THE WEB

To cite a Web site, Web page or an article from a scholarly journal on the Internet (not from a Cheng Library database), begin the entry as you would for a comparable print publication but omit the word Print. Include the author, title of the work (in quotation marks or italicized depending on if it is an independent work or part of a larger Web site), title of overall Web site italicized (if not included as the title). If page numbers are not available, use “n. pag.” (without the quotes) in the place of page numbers. Include the word Web and the date of access (day, month, year).

Web page on a Web site (no author)

Web page on a Web site (no author and no date, use N.d. or n.d.)

Web site (with editors listed but no publisher, use N.p.)

Web Page (with author on a larger Web site, no pages, use n. pag.)

Scholarly article on the Web (with author)