

Welcome to the Purdue OWL



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Summary:

Welcome to the OWL Workshop on MLA Style. This workshop will introduce you to the Modern Language Association (MLA) Style for writing and formatting research papers. To get the most out of this workshop, you should begin with the introductory material below, which covers what MLA Style is, why it is used, and who should apply this style to their work. Then you are invited to browse through the OWL's various handouts on different aspects of MLA Formatting and Citations standards, both as sources appear in-text and in final reference page. Click [here](#) to read about the 2009 MLA updates.

MLA Overview and Workshop

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Note: This workshop should answer most of your basic questions about using MLA Style. However, if you are writing a complex document such as a thesis or lengthy manuscript, or if you have detailed questions, you should consult *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Seventh Edition), which you can usually find at your local library or in many bookstores.

The MLA also has a [website](#) that allows you to order the handbook online. The site also includes some answers to frequently asked questions on basic details of MLA Style that you can consult. Purdue's OWL also has a list of [Additional Resources](#) covering MLA Style as well.

What is MLA Style?

MLA Style establishes standards of written communication concerning:

- formatting and page layout
- stylistic technicalities (e.g. abbreviations, footnotes, quotations)

- citing sources
- and preparing a manuscript for publication in certain disciplines.

Why Use MLA?

Using MLA Style properly makes it easier for readers to navigate and comprehend a text by providing familiar cues when referring to sources and borrowed information. Editors and instructors also encourage everyone to use the same format so there is consistency of style within a given field. Abiding by MLA's standards as a writer will allow you to:

- Provide your readers with cues they can use to follow your ideas more efficiently and to locate information of interest to them
- Allow readers to focus more on your ideas by not distracting them with unfamiliar or complicated formatting
- Establish your credibility or ethos in the field by demonstrating an awareness of your audience and their needs as fellow researchers (particularly concerning the citing of references)

Who Should Use MLA?

MLA Style is typically reserved for writers and students preparing manuscripts in various humanities disciplines such as:

- English Studies - Language and Literature
- Foreign Language and Literatures
- Literary Criticism
- Comparative Literature
- Cultural Studies

MLA Formatting and Notation Style

You should start by becoming familiar with the general formatting requirements of MLA Style, as well as the different standards for notation that MLA writers are expected to use. Because MLA is different than other writing styles, such as APA, you should pay attention to every detail of the Style, from general paper layout to abbreviations. The following pages will introduce you to some of these basic requirements of MLA Style to get you started in the right direction.

General Format

- Covers the basic requirements of page layout for a typical MLA manuscript
- Includes general guidelines to apply through the document and specific formatting details for the first page of the paper
- Also provides an image of sample first page of an essay written in MLA Style

Footnotes and Endnotes

- Explains the necessity for using notes and how to use them effectively in an MLA paper
- Covers different reasons for why you may use a footnote or endnote to supplement the main body of your paper
- Describes how to number and format the notes to be consistent with MLA guidelines

Formatting Quotations

- Describes how to format quotations borrowed from secondary sources
- Addresses both short quotations worked into the writer's own sentences and long quotations that are blocked off as distinct material
- Also explains how to omit or add in words properly to clarify the meaning of a quotation

Abbreviations

- Covers MLA standards for abbreviating words commonly use in academic prose
- Describes the different categories of abbreviations: time, locations, academic references, publishers
- Includes guidelines for abbreviating information in citations in a Works Cited page

MLA Citations and Works Cited Page

As with any publishing style, the most difficult aspect of MLA Style to master are the requirements for citing secondary sources accurately. The pages included here walk you through the details of incorporating citations into the text of your paper as well as how to compose a works cited page of references at the end of your paper. **Read these guidelines carefully.** It is important that you refer to your sources according to MLA Style so your readers can quickly follow the citations to the reference page and then, from there, locate any sources that might be of interest to them. They will expect this information to be presented in a particular style, and any deviations from that style could result in confusing your readers about where you obtained your information.

In-Text Citations: The Basics

- Addresses the formatting requirements of using the MLA Style for citing secondary sources within the text of your essay
- Offers a few basic rules for using parenthetical citations, including when not to use such citations
- Includes examples of in-text citations
- Explains the author-page formatting of the parenthetical citation and how that applies to different types of sources
- Provides examples of in-text citations based on the kind of source being cited, such as a literary work, an anonymous work, and work with multiple authors
- Also describes how to cite a source indirectly referenced in another source

Works Cited Page: Basic Format

- Guides you through the general rules that apply to any works cited page using MLA Style, from where the page appears and how to list the works
- Walks you through how to construct a reference entry for different text starting with a focus on author
- Serves as a primer on formatting that will be followed in all of the following handouts on creating MLA works cited entries
- Includes example Works Cited Page

Works Cited Page: Books

- Builds from the basic format page with a focus on how to create citations for types of commonly referenced book sources
- Includes guidelines and examples for a variety of books depending on the number of authors, whether the work is a piece is a larger work, or if the book itself is part of multivolume collection

Works Cited Page: Other Common Sources

- Provides guidelines on how to reference other sources you may encounter during research that are considered books or non-periodical works
- Includes works that you might likely use but have different publication information, such as a government document, pamphlet, and dissertations

Works Cited Page: Periodicals

- Covers the guidelines for developing a citation entry for works found in periodicals, typically articles in circulating publications that have different dates and volume/issue numbers
- Lists types of entries depending on the kind of journal (e.g. one paginated by volume), if the source is a magazine v. a newspaper, or the kind of article the source is (e.g. a letter to the editor)

Works Cited Page: Electronic Sources

- Walks through the basic requirements and unique qualifications for constructing references for different types of electronic sources
- Covers more standard sources from online periodicals and scholarly databases, to less conventional sources like emails and video recordings found online
- Includes OWL suggestions on how to cite weblog entries and comments posted to blogs (NOTE: consult your instructor to find out if these are acceptable research sources to use)

Works Cited Page: Other Non-Print Sources

- Applies the basic MLA citation rules to non-print sources you may use in your research, such as interviews and images

- Provides directions and examples of how to cite video and sound recordings, as well as three dimensional works like sculptures

Please Note: If you know exactly what you're looking for concerning MLA, you can use the OWL Navigation to the left by looking under "Research and Citation" and clicking on "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." You may also use the search box at the top of the navigation bar to find resources.

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