**Introduction to MLA Formatting**

By Allie Donahue

Source*:* The Purdue University Writing Lab, 2016.

For more detailed information about MLA, visit https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/.

MLA (Modern Language Association) style is the most commonly used to write paper and cite sources within the liberal arts and humanities. This resource offers examples for the general format of MLA in-text citations and Works Cited page.

**In-Text Citations**

In MLA style, referring to the works of others in your text is done by using what is known as parenthetical citation. This method involves placing relevant source information in parentheses after a quote or a paraphrase.

**Rules**

1. The source information required in a parenthetical citation depends (1.) upon the source medium (e.g. Print, Web, DVD) and (2.) upon the source’s entry on the Works Cited (bibliography) page.
2. Any source information that you provide in-text must correspond to the source information on the Works Cited page. More specifically, whatever signal word or phrase you provide to your readers in the text, must be the first thing that appears on the left-hand margin of the corresponding entry in the Works Cited List.

**In Practice**

The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase, but the page number(s) should always appear in the parentheses, not in the text of your sentence. For example:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).   
  
Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

For quotations that are more than four lines of prose or three lines of verse, place quotations in a free-standing block of text and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented one inch from the left margin; maintain double-spacing. Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. For example:

In *Wuthering Heights,* Nelly treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Bronte 78)

**Works Cited**

According to MLA style, you must have a Works Cited page at the end of your paper. All entries in the Works Cited page must correspond to the works cited in your main text.

**Rules**

1. Begin your Works Cited page on a separate page at the end of your research paper. It should have the same one-inch margins and last name, page number header as the rest of your paper.
2. Label the page Works Cited (do not italicize the words Works Cited or put them in quotation marks) and center the words Works Cited at the top of the page.
3. Double space all citations, but do not skip spaces between entries.
4. Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations by 0.5 inches to create a hanging indent.
5. Organize alphabetically by authors’ last names.

**In Practice**

**Basic Book Format**

Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Publication Date.

**Example**

Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. Penguin, 1987.

**Basic Journal Article Format**

Author(s). “Title of Article.” *Title of Journal*, Volume, Issue, Year, pages.

**Example**

Bagchi, Alaknanda. “Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's *Bashai Tudu*.” *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* vol. 15, no. 1, 1996, pp. 41-50.

**Basic Webpage Format**

“Title of Article.” *Website Title,* Date Accessed. URL.

**Example**

“Athlete's Foot - Topic Overview.” WebMD, 25 Sept. 2014, www.webmd.com/skin-problems-and- treatments/tc/athletes-foot-topic-overview.