



# MLA 9 Style Reference Guide

The Modern Language Association (MLA) is used frequently in the humanities and liberal arts. This resource offers information and examples for general MLA format, in-text citations, references, headings, and page structure.

## General Document Guidelines

- Double-space the text of your paper.
- Use an 11-13 point font—Times New Roman is suggested.
- Use one-inch margins.
- Indent each paragraph by 1/2 inch or five spaces.
- Section headings are sometimes utilized as organizational and structural tools in a paper. For more information on formatting section headings, see 1.5 in the MLA 9 Handbook.
- Italicize the titles of longer works.
  - ⇒ Longer works include books, the names of TV series, collection or anthology titles, journals, books, websites and movies. These should be italicized.
- Use quotation marks around the titles of shorter works.
  - ⇒ Shorter works include articles, the names of episodes within a series, the names of plays, short stories, chapters in a book, pages on a website, lectures, and single poems. These should be in quotes.
- Some categories of work are capitalized as titles but do not require any special formatting.
  - ⇒ Works that are not italicized or enclosed in quotations include scripture, laws, acts, political documents, conferences, workshops, ancient artworks and buildings.
- **These rules apply to the Works Cited entries as well.**

## The First Page

- Do not use a title page unless your instructor requests one.
- Instead, simply type your name, instructor's name, course number, and date at the top of the first page, flushed left to the margin and all on separate lines.
- The title of your paper should be centered beneath your heading on **a separate line**. It should not be *italicized*, underlined, "in quotation marks", or written in ALL CAPITALS.
- There should also be a running header which begins on the first page. It is composed of your last name followed by the page number: Picard 1



The diagram shows a sample MLA header with several callout boxes:

- Blue box (left):** Your name, the professor's name, the course number, and the date of the paper are double-spaced in 12-point, Times New Roman font. Dates in MLA are written in this order: day, month, and year. Do not abbreviate the month.
- Header text:** E. L. Angeli  
Professor Patricia Sullivan  
English 624  
12 February 2012
- Green box (top center):** Green text boxes contain explanations of MLA style guidelines.
- Blue box (center):** Blue boxes contain directions for writing and citing in MLA style.
- Blue box (right):** Page numbers begin on page 1 and end on the final page. Type your name next to the page number in the header so that it appears on every page.
- Header text (right):** Angeli 1
- Green box (right):** Use personal pronouns (I, we, us, etc.) at your instructor's discretion.
- Blue box (bottom right):** Titles are centered and written in 12-point, Times New Roman font. The title is not bolded, underlined, or italicized.

**Title:** Toward a Recovery of Nineteenth Century Farming Handbooks

**Text:** While researching texts written about nineteenth century farming, I found a few authors who published books about the literature of nineteenth century farming, particularly agricultural journals, newspapers, pamphlets, and brochures. These authors often placed the farming literature they were studying into an historical context by

Source: Purdue OWL

## Capitalization Guidelines

In MLA, capitalize

- titles that precede a name (Ex. **Professor** Davis)
  - adjectives that are derived from a proper noun (ex. **Canadian** wildlife)
  - proper nouns
- ⇒ Proper nouns are words that refer to a specific person, place, or thing. General nouns are nouns that do not refer to any specific person, place, or thing.

<u>Proper Version</u>	<u>General Version</u>
President Kennedy	the president
The United States Army	the army
The Brooklyn Bridge	the bridge



For capitalizing titles, capitalize the first word, the last word, and all principal words. In titles, you should capitalize:

- nouns (ex. *The **F**lowers of Europe*)
- pronouns (ex. *Save **O**ur Children*)
- verbs (ex. *America **W**atches Television*)
- adjectives (ex. *The **L**ovely Bones*)
- adverbs (ex. *Only **S**lightly Corrupt*)
- subordinating conjunctions: after, although, as, as if, as soon as, because, before, if, that, unless, until, when, where, while. (ex. *Life **A**s I Find It*)

Do not capitalize the following parts of speech if they occur in the middle of the title:

- prepositions (ex. *The Artist **a**s Critic*)
- coordinating conjunctions: and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so. (ex. *Romeo **a**nd Juliet*)
- the “to” in infinitives (ex. *How **t**o Play Chess*)
- articles (ex. *Under **t**he Bamboo Tree*)
  - ⇒ Articles should be capitalized if they occur at the start of a subtitle (ex. *Building Libraries in Exile: **T**he English Convents and Their Book Collections in the Seventeenth Century*)

For untitled works, use the first line or full text if the text is short enough, and capitalize as it appears in the source. Follow the formatting guidelines for your source just as if you were using the title.

- Gertrude Stein’s poem “The house was just twinkling in the moon light”
- The tweet “Avoiding Plagiarism: it’s easy with MLA’s free online guidelines”

For capitalizing with quotations, capitalize:

- after you use a verb to introduce a quote (ex. writes, says, states, exclaims, etc.)
  - ⇒ In *The Mirror and the Light*, Hilary Mantel **writes**, “Our possessions outlast us.”
  - ⇒ Of our personal belongings, Hilary Mantel **writes**, “[T]hey will be our witnesses when we are gone.”
- the first letter of the first word in a block quote.

When a quote is integrated into your sentence, lowercase the letter if it would be lowercase in a normal sentence. Use square brackets to show if you have changed the capitalization from the source.

- ⇒ In *The Mirror and the Light*, Hilary Mantel **writes**, “[o]ur possessions outlast us.”



## Writing with Numbers

### Use words to express:

- Numbers that can be contained in one or two words.  
⇒ One hundred
- Numbers if they are used infrequently throughout the section.
- Numbers that are percentages or amounts of money that can be expressed in less than three words.  
⇒ Fifteen percent  
⇒ Twenty-three dollars
- Numbers that appear at the beginning of a sentence. Consider rewording the sentence so that the number appears later on for consistency.  
⇒ Two hundred people
- A century or an increment of time  
⇒ Half past two

### Use numerals to express:

- Numbers that are more than two words or are in sections where a lot of numbers are being used  
⇒ Four thousand and fifteen vs. 4,015
- Numbers that precede a unit of measurement  
⇒ 5 kilograms
- Numbers that refer to an address. Do not format the suffix in the superscript.  
⇒ 3rd avenue instead of 3<sup>rd</sup> avenue
- Numbers that are decimals or items in a numbered series
- Numbers that are times or years  
⇒ 2:00PM  
⇒ 2022

## In-Text Citations and Quoting

### In-Text Citations

In-text citations, also called parenthetical citations, should be concise. The purpose of a citation is to credit the source and to direct the reader to the correct entry in your Works Cited page. When giving credit, you should include a page number and the name of the author. If the author's name is not available, cite using the title. The name or title only needs to be cited once in the sentence **or** as an in-text citation.

**Correct**

According to Naomi Baron, reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (194).

**Incorrect (redundant)**

According to Naomi Baron, reading is “just half of literacy. The other half is writing” (Baron 194).

If you use a title to cite your source and the title is longer than a noun phrase, you should shorten the title. This can be done by including only the first phrase, excluding the initial articles. For further information on shortening titles, see section 6.10 in the MLA 9 Handbook.

⇒ *How to Avoid Huge Ships* ⇒ *How to Avoid* ⇒ (*How to Avoid*, 220)  
 ⇒ *The Double Vision: Language and Meaning in Religion* ⇒ *Double Vision* ⇒ (*Double Vision*, 102).

- MLA uses an author-page style of in-text citation. The author’s last name and the page number are used in parenthesis. There are a few ways you can do this:
  - ⇒ Rilke uses roses to discuss the transient nature of existence (22).
  - ⇒ A rose’s calyx is a metaphor for the soul (Rilke 22).
  - ⇒ “Roses are unfolding” (Rilke 22).
- If the source does not have a page number, you should use a different kind of location marker. This can be a time stamp, chapter, line number, paragraph number or anything else that indicates where the cited section is coming from in the source. Page numbers do not need to be preceded by p. or pp. as they do on the Works Cited page.

**In Text**

Page 43

Chapter 4

Line 19

Scene 2

00:11:41

**In Parenthetical Citation**

(Smith 43)

(Smith, ch. 4)

(Smith, line 19)

(Smith, sc. 2)

(Smith, 00: 11: 41)



- When citing from a paginated work, always use the style of numbering (roman, Arabic, specialized, etc.) that the source uses.
- If you wish to leave out unnecessary words in a quotation, use ellipses. Never leave out words that change the meaning of the source or that make the sentence grammatically incorrect.
  - ⇒ “The tyrannosaurus rex was very dismayed.... that he could not clap his hands” (Riker 20).
- If you are changing or adding to the original content of a quote in order to provide clarity, use [square brackets] around the altered text.
  - ⇒ The man in the red shirt asked, “What could possibly happen [to me] on this mission?”
- Abbreviating the name of an organization in text is acceptable if the organization is referenced frequently. Always spell out the abbreviation the first time it is referenced and include the abbreviation that will be used henceforth for clarity.
  - ⇒ First mention: American Psychological Association (APA)
  - ⇒ Other mentions: APA
- Do not use periods after the abbreviated letters if they are made up of capital letters. The exception to this is when you are writing initials.
  - ⇒ DVD vs J. K. Rowling

## Block Quotes

Block quotes are quotes that are longer than 4 lines. The quote should be indented a half inch from the left margin, and it should remain double-spaced. There is no indent for the first line in the quote. For poetry, try to keep as much of the original formatting as possible. Use a colon to introduce block quotes unless the connection between your writing and the quote grammatically requires something different. Periods should occur before a parenthetical in-text citation. They should be formatted using the guidelines outlined in the following example.



teach us . . .” (75). His book captures the call and need for scientific experiments to develop new knowledge meant to be used in/on/with American soil, which reflects some farmers’ thinking of the day.

By the 1860s, the need for this knowledge was strong enough to affect education. John Nicholson anticipated this effect in 1820 in the “Experiments” section of his book *The Farmer’s Assistant; Being a Digest of All That Relates to Agriculture and the Conducting of Rural Affairs; Alphabetically Arranged and Adapted for the United States:*

Use block quotations when quoted text runs longer than four lines once typed in your paper.

Perhaps it would be well, if some institution were devised, and supported at the expense of the State, which would be so organized as would tend most effectually to produce a due degree of emulation among Farmers, by rewards and honorary distinctions conferred by those who, by their successful experimental efforts and improvements, should render themselves duly entitled to them.<sup>3</sup> (92)

Block quotations begin on a new line, are double-spaced, and are indented half an inch from the margin. Do not add quotation marks not present in the original. The citation information (author name and page number) follows the quote’s end punctuation.

Source: Purdue OWL

### Indirect Sources

An indirect source is a source that contains and cites ideas or work from another author. It is always preferred that writers use direct sources when possible. If you are quoting from a secondhand source, use the abbreviation “qtd. in” before including the indirect source you are citing. Another option is to include a note that clarifies this relationship. If your writing makes it clear that this information is from an indirect source, then you do not need the abbreviation or a note.

⇒ Ex. “In her article, Segal discusses how Jane Austen introduces many of her characters in terms of their financial situation. For instance, in the beginning of *Sense and Sensibility* Austen introduces us to the Dashwoods by saying, “The family of Dashwood had long been settled in Sussex. Their estate was large...” (qtd. in Segal 252).”

### Works Cited

- Title the source page “Works Cited.” It should begin on a separate page.
- All entries should include the following information in the same order as listed. For formatting guidance, check the following examples.

⇒ Author. Title of source. Title of container, contributor, version, number, publisher, publication date, location.



- All entries should be listed in alphabetical order.
- **Omit information that is unknown or does not apply** such as page numbers or date.

If a title is not available, then create your own description of the source as the title or use the first line of text.

⇒ Benton, Thomas Hart. Letter to Charles Fremont. 22 June 1987. John Charles Fremont Papers, Southwest Museum Library, Los Angeles. Manuscript.

- Use a hanging indent for each entry
- Double space the Work Cited entries. See example below.
- Locations of publication have little relevance today. Only include this information if your source was published before 1900 or if there are different versions of your source that vary by location.

⇒ Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. London, Bloomsbury, 1997.

⇒ Rowling, J.K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. New York, 1999.

- For government documents, include only the year of publication even if there is an exact date on the document.
- Include the date a web source was accessed if the source lacks a publication date. This information is optional.
- There are many other supplemental elements that can be included in a citation. See 5.105 in the MLA 9 Handbook for more information.
- Include abbreviations for volume, issue, and page number respectively e.g. vol. (volume), no. (number), pp. (pages), p. (page).

The Works Cited page begins on a new page. Center the title "Works Cited" without underlining, bolding, or italicizing it. If there is only one entry, title this page "Work Cited."

The Works Cited page is a list of all the sources cited in your paper.

### Works Cited

Allen, R.L. *The American Farm Book; or Compend of American Agriculture; Being a Practical Treatise on Soils, Manures, Draining, Irrigation, Grasses, Grain, Roots, Fruits, Cotton, Tobacco, Sugar Cane, Rice, and Every Staple Product of the United States with the Best Methods of Planting, Cultivating, and Preparation for Market*. Saxton, 1849.

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MLA now requires only the publisher, and not the city of publication. The 8<sup>th</sup> edition also does not require sources to have a publication marker, (such as "Print").





## Containers

A container is a platform or work that contains another form of work. For example, this could be a journal that contains an article or a database that contains an article. Containers are a necessary part of citation that occur after the source title and before contributor information. There are some works that are self-contained, like a printed novel. If this is the case, leave the title of container section empty, but include any relevant publication details in the container section of the citation. There are also some works that have multiple containers, such as an article published in a journal that was digitalized.

If a website links you to a different location which then is where you get your source from, then that first website is not a container. For example, if Blackboard links you to an article on CNN, Blackboard is not a container, CNN is. For more information, see section 5.34 in the MLA 9 handbook.

- ⇒ Sigmund, Paul E. “Chile” Latin American Politics and Development, edited by Howard J. Wiarda and Harvy F. Kline, 7th ed., Westview Press, 2011, pp. 168-99.
- ⇒ Austen, Jane. Emma. Penguin Books, 2011.
- ⇒ Langhamer, Claire. “Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England.” *Historical Journal*, vol. 50, no. 1, 2007, pp. 173-96. *ProQuest*, doi:10.1017/S0018246X06005966. Accessed 27 May 2009.

## URLs and DOIs

URLs are web addresses and often when citing, they need to be truncated in the Works Cited page. URLs should omit <http://> or <https://> as long as the citation still links to the source. If a URL is more than three lines or is longer than the rest of the entry, then it should be shortened to only the host.

- ⇒ [Go.galegroup.com/ps](http://Go.galegroup.com/ps)

A digital object identifier (DOI), is a string of letters and numbers that links to the location of your online source. You should be able to click on the URL or DOI and go directly to the source you are referencing. There are times when a source will indicate that the URL is stable and will not change. In cases like this, the URL is called a permalink and this link is preferred over a normal URL. A DOI will not change over time, so, when possible, it is preferable to use one over a URL or permalink.



## Works Cited Examples

<p><b>One author (book):</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name Middle Initial. <i>Title</i>. Publisher, Publication date.</p> <p>Rowell, Rainbow. <i>Eleanor and Park</i>. St. Martin's Press, 2014.</p>
<p><b>Two authors (book):</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name Middle Initial., and First Name Last Name. <i>Title</i>. Publisher, Publication date.</p> <p>Dorris, Michael, and Louise Erdrich. <i>The Crown of Columbus</i>. HarperCollins Publishers, 1999.</p>
<p><b>Three or more authors (book):</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name Middle Initial., et al. <i>Title</i>. Publisher, Publication date.</p> <p>Charon, Rita, et al. <i>The Principles and Practice of Narrative Medicine</i>. Oxford UP, 2017.</p>
<p><b>No author:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p><i>Title</i>. Publisher, Publication date.</p> <p><i>Lazarillo de Tormes</i>. Medina del Campo, 1554.</p>
<p>⇒ <b>Organization as author:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Organization name. <i>Title</i>. Publisher, Year.</p> <p>United Nations. <i>Consequences of Rapid Population Growth in Developing Countries</i>. Taylor and Francis. 1991.</p>
<p>⇒ <b>Newspaper Article:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name. "Article Title." <i>Newspaper name</i>. Date published. Page numbers.</p> <p>Brubaker, Bill. "New Health Center Targets County's Uninsured Patients." <i>Washington Post</i>, 24 May 2007, p. LZ01.</p>



<p><b>Article/chapter in a book:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name. "Title." Title of Collection, edited by Editor's Name(s), Publisher, Year, Page range of entry.</p> <p>Harris, Muriel. "Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers." <i>A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers One to One</i>, edited by Ben Rafoth, Heinemann, 2000, pp. 24-3</p>
<p><b>Edited book:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name. <i>Title</i>, edited by First Name Last Name, Publisher, Year.</p> <p>Bronte, Charlotte. <i>Jane Eyre</i>, edited by Margaret Smith, Oxford UP, 1998.</p>
<p><b>Article with a DOI:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name. "Title." <i>Journal</i>, Volume number, Version number, Year, Page range, . <i>Container</i>. DOI. Access date.</p> <p>Langhamer, Claire. "Love and Courtship in Mid-Twentieth-Century England." <i>Historical Journal</i>, vol. 50, no. 1, 2007, pp. 173-96. <i>ProQuest</i>, <a href="https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X06005966">https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X06005966</a>. Accessed 27 May 2009.</p>
<p><b>Article with a URL:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name. "Title." <i>Container</i>. URL. Access date.</p> <p>Lundman, Susan. "How to Make Vegetarian Chili." <i>eHow</i>, <a href="http://www.ehow.com/how_10727_make-vegetarian-chili.html">www.ehow.com/how_10727_make-vegetarian-chili.html</a>. Accessed 6 July 2015.</p>
<p><b>Website:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name. <i>Site Name</i>. Version number, Sponsor/Publisher of site, Publication date, DOI/URL/permalink. Date of access.</p> <p><i>The Purdue OWL Family of Sites</i>. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008, <a href="http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl">owl.english.purdue.edu/owl</a>. Accessed 23 Apr. 2008.</p>
<p><b>Government reports, statutes, laws:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First name. Name of the national government, agency. Title. Publishing office and year. Page numbers.</p> <p>United States, Congress, Senate, Committee on Energy and Natural Resources. <i>Hearing on the Geopolitics of Oil</i>. Government Printing Office, 2007. 110th Congress, 1st session, Senate Report 111-8.</p>



<p><b>Social Media:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Social Media Username “Post.” Date and time of posting. Date accessed. URL/DOI.</p> <p>@PurdueWLab. “Spring break is around the corner, and all our locations will be open next week.” Twitter, 5 Mar. 2012, 12:58 p.m., twitter.com/PurdueWLab/status/176728308736737282.</p>
<p><b>Private blog:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Last Name, First Name. “Posting Title.” Name of Site, Version number, Sponsor/publisher, URL. Date of access.</p> <p>almar1515 [Sal Hernandez]. “Re: Best Strategy: Fenced Pastures vs. Max Number of Rooms?” <i>BoardGameGeek</i>, 29 Sept. 2008, boardgamegeek.com/thread/343929/best-strategy-fenced-pastures-vs-max-number-rooms. Accessed 5 Apr. 2009.</p>
<p><b>Lecture Notes:</b></p> <p>⇒ Example:</p>	<p>Speaker name. “Title of lecture/speech.” Conference/meeting/class, name of organization. Venue and city. Appropriate descriptor of work.</p> <p>Stein, Bob. “Reading and Writing in the Digital Era.” Discovering Digital Dimensions, Computers and Writing Conference, 23 May 2003, Union Club Hotel, West Lafayette, IN. Keynote Address.</p>

**Further Assistance:** For more detailed help or if you have questions, visit the Writing Center located in the Lewis University Library or call 815-836-5427.

**Sources Consulted:** Purdue OWL, MLA 9 Handbook, Western Oregon University Hamersly Library