MLA Reference Guide

MLA style stands for Modern Language Association, and it is a style of formatting used frequently in the humanities and liberal arts for in-text citations, references, headings, and general page structure. *Please note that this is the revised eighth edition of MLA style.*

General Guidelines

- Double-space the text of your paper.

- Use a 12 point font—Times New Roman is suggested.

- Use one inch margins.

- Indent each paragraph by 1/2 inch or by five spaces.

- Italicize the titles of longer works. Use quotation marks around the titles of shorter works.

    ° **Longer works** include: books, the names of TV series, collection or anthology titles, and movies.

    ° **Shorter works** include: articles, the names of episodes within a series, the names of plays, and single poems.

The First Page

- Do not use a title page unless your instructor requests one. You simply need an in-text header.

- You can set this up by typing your name, instructor's name, course number, and date at the top of the page, flushed left with the margin.

- The title of your paper should be centered beneath the above information. It should not be *italicized*, underlined, "in quotation marks", or written in ALL CAPITALS.

- There should also be a header which begins on the first page. It is composed of your last name followed by the page number: (Picard 1).

Page header. ➡ Picard 1

Jean-Luc Picard

Professor Vash

Anthropology 101

21 October 2014

The Use of Gold in Pottery

⬅ Here's what the top of your first page should look like!

In-Text Citations

- MLA uses an author-page style of in-text citation. The author's last name and the page number are used in the 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 you wish to leave out unnecessary words in a quotation, use ellipses.

  ○ "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?"

Block Quotes

Long quotations are referred to as *block quotes*. These are used when one is quoting more than three lines of verse or four lines of prose. The text is indented one inch from the left margin, and it should remain double-spaced. For poetry, try to keep as much of the original formatting as possible.

Picard 28

In his work *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*, Robert Pirsig discusses the nature of systems that affect the human experience:

> But to tear down a factory or to revolt against a government or to avoid repair of a motorcycle because it is a system is to attack effects rather than causes; and as long as the attack is upon effects only, no change is possible. The true system, the real system, is our present construction of systematic thought itself, rationality itself, and if a factory is torn down but the rationality which produced it is left standing, then that rationality will simply produce another factory. If a revolution destroys a systematic government, but the systematic patterns of thought that produced that government are left intact, then those patterns will repeat themselves in the succeeding government. There's so much talk about the system. And so little understanding. (100)

Section Headings

The MLA guide lines suggest using numbers to designate different sections of an essay. (See below.) Subheadings use a decimal to indicate this. There are numbered and unnumbered headings.

Numbered
1.0 Turtles
2.0 Anteaters
2.1 Ant cuisine hot spots
3.0 Giraffes
4.0 Topiary

Formatted Headings In-text Without Numbers

Level 1 Heading: bold, flush left

Level 2 Heading: italics, flush left

Level 3 Heading: centered, bold

Level 4 Heading: centered, italics

Level 5 Heading: underlined, flush left

Works Cited

- Title the source page "Works Cited." It should begin on a separate page.

- Do not indent the first line for every entry.

- Double space the Work Cited entries.

- Italicize the titles of longer works.

- Use quotation marks around the titles of shorter works.

- Omit information that is unknown such as page numbers or date.

- Include the date a web source was accessed if you chose. This information is *optional*.

- Be sure to include the URLs for web sources, but omit the http://

- Include abbreviations for volume, issue, and page number respectively e.g. vol., no., pp.

Some Examples

Book:
Rowell, Rainbow. *Eleanor and Park*. St. Martin's Press, 2014.

Website Article:
National Council for Teachers of English. "NCTE/IRA Standards for English Language Arts." 9 Feb. 2012, www.ncte.org/standards.

Journal:
Marjatta, Takala. "Teaching Writing Through Reading." *Support for Learning* , Vol. 28, no. 1, 2013, pp. 17-23. Accessed 14 Sept. 2016.

Poem:
Whitman, Walt. "I Sing the Body Electric." *Burning Your Boats: The Collected Stories*. Penguin, 1995, p. 154.