

MCS MLA Style Guide 2010-2011

General MLA Format

MLA style specifies guidelines for formatting manuscripts and using the English language in writing. MLA style also provides writers with a system for referencing their sources through parenthetical citation in their essays and Works Cited pages.

Writers who properly use MLA also build their credibility by demonstrating accountability to their source material. Most importantly, the use of MLA style can protect writers from accusations of plagiarism, which is the purposeful or accidental uncredited use of source material by other writers.

The following overview covers only the MLA basics. For a complete set of up-to-date MLA guidelines, students should access the Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>.

General Guidelines for MCS Students

- Type your paper on a computer and print it on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use Arial 12.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks.
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. Be sure to use the Tab key. (Do not push the Space Bar five times.)
- Create a header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Use italics throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis.

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Do not make a title page for your paper.
- In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Be sure to use double-spaced text.
- Double space again and center the title. Do not underline, italicize, or place your title in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case (standard capitalization), not in all capital letters.
- Use quotation marks and/or italics when referring to other works in your title, just as you would in your text (for example, Symbolism in *Pilgrim's Progress* or Symbolism in Poe's "The Raven").
- Double space between the title and the first line of the text.
- Create a header in the upper right-hand corner that includes your last name, followed by a space with a page number; number all pages consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), one-half inch from the top and flush with right margin.
- MLA Document [Template](#) is available, along with these guidelines and a sample document, on the MCS website under Student Resources.

Basic In-Text Citation Rules

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.

General Guidelines

- The source information required in a parenthetical citation depends (1) upon the source medium (for example, Print, Web, DVD) and (2) upon the source's entry on the Works Cited page.
- 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-Text Citations: Author-Page Style

MLA format follows the author-page method of in-text citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation or paraphrase is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear on your Works Cited page. 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.

Examples of In-Text Citations *(note double-spaced text)*

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).

Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

Explanation of examples above: Both citations in the examples above, (263) and (Wordsworth 263), tell readers that the information in the sentence can be located on page 263 of a work by an author named Wordsworth. If readers want more information about this source, they can turn to the Works Cited page, where, under the name of Wordsworth, they would find the following information:

Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads*. London: Oxford U.P., 1967. Print.

Citing the Bible

In your first parenthetical citation, make clear which Bible you are using (italicize the title), as each version varies in its translation, followed by book (do not italicize or underline), chapter and verse. For example (note text is double spaced):

Ezekiel saw “what seemed to be four living creatures,” each with faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Ezek. 1.5-10).

If future references employ the same edition of the Bible, list only the book, chapter, and verse in the parenthetical citation.

Works Cited Page

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

Basic Rules

- 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.
- 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.
- Double space all citations. (Be sure to remove the extra 10 points following each paragraph that Microsoft Word uses as a default).
- Indent the second and subsequent lines of citations five spaces so that you create a hanging indent.
- List page numbers of sources efficiently, when needed. If you refer to a journal article that appeared on pages 225 through 250, list the page numbers on your Works Cited page as 225-50.

Source: *The Purdue OWL*. Purdue U Writing Lab, 2010. Web. 2 Aug 2010.

Sample Paper in MLA Style

A sample paper in MLA style is available on the MCS Website under Student Resources. Please note that this paper illustrates correct MLA formatting. The content of the paper itself is not addressed.