



Overview of MLA style

Where is it used?

MLA style is typically used in English and some humanities courses.

What is unique about this citation style?

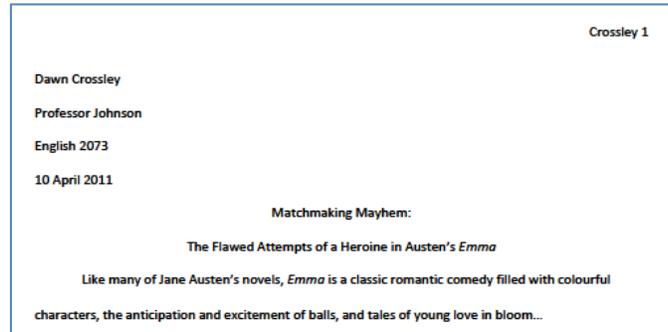
MLA style uses an author-page system for parenthetical references (Smith 298), along with a Works Cited page (a complete list of sources) at the end of a document.

Can I use headings to organize my paper? Should I include a title page?

Headings are generally discouraged in MLA style papers, as are title pages.

General formatting tips

- In place of a title page, begin an inch from the top and flush with the left margin on the first page. Type your name, your instructor's name, the course name and number, and the date, all double-spaced on separate lines.
- Double-space and centre your title. Use italics only to emphasize words that you will also italicize in your paper, such as book titles and foreign terms.
- Number pages in the upper right hand corner preceded by your last name.
- Indent the first line of each paragraph by one-half inch and double-space your text.



In-text citations for paraphrases or summaries of ideas

Even when you paraphrase or summarize (use your own words to express an author's ideas), you must credit the author for his research and ideas. Whenever possible, use a signal phrase in the present tense to introduce the author and integrate his ideas into your paper. For example:

Rigoberta Menchu charges the Church with failing to understand the plight of Guatemala's indigenous people (234).

In-text citations for direct quotations

When you borrow a source's exact words, enclose them in double quotation marks (for up to 3 lines of poetry or 4 lines of prose), indicate the author's surname, and add the page reference (for prose), line numbers (for poetry), or act, scene and line numbers (for a play). Observe these **prose** examples:

"[S]piritual mentoring does not belong only in the hands of the specialists. . . [S]piritual mentoring is the work of the community of faith just as friendship belongs to all people" (Anderson and Reese 56).

"I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen," explains C.S. Lewis, "not only because I see it, but because by it, I see everything else" (3).

Mark line breaks for two or three lines of **poetry** by using forward slashes (/).

Tennyson employs the techniques of alliteration and onomatopoeia to produce a chilling effect in *The Lady of Shalott*: "Willows whiten, aspens quiver, / Little breezes dusk and shiver" (10-11).

Longer quotes require special formatting known as block quoting. This applies to more than 4 lines of prose, more than 3 lines of poetry, or dialogue in a play. Punctuate the introductory phrase with a colon, forgo quotation marks (except to note quotations within the quotation), and set off the quoted material with an indentation of 1 inch from the left margin.

In a tribute to Helen Keller, Alden Whitman reflects on her steadfast character and faith amidst a life of challenge:

Despite the celebrity that accrued to her and the air of awesomeness with which she was surrounded in her later years, Miss Keller retained an unaffected personality and a certainty that

her optimistic attitude toward life was justified. "I believe that all through these dark and silent years, God has been using my life for a purpose I do not know," she said recently, adding, "But one day I shall understand and then I will be satisfied." (1)

Works Cited

- Put in bold, centre and title your list of sources **Works Cited**. Alphabetize entries by authors' surnames. Double-space the entire page, start entries at the left margin and use a hanging indent of one-half inch.
- To cite more than one work by the same author(s), include the name in the first entry. In subsequent entries, replace the name(s) with three hyphens and a period (---.) Proceed with the standard format for that entry.

Sample In-Text Citations (Parenthetical References)

One author	Bullock explains that writing functions as a vehicle "to explore our thoughts and emotions" (3). <i>OR</i> Writing functions as a vehicle "to explore our thoughts and emotions" (Bullock 3).
Two or three authors	"We each write for different reasons and for different audiences" (Levin, Rampton, and Lynch 325). For four or more authors, in the parenthetical citation only , name the first author and replace the others with "et al." E.g., (Mason et al. 57)
The Bible	Jeremiah saw "a boiling pot, tilting away from the north" (<i>New International Version</i> , Jer. 1.13). You may omit the version in subsequent parenthetical references to the same edition.
Play	Shakespeare's protagonists express mutual contempt in a witty exchange: <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>BENEDICK. What, my dear Lady Disdain! are you yet living?</p> <p>BEATRICE. Is it possible disdain should die while she hath such meet food to feed it as Signior Benedick? Courtesy itself must convert to disdain, if you come in her presence. (<i>Ado</i> 1.1.106-110) Consult the MLA Handbook for title abbreviations.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <p>Indent each character's name 1 inch from the left margin. Indent subsequent lines in the same speech an additional quarter-inch.</p> </div>
Unknown Author	Next to Belfast, the site of the ship's construction, Halifax may in fact be "the second most important Titanic city in the world" ("Titanic"). Use a short form of the title and the page or paragraph number if available.
Indirect source	William Zinsser reveals that "[t]he secret of good writing is to strip every sentence to its cleanest components" (qtd. in Levin, Rampton, and Lynch 325). Works Cited will not cite Zinsser, but, rather, the book's authors.

*Most in-text citations follow the basic format for a book, citing the author's surname and page number(s).

Sample Works Cited Entries

One author	Bullock, Richard. <i>The Norton Field Guide to Writing</i> . New York: Norton, 2006. Print.
Multiple authors	Levin, Gerald, David Rampton, and Gerald Lynch. <i>Prose Models</i> . 3 rd Cdn ed. Toronto: Harcourt, 1997. Print.
The Bible	<i>The Holy Bible: New International Version</i> . Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984. Print. (List each edition.)
Play	Shakespeare, William. <i>Much Ado About Nothing</i> . Ed. Tucker Brooke. New Haven: Yale UP, 1917. Print. (UP replaces "University Press.")
Work in an anthology	Weller, Archie. "Going Home." <i>Australian Literature: An Anthology of Writing From the Land Down Under</i> . Ed. Phyllis Fahrie Edelson. New York: Ballantine Books, 1993. 68-82. Print.
Short work from a website	Steves, Rick. "Ireland's History in a Nutshell." <i>Rick Steves' Europe Through the Back Door</i> . Rick Steves' Europe Through the Back Door, n.d. Web. 10 Jan. 2012. (The Title of the short work is followed by the website's title and sponsor, which in this case are one and the same. N.d. represents "no update date," and is followed by the access date.)
Journal article	Fiegl, Amanda. "Sunlight in the Dark." <i>National Geographic</i> 219.6 (2011): 18-26. Print. [Volume.Issue]
Article in an online journal	Gerkin, Patrick, Aaron Rider, and John Hewitt. "Johnny Cash: The Criminologist Within." <i>Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture</i> , 17.1 (2010): 152-183. Web. 10 Jan. 2012.
Lecture or public address	Farrell, Margaret. "Revising the Essay." Queen's University. 16 Oct. 2009. Lecture. (or Address.)

Where can I go to learn more about MLA documentation?

- Diana Hacker's *Research and Documentation Online*. 5th ed. <<http://bcs.bedfordstmartins.com/resdoc5e/>>
- *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. A print copy is available at the Writing Centre.