

## Basic Paper Format

Here are some basic guidelines for formatting a paper in MLA style.

### General Guidelines

- Type your paper or write it on a computer and print it out on standard-sized paper (8.5 X 11 inches).
- Double-space your paper.
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides.
- 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 either underlining or *italics* throughout your essay for highlighting the titles of longer works and providing emphasis.
- If you have any notes, include them on a page before your works cited page and format them the same way as your works cited list.

### Formatting the first page of your paper

- Do not make a title page for your paper unless specifically requested.
- Provide a double-spaced entry in the top left corner of the first page that lists your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date.
- 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.
- Center your title on the line below the header with your name, and begin your paper immediately below the title.

Here is a sample first page of an essay in MLA style:

	Purdue 1
Pete Purdue	
Dr. B. Boilermaker	
English 101	
12 November 2000	

Building a Dream: Reasons to Expand Ross-Aide Stadium

During the 2000 football season, the Purdue Boilermakers won the Big Ten Conference Title, earned their first trip to the Rose Bowl in thirty-four years, and played consistently to sold-out crowds. Looking ahead...

### **Formatting your works cited list**

- Begin your works cited list on a separate page from the text of the essay.
- Label the works cited list Works Cited (do not underline the words Works Cited nor put them in quotation marks) and center the words Works Cited at the top of the page.
- Double space all entries and do not skip spaces between entries.

### **Parenthetical Citations**

MLA format follows the author-page method of citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear in your works cited list (see Your Works Cited Page, below). 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).

Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in

the creative process (263).

## Quotations

Here are some basic guidelines for incorporating quotations into your paper.

### Short Quotations

To indicate short quotations (fewer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks and incorporate it into your text. Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text, and include a complete reference in the works-cited list. Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text.

For example:

According to some, dreams express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184), though others disagree.

According to Foulkes's study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (184).

Is it possible that dreams may express "profound aspects

of personality" (Foulkes 184)?

Cullen concludes, "Of all the things that happened there/  
That's all I remember" (11-12).

### Long Quotations

Place quotations longer than four typed lines in a free-standing block of typewritten lines, and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, indented one inch from the left margin, and maintain double-spacing. Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. (**You should maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.**)

For example:

Nelly Dean 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. (Brontë 78)

In her poem "Sources," Adrienne Rich explores the roles of women in shaping their world:

The faithful drudging child

the child at the oak desk whose penmanship,  
hard work, style will win her prizes  
becomes the woman with a mission, not to win prizes  
but to change the laws of history. (23)

### **Adding or Omitting Words In Quotations**

If you add a word or words in a quotation, you should put brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

For example:

Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states: "some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale" (78).

If you omit a word or words from a quotation, you should indicate the deleted word or word by using ellipsis marks surrounded by brackets.

For example:

In an essay on urban legends, Jan Harold Brunvand notes that "some individuals make a point of learning every recent rumor or tale [...] and in a short time a lively exchange of details occurs" (78).

If there are ellipsis marks in the quoted author's work, do not put brackets around them; only use brackets around ellipsis marks to distinguish them from ellipsis marks in the quoted author's work.

## Your Works Cited List

The works cited list should appear at the end of your essay. Each source you cite in the essay must appear in your works-cited list.

### List Format

- Begin your works cited list on a separate page from the text of the essay under the label Works Cited (with no quotation marks, underlining, etc.), which should be centered at the top of the page.
- Make the first line of each entry in your list flush left with the margin. Subsequent lines in each entry should be indented one-half inch. This is known as a hanging indent.
- Double space all entries, with no skipped spaces between entries.
- Keep in mind that underlining and *italics* are equivalent; you should select one or the other to use throughout your essay.
- Alphabetize the list of works cited by the first word in each entry (usually the author's last name),

### Basic Rules for Citations

- Authors' names are inverted (last name first); if a work has more than one author, invert only the first author's name, follow it with a comma, then continue listing the rest of the authors.
- If you have cited more than one work by a particular author, order them alphabetically by title, and use three hyphens in place of the author's name for every entry after the first.
- When an author appears both as the sole author of a text and as the first author of a group, list solo-author entries first.
- If no author is given for a particular work, alphabetize by the title of the piece and use a shortened version of the title for parenthetical citations.
- Capitalize each word in the titles of articles, books, etc. This rule does not apply to articles, short prepositions, or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title or subtitle.
- Underline or italicize titles of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, and films.
- Use quotation marks around the titles of articles in journals, magazines, and newspapers. Also use quotation marks for the titles of short stories, book chapters, poems, and songs.

- List page numbers 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.
- If you're citing an article or a publication that was originally issued in print form but that you retrieved from an online database, you should provide enough information so that the reader can locate the article either in its original print form or retrieve it from the online database (if they have access). For more about this, see our discussion of [electronic sources](#).

## Basic Forms for Sources in Print

### Books

Author(s). Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher,  
Year of Publication.

#### *Book with one author*

Henley, Patricia. The Hummingbird House. Denver: MacMurray,  
1999.

#### *Two books by the same author*

(After the first listing of the author's name, use three hyphens and a period for the author's name. List books alphabetically.)

Palmer, William J. Dickens and New Historicism. New York:  
St. Martin's, 1997.

---. The Films of the Eighties: A Social History.  
Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1993.

#### *Book with more than one author*

Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. The Allyn and Bacon  
Guide to Peer Tutoring. Boston: Allyn, 2000.

If there are more than three authors, you may list only the first author followed by the phrase et al. (the abbreviation for the Latin phrase "and others") in place of the other authors' names, or you may list all the authors in the order in which their names appear on the title page.

***Book or article with no author named***

Encyclopedia of Indiana. New York: Somerset, 1993.

"Cigarette Sales Fall 30% as California Tax Rises." New York Times 14 Sept. 1999: A17.

For parenthetical citations of sources with no author named, use a shortened version of the title instead of an author's name. Use quotation marks and underlining as appropriate. For example, parenthetical citations of the two sources above would appear as follows: (Encyclopedia 235) and ("Cigarette" A17).

***Anthology or collection***

Peterson, Nancy J., ed. Toni Morrison: Critical and Theoretical Approaches. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.

***Work in an anthology***

Give the elements in this order:

1. The name of the author of the selection (not the name of the editor of the anthology)
2. The title of the selection
3. The title of the anthology
4. The name of the editor, preceded by "Ed." for "Edited by"
5. Publication information
6. The pages on which the selection appears

1 2 3 4  
Desai, Anita. "Scholar and Gypsy." The Oxford Book of Travel Stories. Ed. Patricia  
5 6  
Craig. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996. 251-73.

***Magazine or newspaper article***

Poniewozik, James. "TV Makes a Too-Close Call." Time 20  
Nov. 2000: 70-71.

Trembacki, Paul. "Brees Hopes to Win Heisman for Team."  
Purdue Exponent 5 Dec. 2000: 20.

## **Basic Forms for Electronic Sources**

**If no author is given for a web page or electronic source, start with and alphabetize by the title of the piece and use a shortened version of the title for parenthetical citations.**

### **A web site**

Author(s). Name of Page. Date of Posting/Revision. Name of  
institution/organization affiliated with the site. Date  
of Access <electronic address>.

It is necessary to list your date of access because web postings are often updated, and information available at one date may no longer be available later. Be sure to include the complete address for the site. Also, note the use of angled brackets around the electronic address; MLA requires them for clarity.

### ***Web site examples***

Felluga, Dino. Undergraduate Guide to Literary Theory. 17  
Dec. 1999. Purdue University. 15 Nov. 2000  
<<http://omni.cc.purdue.edu%7Efelluga/theory2.html>>.  
Purdue Online Writing Lab. 2003. Purdue University. 10  
Feb. 2003 <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>>.

### **An article on a web site**

It is necessary to list your date of access because web postings are often updated, and information available at one date may no longer be available later. Be sure to include the complete address for the site. Also, note the use of angled brackets around the electronic address; MLA requires them for clarity.

Author(s). "Article Title." Name of web site. Date of posting/revision. Name of institution/organization affiliated with site. Date of access <electronic address>.

### ***Article on a web site***

Poland, Dave. "The Hot Button." Roughcut. 26 Oct. 1998.  
Turner Network Television. 28 Oct. 1998  
<<http://www.roughcut.com>>.

"Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Format." Purdue Online Writing Lab. 2003. Purdue University. 6 Feb. 2003  
<[http://owl.english.purdue.eduhandouts/research/r\\_mla.html](http://owl.english.purdue.eduhandouts/research/r_mla.html)>.