

Sam Student Handout: Writing Essays Using MLA 2009 Format

Format: General Guidelines

- The #1 rule for any formatting style is that you should follow your instructor's guidelines carefully. Many instructors have their own small exceptions to different MLA rules.
- Type your paper using a computer and print it on white 8.5" x 11" paper.
- Double-space everything.
- Use 12 pt. Times New Roman font.
- Leave only one space after punctuation.
- Set all margins to 1 inch on all sides.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one-half inch. Use the Tab key to indent.
- Include a header with your last name and page numbers in the upper right corner. Do include the header on the first page. Place the header ½" from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Use italics for titles of long works of literature.
- Use quotation marks to enclose titles of short works of literature.

Formatting the 1st Page

- No separate title page
- Double-space everything.
- In the upper left corner of the 1st page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date.
- Center the paper title (use standard caps but no underlining, italics, quotation marks, or bold).
- Create a header in the upper right corner at a half inch from the top and one inch from the right of the page (include your last name and page number).

Sample 1st Page

The first page should be started following the example on the following page. Please note that the example shows page 2 in the header, but your first page will be page 1.

Sam Student

English 102

Dr. Kathy Buckelew

20 July 2010

Drama Essay

Obstacles to Love in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

A Midsummer Night's Dream is a classic Shakespearean comedy in which love plays a major part. In fact, all of the major characters are strongly affected by love, and all of the serious love relationships face obstacles to their happiness. Through magic . . .

In-text Citations: The Basics

- MLA uses parenthetical citations.
- Parenthetical citations depend on the medium (e.g., Print, Web, DVD).
- Parenthetical citations also depend upon the source's entry on the Works Cited page.

Author-Page Style: In-text Examples

Author's Name Used in Essay Text:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Author's Name Not Used in Essay Text:

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Corresponding Works Cited Entry:

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

Print Source with Author

In-text Examples:

Human beings have been described by Kenneth Burke as "symbol-using animals" (3).

Human beings have been described as "symbol-using animals" (Burke 3).

Corresponding Works Cited Entry:

Burke, Kenneth. *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method*.

Berkeley: U of California P, 1966. Print.

Source with Unknown Author

- When a source has no known author, use a shortened title of the work instead of an author name.
- Place the title in quotation marks if it's a short work (e.g., articles) or italicize it if it's a longer work (e.g., plays, books, television shows, entire Websites) and provide a page number.

In-text Example:

We see so many global warming hotspots in North America likely because this region has “more readily accessible climatic data and more comprehensive programs to monitor and study environmental change . . .” (“Impact of Global Warming” 6).

Corresponding Works Cited Entry:

“The Impact of Global Warming in North America.” *GLOBAL WARMING: Early Signs*. 1999.

Web. 23 Mar. 2009. <<http://www.globalwarming.com>>.

* Note that *The* is the first word of the article's title but is not included in the in-text citation because the article is alphabetized in the Works Cited based upon the word *Impact*.

Classic & Literary Works with Multiple Editions

In-text Example:

Marx and Engels described human history as marked by class struggles (79; ch. 1).

- Page numbers are always required, but additional citation information can help literary scholars, who may have a different edition of a classic work like Marx and Engels's *The Communist Manifesto* (as illustrated in the first example on this slide). In such cases, give the page number of your edition (making sure the edition is listed in your Works Cited page, of course) followed by a semicolon, and then the appropriate abbreviations for volume (vol.), book (bk.), part (pt.), chapter (ch.), section (sec.), or paragraph (par.).

Two Authors with Same Last Name

- To distinguish between two authors with the same last name, include the first initial of each person's first name in the parenthetical citation.

In-text Example:

Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 12), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

Citing Works by Multiple Authors

- For a source with three or fewer authors, list the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation. For a source with more than three authors, use the work's bibliographic information as a guide for your citation. Provide the first author's last name followed by et al. or list all the last names.

In-text Examples:

Smith, Yang, and Moore argue that tougher gun control is not needed in the United States (76).

The authors state that "tighter gun control in the United States erodes Second Amendment rights" (Smith, Yang, and Moore 76).

Jones et al. counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels lawmakers to adjust gun laws (4).

In-text Citing: Multiple Works by the Same Author

- If you cite more than one work by a particular author, include a shortened title for the particular work from which you are quoting to distinguish it from the others. This is illustrated in the first example on the next page. Additionally, if the author's name is not mentioned in the sentence, you would format your citation with the author's name followed by a comma, followed by a shortened title of the work, followed, when appropriate, by page numbers. This is illustrated in the second example on the next page.

In-text Examples:

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children ("Too Soon" 38), though he has acknowledged elsewhere that early exposure to computer games does lead to better small motor skill development in a child's second and third year ("Hand-Eye Development" 17).

Visual studies, because it is such a new discipline, may be "too easy" (Elkins, "Visual Studies" 63).

Citing Multivolume Works

- The first number in this citation is the volume number; the numbers after the colon are the page numbers. If you use only one volume of a multi-volume work, the volume number is not needed.

In-text Example:

. . . as Quintilian wrote in *Institutio Oratoria* (1: 14-17).

Citing the Bible

- The citation includes the version of the Bible you used, the book of the Bible (note that titles of books of the Bible are not italicized), the chapter, and the verse numbers.

In-text Example:

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).

Citing Indirect Sources

- If you quote someone who is being quoted by the author of a source, use this format.

In-text Example:

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as "social service centers, and they don't do that well" (qtd. in Weisman 259).

Citing Multiple Sources in the Same Citation

- If you use material from more than one source in the same sentence, use this format.

In-text Example:

. . . as has been discussed elsewhere (Burke 3; Dewey 21).

Citing Non-print Sources

- Sometimes writers are confused about how to craft parenthetical citations for non-print sources (such as films or presentations) because of the absence of page numbers, but often, these sorts of entries do not require any sort of parenthetical citation at all.
- Include in the text the first item that appears in the Works Cited entry that corresponds to the citation (e.g., author's name, article name, Website name, film name, etc.).
- In the example below, "Herzog" from the in-text example leads readers to the corresponding entry on the Works Cited page.

In-text Example:

Werner Herzog's *Fitzcarraldo* stars Herzog's long-time film partner, Klaus Kinski. During the shooting of *Fitzcarraldo*, Herzog and Kinski were often at odds, but their explosive relationship fostered a memorable and influential film.

Corresponding Works Cited Entry:

Herzog, Werner, dir. *Fitzcarraldo*. Perf. Klaus Kinski. Filmverlag der Autoren, 1982. Film.

Citing Internet Sources

- Although MLA format says that page numbers are not necessary when citing Internet sources, the WSCC English Department requires students to use the page number from their printed copy of the source.
- If you need to list the name of an Internet site within the text of your essay, do not put in the entire URL. Instead, provide only the name of the site, such as *CNN.com*.

In-text Example:

One online film critic stated that *Fitzcarraldo* is "...a beautiful and terrifying critique of obsession and colonialism" (Garcia 1).

Corresponding Works Cited Entry:

Garcia, Elizabeth. "Herzog: a Life." *Online Film Critics Corner*. The Film School of New Hampshire, 2 May 2002. Web. 8 Jan. 2009.

Formatting Short Quotations

- When using brief quotations from sources, be sure to put the quoted portions in quotation marks.
- Do not put paraphrased material in quotation marks, but do use a citation with paraphrased material.

In-text Examples:

According to some researchers, dreams can provide insight into the personality of the dreamer (Foulkes 184). (paraphrased material, no quotation marks necessary)

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

(brief quotation with quoted portion in quotation marks)

Formatting Short Quotations from Poetry

- Mark breaks in short quotations taken from poetry (excerpts of three or fewer lines) with a slash preceded and followed by a space. See the example below:

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

Formatting Long Quotations

- For quotations that are four or more lines of verse or prose: place quotations in a free-standing block of text and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented one inch from the left margin; maintain double-spacing. Only indent the first line of the quotation by a half inch if you are citing multiple paragraphs. 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.)
- A long quotation should usually be introduced by a complete, explanatory sentence followed by a colon.
- Limit your use of long quotations, particularly in short essays.

In-text Example of a long quotation:

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. (Bronte 78)

Adding and Omitting Words

- Use brackets to indicate where you added words.

In-text 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).

- Use ellipses to indicate where material has been omitted:

In-text 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).

Works Cited Page: Books

- When you are gathering book sources, be sure to make note of the following bibliographic items: author name(s), book title, publication date, publisher, place of publication. The medium of publication for all "hard copy" books is Print.
- Book with More Than One Author
 - The first given name appears in last name, first name format; subsequent author names appear in first name last name format.
 - If there are more than three authors, you may choose to list only the first author followed by the phrase et al. (Latin for "and others") in place of the subsequent authors' names, or you may list all the authors in the order in which their names appear on the title page. (Note that there is a period after "al" in "et al." Also, note that there is never a period after the "et" in "et al.").
- Two or More Books by the Same Author
 - List works alphabetically by title.
 - Remember to ignore articles like *A*, *An*, and *The*.
 - Provide the author's name in last name, first name format for the first entry only.
 - For each subsequent entry by the same author, use three hyphens and a period.

Basic Format for a Book:

Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Book*. Place of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

Medium of Publication.

Examples:

Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.

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

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

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

Works Cited Page: Editors of an Anthology

- Cite to the editors for material that is not part of the literature selections themselves.
- For example, you would need to cite to the editors if you used material from footnotes or commentaries within the text (materials provided by the editors and not written by the authors of the works of literature).
- The citation below is a sample of how to cite to the editors of an anthology (such as a literature textbook).

Booth, Alison, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays, eds. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. 9th ed. New York: Norton, 2005. Print.

Works Cited Page: Work of Literature in an Anthology

- Selections of poetry and short fiction from an anthology are cited according to this format:

Hemingway, Ernest. "Hills Like White Elephants." *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. 9th ed. Ed. Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays. New York: Norton, 2005. 132-35. Print.

- When citing longer works of literature, such as plays, the order of the information is the same. The only difference is that the title of the play is italicized instead of being enclosed in quotation marks:

Shakespeare, William. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. *The Norton Introduction to Literature*. 9th ed. Ed. Alison Booth, J. Paul Hunter, and Kelly J. Mays. New York: Norton, 2005. 1690-1742. Print.

Works Cited Page: A Work with a Translator

- Below are sample Works Cited entries for translated works.
- If the work has a known author, place his/her name before the title of the work.

Beowulf. Trans. E. Talbot Donaldson. Ed. Nicholas Howe. New York: Norton, 2001. Print.

Beowulf. Trans. Seamus Heaney. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Major*

Authors. 8th ed. Ed. Stephen Greenblatt and M.H. Abrams. New York: Norton, 2006. 31-97. Print.

Works Cited Page: Magazine Article

Basic Format:

Author(s). "Title of Article." *Title of Periodical* Day Month Year: pages. Medium of publication.

Example:

Buchman, Dana. "A Special Education." *Good Housekeeping* Mar. 2006: 143-8. Print.

Works Cited Page: Scholarly Journal

Basic Format:

Author(s). "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* Volume.Issue (Year): pages. Medium of publication.

Example:

Duvall, John N. "The (Super)Marketplace of Images: Television as Unmediated Mediation in DeLillo's *White Noise*." *Arizona Quarterly* 50.3 (1994): 127- 53. Print.

Works Cited Page: Electronic Sources (Web Publications)

- MLA lists electronic sources as *Web Publications*. Thus, when including the medium of publication for electronic sources, list the medium as *Web*.
- Citing an Entire Web Site
 - It is necessary to list your date of access because Web postings are often updated, and information available on one date may no longer be available later.
 - Be sure to include the complete address for the site. Remember to use *n.p.* if no publisher name is available and *n.d.* if no publishing date is given.
- It is always a good idea to maintain personal copies of electronic information, when possible. It is good practice to print or save Web pages or, better, to use a program like Adobe Acrobat, to keep your own copies for future reference. Most Web browsers will include URL/electronic address information when you print, which makes later reference easy. Also, you might use the Bookmark function in your Web browser in order to return to documents more easily.
- WSCC English instructors require the URL (Web address) to be placed in angle brackets at the end of the entry in the Works Cited list.
- Break URLs only after slashes if you need to move to the next line.

Basic Web Source Format:

Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). "Article Name." *Name of Site*. Version number.

Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), Date of

last update. Medium of publication. Date of access. <Web address in angle brackets>.

Sample Web Source Works Cited Entries:

Bernstein, Mark. "10 Tips on Writing the Living Web." *A List Apart: For People Who Make*

Websites. A List Apart Mag., 16 Aug. 2002. Web. 4 May 2009.

< <http://www.alistapart.com/>>.

Felluga, Dino. *Guide to Literary and Critical Theory*. Purdue U, 28 Nov. 2003. Web. 10 May

2006. <<http://www.purdue.edu/guide/>>.

"How to Make Vegetarian Chili." *eHow.com*. eHow, n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.

<<http://www.ehow.com/recipes/>>.

Works Cited Page: Other Sources

Personal Interview Example:

Purdue, Pete. Personal interview. 1 Dec. 2000.

Speech Example:

Stein, Bob. *Computers and Writing Conference*. Purdue University. Union Club Hotel, West

Lafayette, IN. 23 May 2003. Keynote address.

Film Example:

The Usual Suspects. Dir. Bryan Singer. Perf. Kevin Spacey, Gabriel Byrne, Chazz Palminteri,

Stephen Baldwin, and Benecio del Toro. Polygram, 1995. Film.

Works Cited Page: Alabama Virtual Library Sources

- WSCC instructors often require students to use the Alabama Virtual Library (AVL) to find sources for researched essays. Below is the recommended format for a Works Cited entry for a basic AVL source. Your instructor may provide additional formats for different types of AVL articles.

Smith, William. "The Problem with Testing." *Education Review* (Oct. 2009): 1-3. *Academic*

Search Premier. EBSCOhost. Alabama Virtual Library. Web. 14 Apr. 2010.

<<http://www.ebscohost.com>>.

Sample In-text Citations

Correct for a basic citation	(Thompson 78)
Incorrect	(Thompson p. 78)
Incorrect	(Thompson, 78)
Correct for two authors	(Smith and Thomas 15)
Incorrect	(Smith, Thomas 15)
Correct for a section of a Website, no known author	("Symbolism" 4)
Incorrect	(www.literatureonline.com 4)

Alphabetizing the Works Cited

- Alphabetize the Works Cited list by the last names of the authors of the works.
- If there is no author, alphabetize by the editor's last name (which should be the first word in the entry).
- For a work with no author or editor, alphabetize using the first word of the title.
- If the title of the work begins with *A*, *An*, or *The*, alphabetize using the next word.

Common MLA Abbreviations

n.p.	No place of publication given
n.p.	No publisher given
n.d.	No date of publication given
n. pag.	No pagination given

When used before the colon in the Works Cited entry, *n.p.* means "no place"; when used after the colon, *n.p.* means "no publisher."

Examples:

NO PLACE

Smith, Tom. *Literary Motifs*. *N.p.*: U of Gotham P, 2008. Print.

NO PUBLISHER

Smith, Tom. *Literary Motifs*. New York: n.p., 2008. Print.

Note that the first letter of the abbreviation is capitalized if the letter appears after a period within the citation. If the first letter appears anywhere else, it should be lower case.

How to Quote from Poetry in an Essay

- When citing two or three lines from a poem, use line numbers instead of page numbers in the parenthetical citation; also, use a slash with a space on each side to separate lines.

Example:

As the poem unfolds, Hayden describes the father's first unappreciated act of love: "then with cracked hands that ached / from labor in the weekday weather made / banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him" (3-5).

- Verse quotations of more than 3 lines should be indented 10 spaces from the left margin. The original line breaks and punctuation should not be changed. Make the quotation look as much like the original text as possible.

Example:

The speaker's decision becomes evident in the poem's third stanza:

And both that morning equally lay
 In leaves no step had trodden black.
 Oh, I marked the first for another day!
 Yet knowing how way leads on to way
 I doubted if I should ever come back. (Frost 11-15)

How to Quote from Poetry in an Essay

- If your quotation consists of dialogue between characters, start by indenting one inch from the left margin. Type the characters' names in all capital letters, place periods after the names, and indent lines after each speaker's first line an additional one quarter inch.
- For a play written in prose, use a traditional citation style with author and page number(s) instead of act, scene, and line numbers.
- If you are citing a Shakespeare play, as long as it is clear to the reader which Shakespeare play is your source, you do not need to provide the play's abbreviation. Simply provide the act, scene, and line numbers.
- If you need to clarify which Shakespeare play you are using, supply the correct MLA abbreviation for the play (found in section 7.7.2 of the 7th edition of the *MLA Handbook*).
- Never write out long numbers as words in referring to units.
 WRONG: the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth lines of act 1
 RIGHT: lines 34-35 of act 1
- If you use a short quotation from a dramatic work that is written in verse (such as Shakespeare's plays), use slashes to indicate line breaks just as you would if inserting lines of poetry in a paragraph.
- Spell out numerical references when they precede the unit to which they refer. Use numbers when they follow the unit.
 Examples: the fifth act, or act 5; the fourth line, or line 4

Example of a Long Quotation from Drama:

Left alone, Hermia and Lysander express their misery in a quick interchange of emotional lines:

HERMIA. O cross, too high to be enthrall'd to low!

LYSANDER. Or else misgraffed in respect of years--

HERMIA. O spite, too old to be engag'd to young!

LYSANDER. Or else it stood upon the choice of friends -- (1.1.136-139)

Checklist for Writing an Essay

- Do not begin your conclusion paragraph with “In conclusion.”
- Do not refer to your paper in your paper. Completely avoid sentences that begin with such words as “In this paper, I am going to tell you about . . .” or “This essay will focus on . . .”
- Give your paper an original title. Essay titles are not underlined or enclosed in quotation marks. If the title of a literary work appears within the title of your essay, mark the title as you normally would (quotation marks for short works and italics for long works). Do not use the title of the work of literature about which you are writing as your essay title. The title should give readers a clear idea of what your paper will be arguing.
- If you are writing about literature, use present-tense verbs in your analysis and in describing anything that occurs within the work of literature. You would write, “The theme of the story is obvious” instead of “The theme of the story was obvious.”
- Avoid using too many quotations. A good rule to follow is to keep quoted material to less than 20% of your overall essay; however, you should check with your instructor to see how much quoted material he/she allows.
- When writing about a work of literature, use proof quotations from the work of literature to serve as examples of the points you are arguing in your essay.
- Limit your use of directly quoted material. Do not piece together strings of quoted material. Your instructor will probably limit you to a certain percentage or number of quotations.
- Avoid using first person (“I”) or second person (“you”) in most formal essays.
- When writing about literature, enclose titles of short stories, articles, and poems in quotation marks; underline/italicize titles of full-length plays, magazines, newspapers, and books.
- Check for punctuation errors.
- When writing a formal essay, avoid using coordinating conjunctions (such as “but” or “and”) to start sentences.
- Do not end sentences with prepositions.
- Check spelling carefully. Particularly, notice words like “to, too, two” and “there, their.”
- Avoid contractions, slang, or any informal language.

Using Signal Phrases

- Never use a direct quotation without providing an appropriate signal phrase (introduction) to the quotation.

Example:

According to one study, prices will “continue to rise well into the twenty-first century” (Blackwood 27).

- Using a complete sentence as an introduction (signal phrase) to a direct quotation often works well. Just remember to put a colon at the end of the sentence you are using as a signal phrase.

Example:

Mrs. Slade’s high opinion of her position as Delphin’s wife is apparent in the story: “She had always regarded herself (with a certain conjugal pride) as his equal in social gifts, as contributing her full share to the making of the exceptional couple they were . . .” (Wharton 115).

Signal Phrase Examples:

In the words of scholar Tim Jameson, “. . .”
 Smith and Thomas offer a different opinion: “. . .”
 “. . .,” claims noted researcher Susie Smitherman.
 Harold Brown’s research points out that “. . .”

Some Verbs Often Used in Signal Phrases

acknowledges	asserts	suggests	writes	declares	endorses
contends	denies	describes	disputes	emphasizes	refutes
reports	admits	agrees	confirms	argues	claims
implies	points out	observes	illustrates	notes	adds
comments	compares	responds			

*This list is excerpted from *A Writer’s Reference* by Diana Hacker.

Sources Used to Prepare This Handout

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. New York: Modern

Language Assn. of Amer., 2009. Print.

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer’s Reference*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2009. Print.

Purdue OWL. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *The Purdue OWL*. Purdue U Writing Lab, 10 May 2008. Web. 13 May 2009. <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/15/>>.