MLA Quick Guide

The Modern Language Association (MLA) is one of many methods of citation that acknowledges the sources of information we use when writing a paper and is commonly used for research projects in the humanities disciplines. The MLA system consists of two parts, the first being parenthetical citations within the text (called in-text citations), which give an abbreviated reference to the author and page number of the borrowed material. Second, there is an alphabetical listing of all cited sources on a Works Cited page, which appears at the end of the paper and gives full bibliographical information. We will begin by creating the Works Cited Page, then show how to make reference to those works within the text of your paper.

Works Cited Page: The Basics

- For the Works Cited page, the **margins should follow the rest of the paper**: one inch on all sides.
- Write **"Works Cited" centered at the top of the page**. It does not need to be bold or underlined -- just regular font.
- List entries in **alphabetical order** by author's last name.
- For sources with three or more authors, **use the abbreviation et al.**, which means 'and others' (see example below). This applies to both in-text citations and the Works Cited list.
- Entries should begin flush with the left margin. Second and subsequent lines in the entry should be indented one-half inch, or five spaces (known as a **hanging indent**):

  example:
  Walker, Alice. "Everyday Use." *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*, edited by X.J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, 12th ed., Pearson, 2013, pp. 491-96.

- **Double space between and within entries**. Do not add any additional spaces between entries.
- Different types of sources are cited slightly differently, but most of them follow this **basic format**:

  Author. Title of Source. Title of Container, Contributor, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication Date, Location.

Works Cited: Examples

Print book (1 author)
Tan, Amy. *The Bonesetter's Daughter*. Putnam, 2001.

MLA Quick Guide

Print book (with editor)

Kennedy, X. J., and Dana Gioia, editors. *Literature: An Introduction to Fiction, Poetry, Drama, and Writing*, 12th ed., Pearson, 2013, pp. 491-96.

Print book (3 or more authors)

Fisher, Roger, et al. *Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict*. Penguin Press, 1994.

E-book

Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. E-book, Vintage, 2004.

Scholarly journal article (online)*

Wheelis, Mark. "Investigating Disease Outbreaks Under a Protocol to the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention." *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, vol. 6, no. 6, 2000, pp. 595-600, wwwnc.cdc.gov/eid/article/6/6/00-0607_article. Accessed 8 Feb. 2009.

Entire website*

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl. Accessed 23 Apr. 2008.

Page on a website

Gurung, Trishna. "Amur Tigers on the Rise." *WWF, World Wildlife Fund for Nature*, 27 May 2015, https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/amur-tigers-on-the-rise.

Page on a website (no author or date)

"Agriculture on the Preserve." *Cosumnes River Preserve*, https://www.cosumnes.org/agriculture-on-the preserve/. Accessed 21 July 2016.

In-Text Citations: The Basics

- In-text citations include the **author's last name and the page number** of whichever source you are citing. They go in parentheses at the end of a sentence but before the end punctuation, like this: In explaining the origins of ebonics, one expert points to both English and African influences on the oral language of Black Americans (Smitherman 19).
- You **can also use the name of the author within your sentence**, and so in that case you only need to put the page number in parentheses: In explaining the origins of ebonics, Smitherman points to both English and African influences on the oral language of Black Americans (19).

MLA Quick Guide

- If the **text has no author**, use a shortened version of the title and the page number to identify it: Linguists have not reached consensus on the pedagogical value of the politically controversial "dialect readers" introduced in Oakland in the 1970s ("Dialect Readers" 4).
- When you need to **change small parts of a quotation** so that it fits better into your paper, use ellipses (. . .) to show that you left out some words of the original quotation, and brackets [ ] to indicate that the form of a word has been changed to make it fit into the sentence or to add an explanatory word or phrase that was not in the original, like this: Donald Larsson writes of Kate Chopin's "consistently. . . strong-willed, independent heroines... [who] cast a skeptical eye on the institution of marriage" (qtd. in Hicks 1).
- The abbreviation "qtd." (see example above) means "quoted," when **quoting an author found in another text**.

Block Quotations

Long quotations (four or more lines) are called **block quotations and are formatted a little differently than short quotations** are in your paper. Introduce the quote with a sentence of your own that previews or summarizes it. Then indent the entire quote 1 inch from the left margin. Double-space it, just like the rest of your text. And don't use quotation marks. If you don't name the author in introducing the quote, be sure to include their last name in the parentheses. Here is an example of how this might look:

Smitherman sees a continuum between the historical origins and the present use of ebonics:

> The ebonics spoken in the US is rooted in the Black American Oral Tradition,
>
> reflecting the combination of African languages (Niger-Congo) and Euro American English.
>
> It is a language forged in the crucible of enslavement, US-style apartheid, and the struggle
>
> to survive and thrive in the face of domination. (19)

*These citation examples were borrowed from the Purdue Owl website, which is an excellent resource for more detailed information about MLA format and has lots more examples showing how to cite different kinds of sources for your paper.