

Athens State University Library

Using the MLA (Modern Language Association) Format

The information here comes from the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6th edition). It's always best to consult the *Handbook* first for any MLA question. If you are using MLA style for a class assignment, it's also a good idea to consult your professor, advisor, librarian, or the Writing Center for help with using MLA style -- they're the ones who can tell you how the style should apply in your particular case.

General Format for a Paper

The general format for manuscripts written in MLA style is covered in chapter four of the *MLA Handbook*. Your paper should be typed, double-spaced on standard-sized white paper (8.5 X 11 inches) with margins of 1 inch on all sides. The pages of your manuscript should be numbered consecutively, beginning with the first page, as part of the manuscript header in the upper right corner of each page. Your references should begin on a separate page from the text of the paper with the title Works Cited centered at the top of the page.

Citing Sources in Your Text

The question of what must be cited (or documented) in your paper is discussed in chapter 2 of the *MLA Handbook*, and how you cite sources in the text is covered in chapter 6. When using MLA format, the author's last name and the page number(s) for the information used are given in the text. This points the reader to a complete reference to the source, which appears in the Works Cited list at the end of the paper. MLA uses the author-page method of in-text citation. If you are referring to an entire book, article or other work, you only have to show the author's name in your in-text citation. If you are using an exact quote, or are paraphrasing an idea from another work, you must include the author and the page number for the reference. Examples:

- Reference to a complete work:
 - An important study of medieval village commerce (Townsend) indicates that ...
 - Townsend's study of medieval village trade shows that ...
- Documenting an exact quote:
 - Medieval Europe was a place of "traveling merchants, monetary exchange, towns if not cities, and active markets" (Townsend 10).
 - According to Townsend, medieval Europe was a place of "traveling merchants, monetary exchange, towns if not cities, and active markets" (10).
- Documenting paraphrased material:
 - Medieval Europe had an active trade structure that involved merchants traveling between towns and cities (Townsend 10).

If you are using more than one source by the same author, include a shortened version of the title in the reference.

- Example:
 - (Tolkien, *Hobbit* 153)
 - (Tolkien, *Two Towers* 97)

If no author is given, such as when you are citing an anonymous work or a web page that lists no author, use an abbreviated version of the title in quotation marks to substitute for the name of the author. Be sure to begin the shortened title with the same words by which the source is listed in the Works Cited list.

- Example:
 - Tolkien's use of magic in his stories of Middle-Earth reflect his views of "good" magic as a creative force and "bad" magic as a force used for deception or domination ("Magic in Middle-Earth").

Quotations

To indicate quotations of fewer than 40 words in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks. Provide the author, year, and specific page citation in the text, and include a complete reference in the reference list. Example:

- She stated, "Students often have difficulty using MLA style," (Jones 199), but she did not offer an explanation as to why.

Place quotations longer than 40 words in a free-standing block and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, indented one inch or ten spaces from the left margin. Type the entire quotation, double-spaced, with the new margin, and indent the first line of any subsequent paragraph within the quotation one-quarter inch or three spaces from the new margin. Maintain double-spacing throughout. The parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark.

Poetry and Plays

When quoting from one to three lines of poetry, put these in quotation marks within the text, using slash marks (/) to separate lines. Verse quotations of four lines or more should be treated like long quotations, with each line of poetry on a separate line and the parenthetical citation following the closing punctuation.

Dialogue from a play between two or more characters should be set off from the text just like a long quotation. Each part of the dialogue should begin with the character's name in capital letters, followed by a period, then the dialogue. Subsequent lines of the same speech are indented three spaces.

- Example:
NURSE. His name is Romeo, and a Montague
The only son of your great enemy.
JULIET. My only love sprung from my only hate!
To early seen unknown, and known too late!

Works Cited List

Formatting the Works Cited list is covered in chapter five of the *MLA Handbook*. The Works Cited list includes full references to all the information sources you use in your paper and provides the information necessary for a reader to locate and retrieve any of these sources. It should appear at the end of your paper.

Basic Rules:

- The list of works cited should be alphabetized by authors' last names. If two or more authors have the same last name, consider the first name as well.
- Authors' names are inverted (last name first). Include the complete name as shown on the title page.
- If the work has more than one author, give their names in the order listed on the title page. Invert the first author's name and list the other authors in normal form.
- If you have more than one work by a particular author, give the name of the author in the first item only. Use three hyphens in place of the author's name in each successive work. Alphabetize them by title.
- If no author is given for a particular source, begin the entry with the title. Do not use Anonymous as the author's name. Alphabetize the work in the list by the title.
- All lines after the first line of each entry in your reference list should be indented one-half inch from the left margin. This is called *hanging indentation*.
- Underline or italicize titles of books, plays, albums, films, journals, and magazines.
- Put names of chapters or articles in quotation marks.
- Capitalize the first word, last word, and all principal words in the title, including nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, and adjectives. Do not capitalize articles, prepositions, or conjunctions.

The *MLA Handbook* provides extensive examples covering a wide variety of potential sources in chapter five.

Basic Forms for Sources in Print

1. A book (e.g., book, report, brochure, or audiovisual media):

Author's name. *Title of Book*. Location: Publisher, Year.

Example:

Lawrence, William W. *Beowulf and Epic Tradition*. New York: Hafner, 1967.

Example:

Strayer, Joseph R., and Dana C. Munro. *The Middle Ages: 395-1500*. New York: Appleton-Century, 1942.

Example:

Bloom, Harold, ed. *Beowulf*. New York: Chelsea House, 2007.

NOTE: For "Location," you should always list the city, but you should also include the state if the city is unfamiliar or if the city could be confused with one in another state or country.

2. A chapter in a book or an item from an anthology:

Author's name. "Title of Chapter or Item." *Title of Anthology*. Ed. Name of editor. Location: Publisher, Date. Pages of chapter or item.

Example:

Orchard, Andy. "Psychology and Physicality: The Monsters of Beowulf." *Beowulf*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 2007. 91-120.

3. An article in a scholarly periodical:

Author's name. "Title of the Article." *Title of Periodical* volume number(date): pages.

Example:

Mukerji, Chandra. "Printing, Cartography, and Conceptions of Place in Renaissance Europe." *Media, Culture & Society* 28(2006): 651-69.

4. An article in a magazine:

Author's name. "Title of the Article." *Title of Periodical* exact date: pages.

Denny, Ned. "Bare Beauty." *New Statesman* 3 February 2003: 42-44.

Basic Forms for Live or Recorded Performances

1. A performance

Title of Performance. By Author. Director. Performers. Location, date of performance.

Example:

Hamlet. By William Shakespeare. Dir. Stephen Unwin. Perf. Ed Stoppard, Alice Patten and Anita Dobson. New Ambassador's Theatre, London. 5 March 2006.

2. A film or video recording

Title of Film. Director. Medium. Distributor, year of release.

Note: Other important information, such as the writer, producer, leading performers, etc., may be included in addition to the director between the title and the distributor. The medium may be film, videocassette, DVD, etc.

Example:

Pride and Prejudice. Dir. Simon Langton. Prod. Sue Birtwistle. Perf. Colin Firth, Alison Steadman, Jennifer Ehle, Benjamin Whitrow, Susannah Harker, Crispin Bonham-Carter. DVD. BBC, 2001.

Basic Forms for Electronic (Internet) Sources

The basic approach for referencing electronic sources is to provide as much information as necessary to make it possible for the reader to locate the source. If you are citing a source that appears both in print and electronically, such as an article retrieved from one of the Library's databases, include both the information about the print publication and the electronic publication.

1. Electronic copy of a scholarly journal article retrieved from a subscription database

Author's name. "Title of Article." *Title of periodical* volume number(date): pages. *Name of the database*. Name of the service if different from database. Name of the library, Location. Date retrieved.

NOTE: If desired, you can put the URL for the homepage of the database at the end of your citation.

Example:

Ault, Warren O. "The Village Church and the Village Community in Medieval England." *Speculum* 45 (1970): 197-215. *JSTOR*. Athens State University, Athens, AL. 14 May 2007. <<http://www.jstor.org>>.

2. Article in an Internet periodical:

Author's name. "Title of Article." *Title of Journal* volume number (date): pages. Name of sponsoring agency. Date retrieved <URL>.

Example:

Hendricks, John C. "Gender and Power in Icelandic Mythology." *Mythic Studies* 4 (2006). Center for Scandinavian Studies. 22 July 2007 <<http://www.css.org/mythicstudies/vol4/hendricks.html>>.

3. Web site or Internet document:

Author's name. *Title of Web site*. Name of sponsoring agency. Date. Date retrieved <URL>.

NOTE: If you are using one document from a collection, enclose the document title in quotation marks and italicize or underline the name of the collection. If no date is available for the document, use N.d. in place of the date.

Example:

Clarke, Greg. *Tolkien and Theology*. Sydneyanglicans.net. 11 March 2005. 24 May 2006. <http://www.sydneyanglicans.net/indepth/articles/tolkien_and_theology_believing_in_fairy_stories/>.

Example:

"Magic in Middle-Earth." *The Grey Havens: The Ultimate J.R.R. Tolkien Web Page*. N.d. 18 August 2007. <<http://www.tolkien.cro.net/mearth/magic.html>>.

4. E-mail communication

Writer's name. "Title of Message." E-mail to recipient's name. Date of message.

Gennessee, Perry. "Comments on Translation of Tolstoy." E-mail to Morgan Thompson. 7 May 1998.

For More Information:

For additional help with MLA style, contact the Athens State University Library reference desk at (256) 233-8267 or e-mail refdesk@athens.edu. Help is available during regular Library hours.

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