
MLA Formatting Guide

MLA 8th Edition Formatting and Style Guide Purdue OWL Staff Brought to you in cooperation with the Purdue Online Writing Lab

MLA (Modern Language Association) Style formatting is often used in various humanities disciplines. In addition to the handbook, MLA also offers The MLA Style Center, a website that provides additional instruction and resources for writing and formatting academic papers.
<https://style.mla.org/>

Basic rule for any formatting style:

- Always Follow your instructor's guidelines
- 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

An MLA Style paper should:

- Have a header with page numbers located in the upper right-hand corner
- Use italics for titles
- Place endnotes on a separate page before the list of works cited

The first page of an MLA Style paper will:

- Have no title page
 - Double space everything
 - List your name, your instructor's name, the course, and date in the upper left-hand corner
 - Center the paper title (use standard caps but no underlining, italics, quote marks, or bold typeface)
 - Create a header in the upper right corner at half inch from the top and one inch from the right of the page (list your last name and page number here)
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Other Important Information:

- Section Headings are generally optional
- Headings in an essay should usually be numbered
- Headings should be consistent in grammar and formatting but, otherwise, are up to you

An in-text citation is a brief reference in your text that indicates the source you consulted.

- It should direct readers to the entry in your works-cited list for that source
- It should be unobtrusive: provide the citation information without interrupting your own text.
- In general, the in-text citation will be the author's last name (or abbreviated title) with a page number, enclosed in parentheses.

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).

⇨ If the essay provides a signal word or phrase— usually the author's last name—the citation **does not** need to also include that information. Examples:

- Humans have been described by Kenneth Burke as “symbolusing animals” (3).
- Humans have been described as “symbol-using animals”

How to cite a work with no known author:

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).

- **Work Cited Example:** “The Impact of Global Warming in North America.” Global Warming: Early Signs. 1999. Accessed 23 Mar. 2009.

Work by Multiple Authors

➤ In-Text Examples:

- Smith et al. argues that tougher gun control is not needed in the United States (76).
- The authors state: “Tighter gun control in the United States erodes Second Amendment rights” (Smith et al. 76).
- A 2016 study suggests that stricter gun control in the United States will significantly prevent accidental shootings (Strong and Ellis 23).

Multiple Works by the Same Author

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

Citing the Bible

- In-Text Example: Ezekiel saw “what seemed to be four living creatures,” each with the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle (New Jerusalem Bible, Ezek. 1:5-10).

Citing Indirect Sources

- 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).

Multiple Citations

- In-Text Example: *Romeo and Juliet* presents an opposition between two worlds: “the world of the everyday... and the world of romance.” Although the two lovers are part of the world of romance, their language of love nevertheless becomes “fully responsive to the tang of actuality” (Zender 138, 141).

Works in time-based media

In-Text Example: Buffy's promise that "there's not going to be any incidents like at my old school" is obviously not one on which she can follow through ("Buffy" 00:03:16-17).

Works-Cited Entry: "Hush." *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, performance by Sarah Michelle Gellar, season 4, episode 10, *Mutant Enemy*, 1999.

Sources without page numbers

In-Text Example: Disability activism should work toward "creating a habitable space for all beings" (Garland-Thomson).

Works-Cited Entry: Garland-Thomson, Rosemarie. "Habitable Worlds." *Critical Disability Studies Symposium*. Feb. 2016, Purdue University, Indiana.

Short Prose Quotations

In-Text 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)?

Quoting Four or More Lines of Prose

In-Text 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. (Bronte 78)

Quoting 1-3 Lines of Poetry

Examples: Properzia Rossi tells the statue that it will be a container for her feelings: "The bright work grows / Beneath my hand, unfolding, as a rose" (lines 31-32). In "The Thorn," Wordsworth's narrator locates feelings of horror in the landscape: "The little babe was

buried there, / Beneath that hill of moss so fair. // I've heard the scarlet moss is red” (stanzas xx-xxi).

- Use block quotations for four or more lines of poetry.
- If the poem is formatted in an unusual way, reproduce the unique formatting as accurately as possible.

Other Important Information:

- **In-text example for Adding Words:** 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).
- **In-text example for Omitting Words:** 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).