Format and Style of a MLA Paper

Basics

In general, there will be two components to an academic MLA-style paper: the body and the works cited page.

1. Body- this is the paper or essay itself; it will include your introduction, main points, the support for those points, and your conclusion.
2. Works Cited- this is completely separate from the body and as such begins on a new page; it contains any and all works used and cited within the body.

Format

1. Paper size: standard (8.5 x 11 inches)
2. Margins: 1 inch on all sides
3. Font: 12 point, Times New Roman [MLA allows for use of any “easily legible” font style, but TNR is recommended]
4. Text is double spaced
5. Leave only one space after punctuation marks
6. Create a header at the top of each page consisting of your last name and the page number
7. The first line of paragraphs are indented one-half inch from the left margin
8. Italics are used to denote the titles of longer works and for emphasis
9. MLA does not require a title page, but your professor may request one. Otherwise, at the top of your paper, left justify your name, professor’s name, class, and date, each on separate lines.

Mechanics and Punctuation

1. Punctuation
   a. Use only one space after each punctuation mark.
   b. Commas: separate clauses, prepositional phrases, and items in a series or list; the Oxford comma is always used in MLA
   c. Quotation Marks: used around direct quotes taken from an outside source; otherwise, they are only used to denote a word used unconventionally
   d. Hyphens: used for compound adjectives that precede the noun they modify
      • Note: if the compound adjective has an already-established meaning and cannot be misunderstood, a hyphen is not used.
2. Numbers
   a. One or two word numbers and numbers that are used adjectively are written out (e.g. two, five thousand, forty-two, seventeenth-century Britain)
b. Larger numbers and dates are written numerically (e.g. 382, 1990, 9 January, the 17th century)

3. Abbreviations
   a. Abbreviations and acronyms can be used, but must be spelled out in their first appearance in your text; e.g. Arin Hanson and Dan Avidan run the Game Grumps (GG) channel on Youtube. The GG are best known for their Let’s Plays.
   b. Abbreviations are only used if they are more convenient than if it was continually spelled out (e.g. PODUS = President of the United States)

4. Capitalization
   a. For titles: all principle words are uppercase; articles, conjunctions, prepositions, are not capitalized when they appear in the middle of the title
   b. Proper nouns are capitalized, but generic items are not (e.g. twine, World’s Largest Ball of Twine)

Citing Sources

1. Any and all information collected from an outside source must be cited. Whether it is a paraphrasing, a direct quote, or even a summary, there must be a parenthetical citation naming the source and a corresponding entry in the works cited page.
2. A parenthetical citation includes the author’s last name and the page number from which you are citing.
   a. If the author’s name is given in the signal phrase, it can be left out of the parenthetical citation.
   b. If the entire work is being cited, giving a page number is not necessary.
   c. When quoting lines of verse, the abbreviation ll. followed by the line numbers can be used within the parenthetical citation.
3. The parenthetical citation should directly follow your quotation.
4. If a quotation is over four lines, it must be placed in a block quote, separate from your main body paragraph.
   a. Quotation marks will be omitted.
   b. Double space is maintained
   c. The entire block is indented one (1) inch from the left margin, with the right margin remaining unjustified.
   d. Multiple paragraph quotations are indented another .25 inched.
   e. The parenthetical citation, unlike in-text quotes, follows the final punctuation and has no punctuation following it/
5. When omitting information from a direct quotation, use ellipsis points. If an entire sentence or the ending of a sentence is omitted, end the last sentence with a period and then use the ellipsis (it will look like four dots next to each other).
6. When altering a source’s original phrasing, use brackets. However, this does not mean changing the words to mean something the author did not intend. It is to allow for clarification on meaning (conjugation, subject, conjunctions, etc.), since the whole section may not be quoted (such as with conjugation or
7. If there is an error within the original work, such as incorrect spelling, use [sic] directly after the error.
8. If citations appear within your quotation, do not omit them. This is a secondary source, but it does not need to be included inside your works cited page unless it appears somewhere else in the paper on its own.

Creating A Works Cited Page

This is a page of sources used and cited within your paper. It will be completely separate from your body of work, beginning on a new page. A works cited page is a tool for both you and your reader to access the information collected to make your paper. Additionally, each entry in your works cited page must correspond with the citations within your work.

1. The top center of the page should have the label Works Cited (there are no quotations marks, underlining, or italicizing).
2. Entries begin with a hanging indent, meaning the following lines after the first line will be indented one-half inch from the margin.
3. Entries are organized alphabetically by the author’s last name.
4. Double space is maintained.

For further information on how to format citations in the Works Cited page, please reference the Examples page.
Examples

In-Text Citations
When citing a source using a parenthetical citation, use the following format:

Direct Quote: In his novel Peter Pan, J.M. Barrie describes Captain Hook as being “cadaverous and blackavized,” with his hair “dressed in long curls” (52).
- Because Barrie is mentioned in the signal phrase, his name does not appear in the parenthetical citation.

Paraphrasing: The blue of Captain Hook’s eyes gives depth, charisma, and feeling to the character (Barrie 52).
- Barrie, the author, is not mentioned in the sentence, so his name appears in the parenthetical
- Note: there is no comma between the author’s name and the page number or pg.

Works Cited: Books

Lastname, Firstname. Title of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

Medium of Publication.


More than One Author

Author’s Lastname, First Name, and Firstname Lastname. Title of Book. City of

Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Multiple Books by the Same Author

Lastname, Firstname. Title of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

Medium of Publication.

---. Title of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of

Publication.

No Author

Title of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.
An Edition

Lastname, Firstname. Title of Book. Number ed. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

- Note: the number of the edition will be written in numeral format, e.g. 4^{th} ed.

Anthology

Lastname, Firstname, ed. Title of Book. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

- Note: ed. denotes editor. If there are multiple editors, it is written eds.

Work Within Anthology


Article in a Reference Book


Works Cited: Electronic Sources

Entire Web Site

Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). Name of Site. Version number. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site, date of resource creation. Medium of publication. Date of access.

Page on a Web Site

“Title of Page.” Name of Site. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site, date of resource creation. Medium of publication. Date of access.
Article in a Web Magazine

Lastname, Firstname. “Title of Article.” Title of Magazine. Publisher name, Date of publication. Medium of publication. Date of access.

Article in an Online Journal


- Note: if there are no pages, use the abbreviation n. pag.
- Additionally, if the article in question also appears in print, source it in the same format as you would the print source, including the page numbers.

Image (Including Photographs, Paintings, Sculptures)

Artist’s Lastname, Firstname. Name of Work. Date of Creation. Institution where it is housed, city. Name of Site. Medium of Publication. Date of access.

E-mail

Lastname, Firstname. “Subject Line.” To whom the message was sent. Date the message was sent. Medium of publication

Blog Posting or Discussion Group

Editor, screen name, author, or compiler name. “Posting Title.” Name of Site. Version number. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site. Medium of publication. Date of access.
Works Cited: Periodicals

Magazine Article

Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." Title of periodical Day Month Year: pages.

Medium of publication.

Newspaper Article

Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." Title of newspaper Day Month Year Edition:

pages. Medium of publication

- Note: if the newspaper is local or less well-known, include the city name and state in brackets after the title of the newspaper.

Review

Review Author. "Title of Review." Rev. of Performance Title, by Author/Director/Artist.

Title of Periodical day month year: page. Medium of publication.

Article in a Scholarly Journal


Medium of publication.