USING MLA STYLE

This brief handout was compiled using the MLA Handbook, seventh edition. Examples were adapted from various sources and revised April, 2010. For further information, please refer to the MLA handbook.

THE FIRST PAGE

Writer’s Full Name
Professor’s Name
Course Name and Number
Day Month Year
Title of Paper

Choose a standard font and size (for example, Times New Roman, 12 point). Use the same font style and size throughout the paper. Use italics only to add emphasis in your text or as specified in citation rules (mainly for titles of works).

Tab indent ½ inch or leave ten spaces to begin first line of every paragraph. Left align paragraphs.

Double-space throughout, including text, titles, quotations and works cited entries. Do not use extra space before or after paragraphs. Leave a single space between one sentence and another unless your instructor prefers two.

A separate title page is not necessary in MLA style; on the first page of your paper (flush left), write your name, professor’s name, name of the course, date, and center the title of your paper, as shown above. Do not boldface, underline or enlarge font of title. Capitalize major words.

Insert your last name and page number on all pages, half an inch from top edge of paper and on the right. You can do this using the header feature in MS word.

Place tables, pictures, and other graphic figures as close to the related text as possible. Number figures continuously or by chapter, and give a descriptive caption/title followed by a reference entry (because figures are cited within the text).

Use white, 8.5 by 11 inch paper. Leave one inch margins on all sides. Print on one side of paper. Bind, paper clip, or staple, as your instructor specifies.

Format Works Cited entries as hanging-indented paragraphs, which means that the first line of each entry must stick out on the left. See example on following pages.
IN-TEXT CITATION

In-text citation is a brief reference to the source of other writers’ words or ideas included in your text. This reference is meant to help the reader locate the corresponding Works Cited entry. [NOTE: It is often easier to construct your Works Cited page first, then go back and to complete your in-text citations!]

- When you borrow or build on other writers’ words or ideas, indicate author and page number of the source in parentheses; do not insert a comma between the author’s last name and page number; place the punctuation mark after the parenthetical reference:

  One of the paradoxes of democracy is that “individual freedom is possible when there is discipline regulated by the society” (Doe 23).

- If you have already mentioned the author’s name before the quotation, you only need to write the page number in the parentheses:

  John Doe discusses this paradox of democracy when “individual freedom is possible when there is discipline regulated by the society” (23).

- If you cite two or more works by the same author, add the title of the work between author name and page reference. Shorten title using key word(s) if it is long. Note the comma here:

  (Doe, Policy 87)

- For two or three authors of the same work, cite all last names. There should be a comma before “and”:

  (Doe, Smith, and Williams 183-84)

- For more than three authors, there are options: either write list all names or the first author’s last name followed by “et al.”. Do not use a period after “et” or a comma after “al.”:

  Doe, Smith, and Williams argued that technology is not value-free (122). Technology is not value free (Doe et al. 122).

- For electronic and other non-print sources that do not have page numbers, try to give the section or paragraph number and indicate that the number does not refer to a page. You need not give page number of a one-page source. Note the use of punctuation when a word or phrase comes between author name and page number:

  (Doe, par. 3) or (Myth of Poverty, sec. 3)

- On occasion an author will quote another author/text. This quote is considered an indirect source (source quoted in another source). Try to go to the original text whenever possible; if you must cite indirectly, use the following format:

  Researchers Botan and McCreadie point out that “workers are objects of information collection without participating in the process of exchanging the information . . .” (qtd. in Kizza and Ssanyu 14).

- You only need to cite and indicate personal communication within your text (as in-text citation); you need not create separate bibliographic entry for it in the Works Cited section:

  In an email John Brown sent me, he asserted that “global warming is not just a fact, it is the most severe threat to mankind” (July 13, 2007).
WORKS CITED

The “Works Cited” page is an alphabetical list of bibliographic entries for each work you reference in your text. This list allows readers to trace your research path. As you do the groundwork for your paper, record citation information for each source that you use; never wait until the end of your writing process to “add in” citation information.

Format

- Begin the Works Cited section on a new page; number it continuously with the body of the paper. Center the title Works Cited (no underline, no quotation marks; see below).
- Keep the one-inch page margins, double-spaced format and flush left margin of regular text.
- Format entries as hanging indented (which means that the first line of each entry should be at the left margin and the rest of the lines should be indented half an inch).

Anatomy of an MLA Works Cited Page (example source is a book)

Print Publications

- Alphabetize Works Cited entries by the last name of the author you cited. When there is no author, alphabetize by the title of work.
- When last names are similar, consider the full first names as well for alphabetical order.
- When there are multiple works by the same author, replace the author’s name with three hyphens (---) and list the entries of that author’s works by their titles in alphabetical order.


- Journal citation: For print articles, follow the format below:


- Book Citation: This citation includes the same type of information as journal citations:

• **A Work in Anthology:** To cite a short piece of writing from a larger anthology or compilation, use the following format:

• **Multiple author citation:** If a work was written by two or three authors, list the authors’ names by the first author’s last name. Invert only the first author’s name. Follow the same order of author names that the book uses.


• **More than three authors:** Give only the first author’s name followed by et al. (“and others”); you also have the option of giving all authors’ names, maintaining the order used on the title page.


**Electronic Sources**

*For Works Cited Only on the Web*

Websites can be tricky, but don’t give up too easily. If you cannot find some of this information, cite what is available to you, but work to find as much as you can. Begin with the author/editor/group of authors, followed by the title of the site (italicized). Then give the sponsor/publisher of the site (if unavailable, use N.p.), followed by the original date of publication or last date of update (if unavailable, use N.p.; the medium (“Web”); and the date of access. [NOTE: MLA no longer requires the website address (URL) for the citation, but check with your instructor or editor for their preference]

• **Author Unknown**

• **Online Journal/Magazine**

• **Scholarly Article**

*Works on the Web Cited with Print Publication Data*

Typically, you will use this type of citation when using a book or magazine that was scanned into an online database. Begin the entry just as you would a print version. If pagination is not available, use n. pag. Instead of concluding with Print as the medium of publication, record the following in sequence: 1.) Title of the database or website you used to find the article (italicized); 2.) Medium of publication (Web); and 3.) Date of access (day, month, year).

• **Book from a database**

• **Scholarly article found from a database**
OTHER RESOURCES
There are many good resources available for learning to use the MLA citation style. The USF library has many good sources, handbooks, and publication manuals, and there are many good electronic sources listed below. After consulting these resources and working with your instructor or editor for clarification, the USF Writing Center would be glad to help.

Online Citation Generators
While there are a growing number of useful electronic tools to help you create your MLA citations (such as RefWorks, available through the USF library website), be aware that you must still understand how the citation process functions. Without this understanding, these tools can easily provide you with incorrect citation formatting. Also take note that these electronic tools generally only provide Works Cited information and will not help you with your In-text citations. For these reasons, you should always begin with a basic understanding of MLA style.

Online Resources
The USF Library website for citing sources and RefWorks:
http://guides.lib.usf.edu/CitingSources

Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab (OWL):
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

Diana Hacker’s online resource for documentation and research:
http://www.dianahacker.com/resdoc/home.html

For appointments or more information, email sar-tutoring@usf.edu or call (941) 359-4323.