APPENDIX: MLA FORMAT

Learning Objectives

- Review the logic of MLA format
- Cite sources correctly

MLA Format & Citation

MLA stands for The Modern Language Association, which is one of the organizations that establish format rules for essay format. MLA format is used most often by humanities courses in college, such as English composition and literature courses. Other format systems are used for other kinds of classes—for instance, many science classes use APA format—so the following information won't apply to those situations.

The guidelines below conform to the Ninth edition of the *MLA Handbook*, which is the most recent, having been released in 2021. The entry for that book is as follows:

MLA Handbook. Modern Language Association of America, 2021.

MLA Format Rules

- Double-space all lines. Eliminate all extra spacing between paragraphs so that everything is only double-spaced.
- Use a standard font and size, such as Times New Roman, 12 point.
- On the first page only, include the following identifying information in the upper left-hand corner of the page (not in the header).
  - your name
  - the professor's name
  - the course name
  - the date

- Center the title on the next line down after the identifying information. Capitalize using standard title format, which means to capitalize the first letters of all words except prepositions and conjunctions in-between other words.
- On every page, include your last name and page number in the righthand header.
- Use the MLA Citation rules for every source in your essay.

MLA Citation

Every citation requires two parts:

- **Works Cited Page**
  - One entry for each source, providing all fundamental publication information
- **In-text Citation**
  - The first element of the Works Cited page entry for the source (often the author's last name)
  - The location marker in the source of the part being cited (often the page number)

Works Cited Page

Include one entry for each source used in the essay. Construct the entry by gathering all fundamental publication information, and stating each piece of that information in the order described below. The information you need to gather for each source is as follows (watch for periods or commas):

1. **Author.**
2. **Title of Source.**

(+ Supplemental Element for the Source)

3. **Title of Container,**
4. **Contributor,**
5. **Version,**
6. **Number,**
7. **Publisher,**
8. **Publication Date,**
9. **Location.**

(+ Supplemental Element for the Container)

Keep in mind that the general guideline for stating these pieces of information is to make each exactly clear but efficient and brief. This means describing where you must, but omitting rather than repeating.

Find this information by examining the work itself, not other sources.

Author: the writer of the source, or any form of the creator of it. If no author is stated, or if the publisher is the author, omit this part. End with a period.

Style: Place the last name first, then a comma, then the first name.

Ex: Martin, Richard P.

Ex: Tsampouraki, Maria, and Maria Sidiropoulou.

Title of Source: the title that the specific source provides for itself (not the larger work that the source appears in). This should always appear in your entry. If the source is untitled, briefly describe it (without quotation marks, italics, or other title conventions)

Style: Use standard title capitalization. Italicize titles of large, full, and/or self-contained works, such as books. Use quotation marks around shorted sources within larger works or containers, such as articles. End with a period.

Ex: *Myths of the Ancient Greeks.*

Ex: "Witnessing Societal Changes through Translated Versions of *The Lord of the Rings.*"

Supplemental Element for the Source (an option): vital information about a source that does not pertain to the container or publication. The common types are **contributors** (e.g., translator of the source article but not of the journal that contains the article), **original publication date** (e.g., date of a letter but not the date of the book that published the letters), and **generic label of a section** (e.g., a titled source that is actually a preface).

Style: Do not add extra formatting (such as added italics, quotation marks, or capital letters beyond where otherwise required by grammar, publication titles, etc.). Add this after the normally styled title's period (or other terminal punctuation); in other words, do not change the title's punctuation. End with a period.

Example for contributors: Interview by Jordan B. Peterson.

Example for original publication date: 1776.

Example for generic label of a section: Preface.

Title of Container: the title of the larger work that contains the source, such the website that contains the article, the book that contains the chapter, or the show that contains the episode. If the container is untitled briefly describe it (without quotation marks, italics, or other title conventions). If the source is self-contained (i.e., the same as the Title of Source), omit this part.

Style: Use standard title capitalization. Italicize titles of large, full, and/or self-contained works, such as books. End with a comma, provided that other entry information follows.

Ex: *Tolkien Studies: An Annual Scholarly Review,*

If your source has a second container (and a third, fourth, etc.), add all of its citation information after finishing all of the information for the preceding container. The additional information is the same as with the first container:

10. **Title of Container,**
11. **Contributor,**
12. **Version,**
13. **Number,**
14. **Publisher,**
15. **Publication date,**
16. **Location.**

Contributor: another person named by the source who helped created the source without being the primary author/creator. This is often a translator, editor, or director. But if this person is the focus of the citation, then the name should be treated instead as the author/creator. If there was no contributor who is necessary to name, omit this part.

Style: State the nature of the contribution with "by" (edited by, translated by, etc.) and then the contributors name per normal (first name first). End with a comma, provided that other entry information follows.

Ex: translated by David Raeburn,

Version: the labeled edition or form of the source if it has appeared in various versions, such as a second edition, the King James Version, an abridged version, an e-book, etc. If there are no multiple versions of the source, omit this part.

Style: Abbreviate common words (without superscripts), such as 2nd for second, ed. for edition, and rev. for revised. End with a comma, provided that other entry information follows.

Ex: 10th ed.,

Number: the labeled number of a source if it is part of a sequence, such naming which issue, volume, or season and episode. If there is no such number listed for the source, omit this part.

Style: Abbreviate common words and use Arabic numerals, such as vol. 2 for Volume Two, and no. 29 for Number XXIX. End with a comma, provided that other entry information follows.

Ex: vol. 27,

Ex: season 2, episode 2,

Publisher: the company or institution that produced and presented the container. This is not the same as the author, nor is it the same as the publication title. This is the entity that, for instance, printed or distributed it. If naming the publisher would repeat previously named items (such as the container or the author), omit this part.

Style: Capitalize as a proper noun, and abbreviate University and Press with U and P without periods. End with a comma, provided that other entry information follows.

> Ex: New American Library,
>
> Ex: West Virginia UP,

Publication Date: the date that the source states it was released. In cases of revision, use the most recent date stated by the source. End with a comma, provided that other entry information follows.

Style: Arrange as day-month-year.

> Ex: 2020,
>
> Ex: 17 Oct. 2015,

Location: where the cited information in the source or container can be found. This often means page numbers or website addresses.

Style: Use p. for a single page or pp. for a page range, and use abbreviated page numbers (page 115 through page 121 is pp. 115-21). URLs and similar coded web addresses are optional, per instructor discretion. End with a period.

> Ex: pp. 27-9
>
> Ex: https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/06/will-the-humanities-save-us/

Supplemental Element for the Container (an option): vital clarifying information about a container. The common types are **date of access** (if the source lacks a publication date or has been altered or removed), **medium of publication** (if the format needs clarification for your readers to know what it is or to find the right one), **publication information** (if vital, such as originally published in...), **book series** (if relevant), **recurring sections of periodicals** (e.g., Ask the Expert), **multivolume info** (if not otherwise clarified earlier), and **legislative info** (e.g., which number and session of congress).

Style: Add this after the final period of the container entry information. Do not add extra formatting (such

as added italics, quotation marks, or capital letters beyond where otherwise required by grammar, publication titles, etc.). End with a period.

> Example for date of access: Accessed 31 Oct. 2020.
>
> Example for medium of publication: Transcript.
>
> Example for publication information: Originally published in *Diacritics*, 1982.
>
> Example for book series: The Basics.
>
> Example for recurring sections of periodicals: Ask the MLA.
>
> Example for multivolume info: 2 vols.
>
> Example for legislative info: 48th Congress, 2nd session.

Styling Titles:

Published or produced works must be formatted in either italics or quotation marks (with few exceptions, noted below). You are not free to choose between italics and quotation marks; instead, you must determine which type of title you're using in order to select the correct option.

Title Type 1: Large Works

Italicize the title of self-contained works or containers that comprise smaller works, such as books, Websites, films, albums, television series, etc.

> Example of a book: *The Lord of the Rings*
>
> Example of a periodical: *The New York Times*
>
> Example of a website: *Wikipedia*
>
> Example of a series: *Stranger Things*

Title Type 2: Small Works

Use quotation marks around sources within larger works or containers, such as articles, episodes, chapters, Webpages, songs, etc.

Example of a published essay: "Politics and the English Language" by Orwell

Example of a chapter in a book: "Chapter 11: A Knife in the Dark" from *The Fellowship of the Ring*

Example of an article in a periodical: "Age of Reason" in *The New Yorker*

Example of an episode in a series: "Full Measure" from *Breaking Bad*

Example of a song on an album: "Black Sabbath" from *Black Sabbath* by Black Sabbath

Title Type 3: Exceptions

You will use plain text for the titles of scripture, titles of text-based publication series, and titles of governmental laws, acts, and similar documents. Common examples include the U.S. Constitution and the Bible. But note that citations of specific publications or productions of works such as the Bible (such as which translation/version) still follow the rules above.

Example of the work without italics and the specific version with italics:

Literature has been deeply influenced by the Bible and its characters. Aaron is particularly interesting, especially when he defends his idol-making by saying, "I threw it into the fire, and out came this calf" (*New American Standard Bible* Exod. 32.24).

Works Cited Entry Arrangement

Between each piece of information in the Works Cited entry, use the punctuation indicated in this guide above. Typically, use a period after the author's name, and after the source title. Then use commas to separate all remaining pieces of information until that container is complete, at which point you will end with a period. A second container will likewise use commas between pieces of publication information until ending with a period. The exceptions to this are titles that include their own terminal punctuation, such as a quotation mark. In a case like that, do not add further punctuation to the title.

The arrangement goes as follows, but note the four rules of Works Cited page arrangement below these examples.

Author (last name first). Title of Source. Title of Container, Contributor, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication Date, Location.

Example 1

Citation information needed for example 1:

1. Stanley Fish.
2. "Will the Humanities Save Us?"

+

3. *The New York Times*
4.
5.
6.
7. (already noted as container)
8. January 6, 2008
9. https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/06/will-the-humanities-save-us/

+

Entry for example 1:

Fish, Stanley. "Will the Humanities Save Us?" *The New York Times*, 6 Jan. 2008.

Or:

Fish, Stanley. "Will the Humanities Save Us?" *The New York Times*, 6 Jan. 2008, https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/06/will-the-humanities-save-us/

Example 2

Citation information needed for example 2:

1.

2. "Under the Gun"

+

3. *Pretty Little Liars*
4.
5.
6. Season 4, Episode 6
7. ABC Family
8. 16 July 2013
9.

+

(second container)

10. Hulu
11.
12.
13.
14.
15.
16. www.hulu.com/watch/511318

+

Entry for example 2:

"Under the Gun." *Pretty Little Liars*, season 4, episode 6, ABC Family, 16 July 2013. *Hulu*, www.hulu.com/watch/511318.

There is more than one right way to create a Works Cited page entry. Cite for focus and circumstance.

For example, if you wrote about the performance of the main character in an episode of *Breaking Bad*, your citation could be as follows:

> Cranston, Bryan, actor. "Full Measure." *Breaking Bad*, season 3, episode 13, AMC, 13 June 2010. *Netflix.*

But if you wrote about the direction and production of that same source, your citation could be as follows:

> Gilligan, Vince, writer, director, creator. "Full Measure." *Breaking Bad*, season 3, episode 13, AMC, 13 June 2010. *Netflix.*

And if you were writing about Cranston's performance but found the directing to be relevant in your discussion of the source, then you would add the director as a contributor, as follows:

> Cranston, Bryan, actor. "Full Measure." *Breaking Bad*, directed by Vince Gilligan, season 3, episode 13, AMC, 13 June 2010. *Netflix.*

Works Cited Page Arrangement

1. Use **"Works Cited" as the title** (without quotation marks, italics, or bold letters). If you have only one entry, title it "Work Cited."
2. Keep every line **double-spaced** as usual.
3. Arrange each entry **alphabetically** according to the first letter of the entry.
4. Use **hanging indentations** for each entry. This means every entry should begin flush against the left margin with the first line, but if it extends beyond one line, each following line should be indented. The next entry begins left-flush again, with continued lines indented, and so on.

Full Example of a Works Cited Page

Last Name 3

Works Cited

Bower, Colin. "Language, Truth… and Wine." *The New English Review,* Feb. 2007,

http://www.newenglishreview.org/custpage.cfm?frm=5509&sec_id=5509.

Clinton, Bill. "Clinton on Climate Change." Interview by Andrew C. Revkin. *New York Times,*

May 2007.

Cranston, Bryan, actor. "Full Measure." *Breaking Bad,* season 3, episode 13, AMC, 13 June

2010. Netflix.

Gilligan, Vince, writer, director, creator. "Full Measure." *Breaking Bad,* season 3, episode 13,

AMC, 13 June 2010. Netflix.

Gowdy, John. "Avoiding Self-organized Extinction: Toward a Co-evolutionary Economics of

Sustainability." *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World*

Ecology, vol. 14.1, 2007, pp. 27-36.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Originally published in 1963. African

Studies Center, U of Pennsylvania,

https://www.africa.upenn.edu/Articles_Gen/Letter_Birmingham.html.

In-Text Citations

Requirements

- Include the first element of the Works Cited entry for quotation, paraphrasis, and summary.
    - This is usually the last name of the author, but if something else is the first element of the Works Cited entry (article title, corporate entity name, etc.), use a shortened form of that.
    - This may be stated in the sentence, or shown in parentheses right before the end of the sentence. This option is either/or, but it should not be both.

- Incorrect Example: Kingsnorth said, "But religions do not own the sacred" (Kingsnorth).
- Correct Example: Kingsnorth said, "But religions do not own the sacred."
- Correct Example: Although religions have institutionalized spirituality, they "do not own the sacred" (Kingsnorth).

- Include the page number or location marker for quotation, paraphrasis, and summary of specific ideas.
    - This is usually the page number, but only for works that have official typeset pagination.
    - For other kinds of works, this can be chapter, verse, line, or even timestamp (for audio or video sources).
    - Omit this if the source provides no location marker. And omit if the location marker does not appear consistently to other users (such as e-book page numbers).
    - Do not separate this with a comma, nor use any abbreviation for "page" (such as p.)
    - This page number or location marker must appear in the parentheses right before the end of the sentence.

- Incorrect Example: A skilled writer must first "see a choice wherever there is one" (Barzun, p. 11).
- Correct Example: According to Barzun, the skill of writing begins when you "see a choice wherever there is one" (11).

> - Correct Example: A skilled writer must first "see a choice wherever there is one" (Barzun 11).

- Make sure the above elements appear inside the relevant sentence, which means to the left of the terminal period.

> - Incorrect Example: A skilled writer must first "see a choice wherever there is one." (Barzun 11)
> - Correct Example: A skilled writer must first "see a choice wherever there is one" (Barzun 11).

- The goal here is concise and efficient clarity, so add any names or indicators that will help readers know which source you're citing, and avoid all unnecessary information or repetition.

Direction Quotation

- For direct quotation, use correct period and comma placement:
  - The final period of the sentence goes inside the quotation marks.
  - A comma at the end of a quotation also goes inside the quotation marks.
  - But if there are parentheses right before the end of the sentence, place the period or comma outside the parentheses.
  - Do not use more than one terminal period in a sentence.
  - All other similar punctuation (semicolons, colons, question marks, exclamation points) go outside the quotation marks unless they were included in the original quotation.

5 Quotation Techniques

- Tagging
- Blending
- Modifying

- Omitting
- Block quoting

Tagging

- Rules:
  - Comma after the tag
  - Capital letter to start the quotation

> - Example: Kingsnorth said, "But religions do not own the sacred."
> - Example: The author argues, "Serial killing is glam killing" (Klosterman).

Blending

- Rules:
  - No comma after the tag
  - No capital letter to start the quotation

> - Example: A skilled writer must first "see a choice wherever there is one" (Barzun 11).
> - Example: Klosterman wonders whether displaying Gacy's paintings "perpetuates the gothic glamour of mass murder."

Modifying

- Rules:
  - Brackets around changes
  - Parenthetical explanations as needed

- Example: Lovecraft said, "The appeal of the spectrally macabre [in literature] is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree of imagination and a capacity for detachment from everyday life."
- Example: There are valid criticisms of de-extinction, but Kingsnorth cares "about the *invalid* criticisms" (emphasis added).

- Permissible circumstances for modifying:

  1. **Emphasis:** Put the emphasized part in italics, and say "emphasis added" in parentheses outside the quotation but inside the sentence.
     - Ex: There are valid criticisms of de-extinction, but Kingsnorth cares "about the *invalid* criticisms" (emphasis added).
  2. **Error in the original:** Leave the error in your quotation, but add "sic" in brackets immediately following the error.
     - Ex: Smith admitted that "the city has it's [sic] problems."
  3. **Necessary clarification:** If something in the quotation would be unclear out of its original context and isn't made clear by your writing leading up to the quotation, give very brief clarity in brackets. This is often for pronouns or similar references.
     - Ex: Smith said that "she [the mayor] has an agenda that will result in unintended consequences."

Omitting

- Rules:
  - Ellipsis marks (...) for what you skip over (space on either side)
  - Not needed for obvious omissions, such as before and after most quotations. But if you shorten the quotation and it appears falsely complete, add ellipses for clarification.
  - Period plus ellipses when needed (four dots)

- Example: Orwell says, "The wretched prisoners ... oppressed me with an intolerable sense of guilt."
- Example: "I had already made up my mind that imperialism was an evil thing and the sooner I chucked up my job and got out of it the better. ... I hated it more bitterly than I can perhaps make clear" (Orwell).

Block Quoting

- Rules:
  - For more than four lines
  - No quotation marks
  - Parenthetical outside the period
  - Indent all lines

Key Takeaways

- MLA format requires both in-text citations and a works cited page
- Citing correctly requires an understanding of some general formatting rules and *a willingness to look up the correct format for each source*
- MLA allows some leeway in how to cite different sources