

MLA Guidelines

This handout gives simple guidelines for using the MLA style. See the MLA Style Manual in the Writing Lab for further information. Good luck!

1. Initial Page (section 3.5)

- MLA does not require a separate title page. All appropriate information is located on this first page. Note: Individual instructors may require a title page instead.
- All text is double-spaced, including headings.
- The heading, left-justified, beginning with the first line of type, includes 1) your name, 2) professor's name and title, 3) the class, and 4) the date the paper is due.
- The title is centered below the heading.
- Center your title two lines (one double-space) below the initial heading. If you're using a subtitle, end your title with a colon.

2. Margins and Page Number Header (sections 3.3 and 3.6)

- Use one-inch margins on all sides of all pages. All information except for the page number header should be within the margins.
- The page number header (your last name and page number) should be ½" from the top of the page and ½" from the first line of text, lining up with the right margin.

3. Spacing (sections 2.7.2-2.7.4, and 3.3)

- Indent the first line of all paragraphs ½" (5 spaces).
- Indent block quotations 1" (10 spaces). Indent an additional ¼" (3 spaces) on any line of a block quotation that begins a new paragraph in the original source.

4. Notes (sections 5.5.1, 5.5.2, and B.1)

- Place any note numbers ½ space (superscript) above the line.
- Leave one space between your note number and the end of the sentence, clause, or phrase containing the material quoted or referred to.
- Number notes consecutively throughout the paper.
- Place notes with corresponding numbers either on the bottoms of the pages as footnotes or at the end of the paper as endnotes on a "Notes" page.
- In the text of your paper, do not leave a space before the superscript number.

4a. Endnotes

- The page(s) for endnotes should be headed with the word Notes centered on the top line of the page.
- On your note page, leave a space after the superscript number, before beginning the note.
- Indent notes five spaces before the superscript number so the note is in paragraph style.

4b. Footnotes

- Footnotes appear on the bottom of the page beginning four lines (two double-spaces) below the text.

- Single-space all footnotes.
- Double-space between two separate notes.
- Indent five spaces the first line of each note.

5. In-text Citations (sections 5.1 to 5.4)

- Place all in-text citations at the most appropriate point within a sentence, usually as a parenthetical just before the period or, when using the author's name to introduce the quote, with the page number to follow as a parenthetical.

EXAMPLE: . . .last words of quote" (Anderson 89).

OR

Anderson claims, "Quoted material" (89).

- The citation contains the author's(s') last name(s) and the page(s) where the material can be located.
- Use line numbers, rather than page numbers, when referring to or quoting poetry. Also remember that certain older texts, such as the Bible and Shakespeare's plays, have their own numbering systems.
 - *Biblical quotes follow this pattern: Version of Bible (followed by a comma and one space), book (abbreviated, a period and one space) then chapter and verse separated only by a period (for example, New Jerusalem Bible, Ezek. 1.5-10).
 - *Quotes from Shakespeare follow this pattern: Title of play (usually italicized, abbreviated and followed by a period and a space) then act, scene, and line(s), separated only by periods (for example, *Oth.* 4.2.7).

6. Block Quotes

- Block quoting style is used with quotes of more than four lines.
- The first word of the quote begins on a separate line
- Quotation marks are not used.
- The entire quote is typed 1" in from the left margin.
- The citation is placed at the end of the quote outside the period.
- Block quotes are often introduced with a colon.

7. Miscellaneous

- The MLA recommends underlining all titles of books, periodicals (journals, magazines, newspapers, etc.) and separate volumes, regardless of where those titles appear in your paper. Italics are sometimes difficult to discern.
- In your text, introduce source authors by their first and last names. After that, refer to source authors by their last names only. The same applies to musicians, artists, etc.
- Add a fourth period to an ellipsis when the ellipsis omission includes or coincides with a period which ends a sentence.
- Either past or present tense is acceptable, but remain consistent. A bit of advice, however: many literature instructors will hold a strong preference for literary present (Mark Twain writes, Hamlet lives, Romeo dies, etc.).