WRITING CENTER STYLE GUIDE

The Writing Center uses MLA style for all academic papers, except those where APA style has been requested by faculty. MLA style can be found in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* located in the library’s reference section. The MLA style establishes a standard of written communication used in all colleges and universities with rules concerning formatting and layout, stylistic technicalities (e.g. footnotes, abbreviations, quotations), and citing sources. Much of the information below can also be found at owl.english.purdue.edu/owl.

General Guidelines

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use a legible font (e.g. Times New Roman). Whatever font you choose, MLA recommends that the regular and italics type styles contrast enough that they are recognizable one from another. The font size should be 12 pt.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks (unless otherwise instructed by your instructor).
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides (*Microsoft Word* default).
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. MLA recommends that you use the Tab key as opposed to pushing the Space Bar five times.
- Use italics throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis.

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Do not make a title page for your paper unless specifically requested.
- In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Again, be sure to use double-spaced text.
- Double space again and center the title. Do not underline, italicize, or place your title in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case (standard capitalization), not in all capital letters.
- Double space between the title and the first line of the text.
- In *MS Word*, insert page number in the upper right-hand corner and type your last name, followed by a space before the page number; number all pages consecutively.
In 1948, a Ukrainian peasant by the name of Trofim Lysenko perfected his method of “vernalization” and unwittingly laid the groundwork for the genetically modified organism (GMO) boom of the mid-twentieth century (Heers 15). At the same time, his radical approach to peer review, which relied on imprisonment and state-sponsored murder for dissident thinkers,
COMMON CONCERNS

- If writing an essay that uses very few numbers, you may write out numbers that consist of less than three words, e.g. one, twenty-three, etc.
- Numbers used with abbreviations or symbols (e.g. 6 p.m., 10%) must use numerals.
- To form the possessive of a singular proper noun ending in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s*, e.g. Venus’s beauty, Dickens’s reputation.
- To form the possessive of a plural noun ending in *s*, add only an apostrophe, e.g. firefighters’ trucks.
- Use a hyphen with all compound adjectives that precede a noun, except when the compound adjective begins with an adverb ending in –ly or with *too*, *very*, or *much*, e.g. thoughtfully presented thesis, too hasty judgment, our much loved teacher.
- Do not use a hyphen in a pair of nouns in which the first noun modifies the second, e.g. gender appropriate, father figure.
- In general, do not use hyphens after prefixes (e.g., *anti*, *co*, *multi*, *non*, *over*, *post*, *pre*, *re*, *semi*, *sub*, *un*, *under*), e.g. antiwar, overpay, semiretired, etc.
- But use hyphens with the prefixes ex- (meaning former), self-, and all-.
- The first word of a quotation does not have to be capitalized if the quotation is used as an integral part of the sentence structure, e.g.

  Shelley thought poets “the unacknowledged legislators of the world.”

  He claimed he could provide “hundreds of examples [of court decisions] to illustrate the historical tension between church and state.”

- Quoted material is usually preceded by a colon if the quotation is formally introduced and by a comma or no punctuation if the quotation is an integral part of the sentence structure.
- If a quotation runs more than four lines, set it off from the text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin, and typing it double-spaced.
- Italicize the names of books, plays, poems published as books, pamphlets, periodicals (newspapers, magazines, and journals), Web sites, online databases, films, television and radio broadcasts, compact discs, musical recordings, dance performances, operas and other long musical compositions, works of visual art, ships, aircraft, and spacecraft.
- In order to use a dash, type two hyphens, with no space before, between, or after, *Microsoft Word* should convert the too hyphens into a dash—like this.
- Periods are placed inside a parenthetical if it is a complete sentence, i.e. The computer was missing (perhaps forever). (Because “perhaps forever” is not a complete sentence, the period would be outside the parentheses.)
- Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *for*, *nor*, *or*, *so*, or *yet*) joining independent clauses in a sentence, e.g. Congress passed the bill, and the president signed it into law.
PLAGIARISM

from MLA Handbook

You have plagiarized if:

- You took notes that did not distinguish summary and paraphrase from quotation and then you presented wording from the notes as if it were all your own.
- While browsing the Web, you copied text and pasted it into your paper without quotation marks or without citing the source.
- You repeated or paraphrased someone’s wording without acknowledgment.
- You took someone’s unique or particularly apt phrase without acknowledgement.
- You paraphrased someone’s argument or presented someone’s line of thought without acknowledgement.
- You bought or otherwise acquired a research paper and handed in part or all of it as your own.

You can avoid plagiarism by

- Making a list of the writers and viewpoints you discovered in your research and using this list to double-check the presentation of material in your paper.
- Keeping the following three categories distinct in your notes: your ideas, your summaries of others’ material, and exact wording you copy.
- Identifying the sources of all material you borrow—exact wording, paraphrases, ideas, arguments, and facts.
- Checking with your instructor when you are uncertain about your use of sources.

QUOTATIONS

When you directly quote the works of others in your paper, you will format quotations differently depending on their length. Below are some basic guidelines for incorporating quotations into your paper. Please note that all pages in MLA should be double-spaced.

Short Quotations

To indicate short quotations (fewer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks. Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text, and include a complete reference on the Works Cited page. Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation. Question marks and exclamatory points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text.
For example, when quoting short passages of prose, use the following examples:

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)?

When short (fewer than three lines of verse) quotations from poetry, mark breaks in short quotations of verse with a slash, ( / ), at the end of each line of verse (a space should precede and follow the slash).

Cullen concludes, “Of all the things that happened there / That's all I remember” (11-12).

**Long Quotations**

For quotations that are more than four lines of prose or three lines of verse, place quotations in a free-standing block of text and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, with the entire quote indented **one inch** from the left margin; maintain double-spacing. Only indent the first line of the quotation by an additional quarter inch if you are citing multiple paragraphs. Your parenthetical citation should come **after** the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. (You should maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.)

For example, when citing more than four lines of prose, use the following examples:

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)

When citing long sections (more than three lines) of poetry, keep formatting as close to the original as possible.

In his poem "My Papa’s Waltz," Theodore Roethke explores his childhood with his father:

> The whiskey on your breath

> Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:  
Such waltzing was not easy.  
We Romped until the pans  
Slid from the kitchen shelf;  
My mother’s countenance  
Could not unfrown itself. (quoted in Shrodes, Finestone, Shugrue 202)

When citing two or more paragraphs, use block quotation format, even if the passage from the paragraphs is less than four lines. Indent the first line of each quoted paragraph an extra quarter inch.

In "American Origins of the Writing-across-the-Curriculum Movement," David Russell argues:

Writing has been an issue in American secondary and higher education since papers and examinations came into wide use in the 1870s, eventually driving out formal recitation and oral examination. . . .

From its birth in the late nineteenth century, progressive education has wrestled with the conflict within industrial society between pressure to increase specialization of knowledge and of professional work (upholding disciplinary standards) and pressure to integrate more fully an ever-widening number of citizens into intellectually meaningful activity within mass society (promoting social equity). . . . (3)

**Adding or omitting words in quotations**

If you add a word or words in a quotation, you should put brackets around the words to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

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).

If you omit a word or words from a quotation, you should indicate the deleted word or words by using ellipsis marks, which are three periods ( . . . ) preceded and followed by a space. For example:

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).
WORKS CITED

Format

Below is an example of a Works Cited Page (Remember all text in MLA style is double-spaced). Citations are organized alphabetically.


Web Pages

It is important to note that MLA no longer requires the use of URLs in Web citations. Because Web addresses are not static (i.e., they change often) and because documents sometimes appear in multiple places on the Web (e.g., on multiple databases), MLA explains that most readers can find electronic sources via title or author searches in Internet Search Engines. Also citations must be double spaced.

- Citing entire website in your Works Cited

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

- For example,


- With no author or editor:


- Citing a single page or article (with no author) on a website in your Works Cited:


Article in a Scholarly Journal


- With More than One Author:

• With more than two authors:

• If there are more than three authors, you may choose to list only the first author followed by the phrase et al. (Latin for “and others”) in place of the subsequent authors' names, or you may list all the authors in the order in which their names appear on the title page. (Note that there is a period after “al” in “et al.” Also note that there is never a period after the “et” in “et al.”).

**A Work in an Anthology, Reference, or Collection**

Works may include an essay in an edited collection or anthology, or a chapter of a book. The basic form is for this sort of citation is as follows:

Lastname, First name. "Title of Essay." *Title of Collection*. Ed. Editor's Name(s). City of Publication: Publisher, Year. Page range of entry. Medium of Publication.

• Some examples:

**Other Common Sources**

• **Personal Interviews**

Personal interviews refer to those interviews that you conduct yourself. List the interview by the name of the interviewee. Include the descriptor Personal interview and the date of the interview.

• **Speeches, Lectures, or Other Oral Presentations (including Conference Presentations and Classroom Discussions)**

Provide the speaker’s name. Then, give the title of the speech (if any) in quotation marks. Follow with the name of the meeting and organization, the location of the occasion, and the date. Use the descriptor that appropriately expresses the type of presentation (e.g., Address, Lecture, Reading, Keynote Speech, Guest Lecture, Conference Presentation). Remember to use the abbreviation *n.p.* if the publisher is not known; use *n.d.* if the date is not known.


**IN TEXT CITATIONS**

*(examples from the online writing lab at Purdue University, owl.english.purdue.edu)*

MLA format follows the author-page method of in-text citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation or paraphrase is taken must appear in the text, and a complete reference should appear on your Works Cited page. The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase, but the page number(s) should always appear in the parentheses, not in the text of your sentence. For 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).

Both citations in the examples above, (263) and (Wordsworth 263), tell readers that the information in the sentence can be located on page 263 of a work by an author named Wordsworth. If readers want more information about this source, they can turn to the Works Cited page, where, under the name of Wordsworth, they would find the following information:

Web Pages

When creating in-text citations for electronic, film, or Internet sources, remember that your citation must reference the source in your Works Cited.

For electronic and Internet sources, follow the following guidelines:

- Include in the text the first item that appears in the Work Cited entry that corresponds to the citation (e.g. author name, article name, website name, film name).
- You do not need to give paragraph numbers or page numbers based on your Web browser’s print preview function.
- Unless you must list the Web site name in the signal phrase in order to get the reader to the appropriate entry, do not include URLs in-text. Only provide partial URLs such as when the name of the site includes, for example, a domain name, like CNN.com or Forbes.com as opposed to writing out http://www.cnn.com or http://www.forbes.com.

➢ Some Examples,

According to forbes.com, “The financial bubble burst when big lenders made it a policy to take on high risk loans in order to increase their debt-based revenue” (“Bubble Economics”).

Itasca Community College’s slogan is “the best place to start” (itascacc.edu).

No Author

When a source has no known author, use a shortened title of the work instead of an author name. Place the title in quotation marks if it’s a short work (such as an article) or italicize it if it's a longer work (e.g. plays, books, television shows, entire Web sites) and provide a page number.

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).

In this example, since the reader does not know the author of the article, an abbreviated title of the article appears in the parenthetical citation which corresponds to the full name of the article which appears first at the left-hand margin of its respective entry in the Works Cited. Thus, the writer includes the title in quotation marks as the signal phrase in the parenthetical
citation in order to lead the reader directly to the source on the Works Cited page. The Works Cited entry appears as follows:


**A Work By Multiple Authors**

For a source with three or fewer authors, list the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation:

Smith, Yang, and Moore argue 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, Yang, and Moore 76).

For a source with more than three authors, use the work's bibliographic information as a guide for your citation. Provide the first author's last name followed by et al. or list all the last names.

Jones et al. counter Smith, Yang, and Moore’s argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (4).

Or

Legal experts counter Smith, Yang, and Moore’s argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (Jones et al. 4).

Or

Jones, Driscoll, Ackerson, and Bell counter Smith, Yang, and Moore’s argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (4).
Indirect Sources

Sometimes you may have to use an indirect source. An indirect source is a source cited in another source. For such indirect quotations, use "qtd. in" to indicate the source you actually consulted. For 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).

FORMS OF PLAGIARISM (FROM MLA HANDBOOK)

The most blatant form of plagiarism is to obtain and submit as your own a paper written by someone else. Other, less conspicuous forms of plagiarism include the failure to give appropriate acknowledgement when repeating or paraphrasing another’s wording, when taking a particularly apt phrase, and when paraphrasing another’s argument or presenting another’s line of thinking.

Repeating or Paraphrasing Wording

**ORIGINAL SOURCE**

Some of Dickinson’s most powerful poems express her firmly held conviction that life cannot be fully comprehended without an understanding of death.

**PLAGIARISM**

Emily Dickinson firmly believed that we cannot fully comprehend life unless we also understand death.

**CORRECT FORM (includes original author and page number)**

As Wendy Martin suggested, Emily Dickinson firmly believed that we cannot fully comprehend life unless we also understand death (625).

Taking a Particularly Apt Phrase

**ORIGINAL SOURCE**

Everyone uses the word language and everybody these days talks about culture ...."Languaculture" is a reminder, I hope, of the necessary connection between its two parts.

**PLAGIARISM**
At the intersection of language and culture lies a concept that we might call “languaculture.”

**CORRECT FORM (includes original author and page number)**

At the intersection of language and culture lies a concept that Micheal Agar has called “languaculture” (60).

**Paraphrasing an Argument or Presenting a Line of Thinking**

**ORIGINAL SOURCE**

Humanity faces a quantum leap forward. It faces the deepest social upheaval and creative restructuring of all time. Without clearly recognizing it, we are engaged in building a remarkable civilization from the ground up. This is the meaning of the Third Wave. Until now the human race has undergone two great waves of change, each one largely obliterating earlier cultures or civilizations and replacing them with the ways of life inconceivable to those who came before. The First Wave of change—the agricultural revolution—took thousands of years to play itself out. The Second Wave—the rise of industrial civilization—took a mere hundred years. Today history is even more accelerative, and it is likely that the Third Wave will sweep across history and complete itself in a few decades.

**PLAGIARISM**

There have been two revolutionary periods of change in history: the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution. The agricultural revolution determined the course of history for thousands of years; the industrial civilization lasted about a century. We are now on the threshold of a new period of revolutionary change, but this one may last for only a few decades.

**CORRECT FORM (includes original author and page number)**

According to Alvin Toffler, there have been two revolutionary periods of change in history: the agricultural revolution and the industrial revolution. The agricultural revolution determined the course of history for thousands of years; the industrial civilization lasted about a century. We are now on the threshold of a new period of revolutionary change, but this one may last for only a few decades (10).