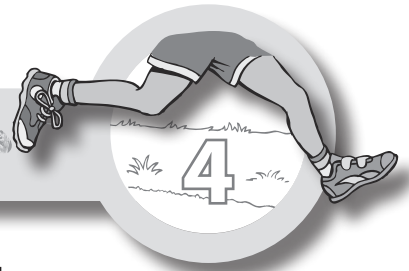


# MLA Style Guide



## A Note about MLA and APA Styles

This Writer's Style Guide mainly uses Modern Languages Association (MLA) style. It is the preferred style in many North American colleges and universities, particularly for English courses.

American Psychological Association (APA) style is an alternative style that many colleges and universities require for courses in social sciences. APA style will not be addressed here.

The MLA and APA styles do not normally use footnotes or endnotes to indicate sources of information. Those kinds of documentation were once more widely used, and you **should be aware that some history teachers and other courses may still require them**. Once you have learned to apply MLA style consistently, you will find that you can soon learn alternative styles if the need arises.

### Formatting Your Piece of Writing

Word process on "letter-size" white sheets of paper, which are 8.5 by 11 inches, or approximately 21 by 28 cm. If you are expressly permitted to use handwriting, write legibly in pen on standard-size lined sheets. Whether you are typing or writing, use only one side of each sheet.

Where standard usage calls for italic type, underline the words if you are writing by hand.

### Page Identification

Number the pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner of each page. Start with the number 1 for the first page of content, which is usually the first page after the title page.

On the same line as the page number, add any other information that the assignment directions require. If you are using a word processor, all of this information belongs in the header.

## Margins

Use margins of at least 2.5 cm, or at least 1 inch.

## Spacing and Indenting

If you are typing your work, double space it. If you are writing by hand, skip every second line. Indent the first word of each paragraph at least 1 cm or 5 spaces. You may also allow a little extra space above each paragraph.

## Setting Up a Title Page

Use a separate sheet of paper for the title page of a research paper. Centre the title of your piece of writing: place it halfway between the left and right margins. In the title, capitalize the first letter of the first word and all major words—all words except articles, coordinating conjunctions, and prepositions. Within your title, italicize the title of any separately published book or play, and use quotation marks around the title of any article, short story, or poem.

At the bottom, add your name, the course name, the date, your teacher's name, and any other information that the assignment directions require.

Example:

**The Use of Dramatic Irony in *Hamlet*  
and *Death of a Salesman***

Terry John  
English 12  
February 29, 2006  
Submitted to Mr. Lee

# Following Style Conventions

## Quotations

When quoting, use the exact wording, capitalization, punctuation, and spelling of the original. Use ellipsis points (three spaced periods) like this . . . to indicate words that you have omitted within a quotation. Precede the ellipsis points with a period when the omitted words are at the end of a sentence—like this. . . .

Do not correct any error in a quotation. If it is necessary to indicate an error, insert [sic]—Latin for thus—in square brackets after it. If an explanatory remark is needed in a quotation, insert it in square brackets to show that it is not part of the quotation.

Generally put quoted material within double quotation marks (“ ”). Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) only when you need to use quotation marks within other content in quotation marks.

Use block quotation style for poetry of at least two lines and other quotations of at least four lines. Do not enclose the block quotation in quotation marks, but do indent it at least 1 cm or 5 spaces. Within block quotations, use single spacing instead of the usual double spacing. The statement introducing a block quotation often ends with a colon. Here is an example of block quotation style:

Hinchcliffe explains why she believes Thorstein Veblen had serious misgivings about the relevance of social Darwinism to history: “Veblen describes his own evidence as ‘less than convincing’ in several chapters.” (341)

When you are quoting two lines of poetry within a paragraph (but not in a block quotation), show the break between the lines with a slash (/). Retain the original capitalization at the beginning of the second line, as in “Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit/ Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste. . . .”

When you are using “block quotation” style for poetry, keep the original indentation and line breaks intact, as in this stanza by George Herbert:

Man

My God, I heard this day,  
That none doth build a stately habitation,  
But that he means to dwell therein.

Avoid using long quotations to “pad” your writing—to increase the length. Also be sure that sentences with quotations are grammatically correct and easy to read: be as careful as you would be if there were no quotation marks.

## Abbreviations

Keep abbreviations to a minimum. Do not abbreviate Prime Minister, Governor General, President, Vice President, the Reverend, Professor, military titles, days of the week, and months of the year. Use Dr., Jr., Sr., Mr., Ms., and Mrs.

## Italics

Use italics for emphasis and for:

- The titles of books and periodicals
- Foreign language words and phrases (if not yet brought into English)
- Names of newspapers, with the city italicized only if it is part of the paper’s name (The *Globe and Mail* of Toronto, but the *Victoria Daily Times*)

Do not italicize titles of articles, lectures, and chapters; instead, put quotation marks around them.

If you are writing by hand or do not have italic type available, use underlining instead of italics.

## Numbers

In general, use numerals (101, 102) for numbers above 100. Use numerals for scientific numbers (7 g), years (1984, 2001), and parts of a book (pages 9–11).

Use words for numbers up to 100. Use words for approximate numbers (as in over two hundred people) and for a number that begins a sentence. Use words when they are more readable (as in a budget of \$2.5 billion and ten 5-point scales).

## **Punctuation**

Always place periods and commas inside (before) the closing quotation marks. Place all other punctuation marks outside (after) the closing quotation marks unless the other punctuation mark is part of the quoted material (as in “Is this a metaphor of life?” he asked.)

When referring to decades, write (for example) 1880s, rather than 1880’s.

Do not use commas before or after dashes.

Avoid contractions (doesn’t, you’re) in all formal writing.

## **Spelling**

For spelling and usage, use a Canadian dictionary. Where more than one spelling is given, use the first spelling listed. Be consistent in your spelling.

## **Identifying People**

The first time you refer to someone, use the person’s full name and title. After that, the surname is sufficient if there is no possibility of confusion.

## **Titles of Books and Articles**

Always copy the title of a book from the title page, not the book cover, which may sometimes have an abbreviated form of the title.

Italicize titles of books, periodicals, plays, long poems, films, TV programs, CDs, CD-ROMs, websites, and works of art.

Put quotation marks around the titles of articles, essays, short stories, interviews, and short poems.

## Citing Sources

Passing off other people's ideas as your own would be plagiarism. It is a major academic offence.

You do not need to cite sources for matters of common knowledge. It is hard for some students to know what is "common knowledge," but it becomes easier with experience. Assigned readings are not "common knowledge"; cite these sources even though your instructor will know where you obtained your information.

You must document your sources in two ways:

- In parenthetical documentation within the body of your piece of writing
- In your "Works Cited" list at the end

### Parenthetical Documentation

If you use someone's words or ideas, cite the source—normally including the page number—in parentheses. (For electronic sources such as web pages or online journals, cite the paragraph number.)

Steinbeck's female characters are often strong people who "guide their husbands through their moments of instability" (Falkenberg 17).

Steinbeck often created strong female characters who were able to guide their husbands through moments of instability (Falkenberg 17).

If you mention the author's name in your text, cite only the page number:

Falkenberg notes that Steinbeck created strong female characters who were able to guide their husbands through moments of instability (17).

If you are acknowledging an entire work, you can simply include the name of the work and its author in your text. An example is "Ray Carver earned his reputation as a 'dirty realist' with *What We Talk About When We Talk About Love*, a collection of tales of woe from the dark side of the American dream."

If you are citing a play, include the act, scene, and line numbers—not the page.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, we are told that "The play's the thing" (2.2.633).

MLA style generally does not use footnotes (at the bottom of a page) or endnotes (at the end of an essay). On occasion, however, you may need to use a footnote or endnote for a comment that would distract the reader from the main point of your writing. A footnote is used for that kind of comment in “Examples of Works Cited (MLA Style)” later in this guide.

## List of Works Cited

At the end of your piece of writing, list all the source materials that you have cited. Do this in a “Works Cited.” List in alphabetical order. Use the following guidelines when making the list:

- Centre the heading “Works Cited” near the top of your page. Leave a double space after the heading before beginning the first entry.
- Begin your entry flush with the left-hand margin. If the entry runs to a second line, indent that line by at least one centimetre or five spaces.
- Use the punctuation shown in the “Examples of Works Cited (MLA Style)” part of this style guide.
- Where an author’s name would be repeated in the list of works cited, replace the name with three hyphens and a period.
- If no place of publication or publisher is given, write *n.p.* For no date, write *n.d.* For no page, write *n. pag.*
- For **books**, use this general order of information in your citation:
  - The names of the author(s), editor(s), or institution(s) responsible for writing the book
  - The full title of the book, including the subtitle (if any)
  - The series title (if any) and the volume or number in the series
  - The total number of volumes (of a multi-volume work)
  - Edition (if not the first edition)
  - City of publication
  - Publisher’s name
  - Date of publication

Tazo, Ezra B., and Leah E. Doherty. *The Comprehensive Handbook of English*. 2nd ed. Toronto: UBC Press, 2006.

- For **articles**, use this general order of information in your citation:
  - Author
  - Article title
  - Periodical name
  - Volume number (sometimes issue number)
  - Date
  - Pages on which the article appears

McDonald, Tony. "Shakespeare's Threatre." *Understanding Literature* 27 (June 2006): 21-24.
  
- For **electronic sources**, works on the internet are cited in much the same way as printed works. The challenge with internet resources is that there is no standardized publication information. Aim to include:
  - Author and / or editor
  - Title of webpage / article
  - Title of website
  - Version number
  - Date of version or posting
  - Publishing information
  - Date of access
  - URL

Bird, P. "Holden Caufield's Humour." *Modern Literature* 2.1. 2006. Canadian Literary Association. Mar. 2006  
<<http://www.modernliturature.com/ed21/holden.htm>>.

Sometimes your assignment directions may require you to include a bibliography. MLA style generally avoids the term bibliography because it literally means a "description of books" and therefore appears to exclude non-print materials. In practice, however, the expectation is likely to be what MLA style calls a list of works consulted. In a "bibliography" in that sense, include not only the works that you cited in your paper but also other relevant works that you consulted.



## Examples of Works Cited (MLA Style)

### Books

- Books by a single author  
Jones, Ray. *Talking about Statistics*. New York: Harper Collins, 1983.  
*America's Funniest Statistics*. New York: Harper Collins, 1993.
- Book with two or more authors or editors  
Dal, Michael, and Louise Lui. *Galileo*. New York: Harper Collins, 1999.
- Book under the direction of an editor  
Brown, Mary, ed. *The History of Canada*. Toronto: Key Porter Books, 2000.

### Other Printed Works

- Play  
Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine. New York: Washington Square-Pocket, 1992.
- Article, essay, poem, etc., in an anthology  
Brown, A. Y. "The Loon in Canadian Literature." *Symbols in Fiction*.  
Ed. A. D. Singh. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971. 27–41.
- Article or entry in a reference book  
"Sparta." *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. 15th ed., 1987.
- Review in a scholarly journal  
McNeal, Robert H. Rev. of *The Prophet Outcast: Trotsky, 1929–1940*, by Isaac Deutcher. *Canadian Historical Review* 46 (Mar. 1965): 79–81.
- Article in a magazine or newspaper (translated, in this example)  
Raymond, Jean-Gilles. "Victims of Crime Have Rights Too." Trans. Marie Ng. *Guardian Weekly* 24 Jan. 1999: 13.
- Anonymous article  
"Importing Full Employment." *Financial Post* 17 July 1965: 6–7.
- Letter to the editor or editorial  
Chan, Jie. Letter. "Best Bets." *National Post* 4 Dec. 1998: A28.  
"Court Case Avoided." Editorial. *Burnaby Now* 30 May 1999: 6.

## Web Sources

- Professional site  
*English Language Centre Study Zone*. University of Victoria. 1997. University of Victoria English Language Centre. Mar. 2006  
< <http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/>>.
- Personal site  
McLean, Jose. Home page. May 2006 <<http://www.josemclean.com>>.
- Article in a magazine  
Doherty, Hannah. "Global Warming." *Earth Watch*. Oct. 2006. Dec. 2006  
<<http://www.earthwatch/warming.com>>.

## Other Media

- Interview that you conducted  
Tanaka, Stacey. Personal interview. 28 Nov. 1999.
- Sound recording  
Dylan, Bob. *Nashville Skyline*. Columbia, 1969.
- Television or radio program  
"Death by Moonlight." *The Valour and the Horror*. Dir. Brian McKenna. Writs. Brian McKenna, Terrence McKenna, and Roman Jarymowicz. CBC, 1992.
- Film or video  
*Under the Willow Tree: Pioneer Chinese Women in Canada*. Dir. Dora Nipp. National Film Board, 1997.
- CD-ROM  
Zebu. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. CD-ROM. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1992.