

What, Why, and How?

5

MLA CONVENTIONS

**General Formatting
Titles & Authors
In-Text Citations
Works Cited
Brief MLA Citation Guide**

WHAT IS MLA?

MLA stands for Modern Language Association, which is a professional association in the United States for scholars of language and literature.

MLA style is the style recommended by the Modern Language Association for preparing and writing scholarly manuscripts and student research papers. It concerns itself with the mechanics of writing, such as punctuation, quotation, and documentation of sources. **MLA style** has been widely used by schools, academic departments, and instructors for nearly half a century. MLA style provides writers with a system for cross-referencing their sources from their parenthetical references to their "works cited" page.

All fields of research agree on the need to document scholarly borrowings, but documentation conventions vary because of the different needs of scholarly disciplines. MLA style for documentation is widely used in the humanities, especially in writing on language and literature. Generally simpler and more concise than other styles, MLA style features brief parenthetical citations in the text keyed to an alphabetical list of works cited that appears at the end of the work.

WHY USE MLA?

Using MLA Style properly makes it easier for readers to navigate and comprehend a text by providing familiar cues when referring to sources and borrowed information. Editors and instructors also encourage everyone to use the same format so there is consistency of style within a given field. Following MLA's standards as a writer will allow you to:

- Provide your readers with cues they can use to follow your ideas more efficiently and to locate information of interest to them.
- Allow readers to focus more on your ideas by not distracting them with unfamiliar or complicated formatting.
- Establish your credibility or ethos in the field by demonstrating an awareness of your audience and their needs as fellow researchers (particularly concerning the citing of references).

WHEN DO I USE MLA?

There are several steps in your essay writing process where you will need to use MLA, including:

1. General Formatting
2. Titles & Authors
3. In-Text Citations
4. Works Cited

In this chapter, we'll show you how to use MLA for each of these 4 areas...

HOW DO I USE MLA?

The following explanations and examples will help familiarize you with the basic formatting requirements of MLA Style and the different standards for notation that MLA writers are expected to use. Pay attention to even the small details from basic paper layout to abbreviations to punctuation and spacing.

A well formatted essay sends a positive message to the reader that the writer has invested care, time, and attention into crafting the essay.

General Formatting

- Essay is double-spaced**
- A standard font is used (e.g. Times New Roman), font size 12**
- There are 1 inch margins at the top, sides and bottom of the paper**
- There are no extra spaces between the paragraphs, just a half inch indent at the beginning of each paragraph**
- There is a MLA formatted title page with the following information in the top left corner of the paper:**
 - Student name
 - Instructor name
 - Course title
 - Date
- There is MLA style numbering on each page in the top right with student's last name and page number (e.g. Smith 1)**
- Essay meets the minimum page requirement**

Rachel Bell

Professor Karen Wong

English 100

21 June 2014

America's Weak Work Ethic: Learning a Lesson from Malcolm X

Malcolm X in the excerpt "Learning to Read" from *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* shows that reading and writing are paths to self-confidence, empowerment and liberation. He also shows a level of dogged determination that has become increasingly atypical. The characteristics that he shows of not giving up even in the face of overwhelming odds and applying good old-fashioned, and often tedious and repetitive, hard work and persistence have become frighteningly rare in the U.S. today where people have bloated senses of entitlement. People today often feel that things should be given rather than earned. No need to study acting for years, act in play after play honing your craft, or learn different dialects and accents to play diverse and convincing characters. Instead, you can become rich and famous overnight by starring in a reality show without a shred of talent. The repeated message that we should be richly rewarded for doing nothing or for just being ourselves causes people to not pursue the healthy and character building paths of hard work. As a result, we become paralyzed in disappointment when we don't get what we think we deserve, and we become a nation of discontents that do nothing and don't care. If we keep devaluing the slow path of hard work, we're going to become increasingly uneducated, unmotivated, apathetic, and better controlled by advertisers, politicians, and in the changing global climate, other countries.

The diligence and persistent effort Malcolm X showed in learning to read has become disappointingly rare. Malcolm X in his autobiography tells us that when he went to prison, he could hardly read or write. He decided the way to improve would be to copy the entire dictionary word for word by hand. He said to copy just the first page alone took an entire day. The next day he reviewed all

Titles & Authors

- The student's essay title is centered above the introductory paragraph and is appropriate, creative and draws in reader interest.
- The names of the texts are properly formatted (names of longer works are italicized or underlined, and titles of shorter works are in quotes)

<p>Italicize or underline longer works (italicizing is more commonly used to avoid confusion with hyperlinks)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Books○ Plays○ Periodicals (newspapers, journals, and magazines)○ Films○ Television or web series○ Albums (CDs)○ Long or epic poems○ Court cases○ Computer and video games○ Orchestral works○ Paintings, sculptures and other works of visual art	<p>Use quotation marks for shorter texts and for works that are part of a larger work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Chapters in books● One Act Plays● Articles in periodicals (newspapers, journals, and magazines)● Short Stories● Episodes of television or a web series● Song titles● Short Poems● Essays● Titles of sections from longer works● Other literary works shorter than a three act play or complete book
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- For titles, only put them in quotes, underline **OR** italicize them—**NEVER** a combination of styles. **WRONG:** Gene's favorite book is "*Geek Love.*"
- All words in titles are capitalized except the following (when they aren't the first word in the title): articles (a, an), prepositions (in, of), conjunctions (and, but, so), and the "to" in infinitives (*How to Sing*)
- In reading-based writing, introduce the text(s) and author(s) being written about in the introductory paragraph.
- When first introducing a text, provide the full name of the author and afterwards, refer to the author by last name (never by first name)
- Don't confuse characters in stories/poems and authors as being the same person as often they are not.

PRACTICE

Find the **TEN FORMATTING ERRORS** in the first page of the following essay:

Lachmayr 1

Rachel Bell

Professor Lucia Lachmayr

21 May 2013

Revision of Essay #1

In the novel "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave," it is revealed how this long and brutal control of human beings was partly accomplished through control over literacy. The control and limitations over reading and writing during slavery sought to make slaves like Fred ignorant, powerless, and therefore more easily controlled, and this control over literacy and education is still happening in the world today.

In his narrative, Fred exposes how being denied education was one of the main tactics used to keep so many blacks trapped within generations of enslavement. Freddie lived in Baltimore for 7 years as a house slave and was forbidden by his masters Mr. and Mrs. Hugh to read or write.

In-Text Citations

In-text citation 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 (the body of the essay), and a complete reference should appear on your Works Cited page at the end.

You have two options when you cite your sources within the text of your paper:

- (1) **Provide the author's name and the page number on which you found the material you are citing:**

Example: Forecasters agree that El Niño has "made for an unusual year" (Sampson 91).

- (2) **Provide author's name in text of your sentence and include only page number after the sentence.**

Example: Forecasters from across the country agree with John Sampson's statement that El Niño has "made for an unusual year" (91).

No author?

Sometimes the author can be a corporation or organization like Chevron or the ASPCA so follow the same rules above citing them as the authors. If the author is unknown, either use the complete title in the phrase introducing the quote or use a short form of the title in parentheses.

No page number?

Do not include the page number if a work lacks page numbers, as is the case with many Web sources. Even if a printout from a Web site shows page numbers, treat the source as unpaginated in the in-text citation because not all printouts give the same page numbers (when the pages of a Web source are stable, as in PDF files, supply a page number in your in-text citation).

NEVER write out pg. or page or pp. in the parenthesis

The period in the sentence goes *after* the citation parenthesis.

If there were two or three authors, name them all either in the phrase leading up to the quote or in the parenthetical citation.

If there are four or more authors, include only the first author's name followed by "et al." (Latin for "and others").

Works Cited

A Works Cited is an alphabetized list of texts you have analyzed, quoted, summarized, or paraphrased in your essay. The Works Cited appears at the end of your paper and gives publication information for each of the sources you have cited in the paper.

- In text-based writing, you will always include a Works Cited listing the text you are analyzing. If you did not do additional outside research, your Works Cited will still list your primary text or texts.**
- Begin the list of works cited on a new page at the end of the paper.**
- Center the title Works Cited about one inch from the top of the page and double-space throughout.**
- All citations on the Works Cited are listed alphabetically according to the last name of the author.**
- If a work has no author, alphabetize by the first word of the title (ignoring “A,” “An,” or “The” at the beginning of the title).**
- Indenting—do not indent the first line of each works cited entry, but indent any additional lines one-half inch. This technique highlights the names of the authors, making it easy for readers to scan the alphabetized list along the left margin.**
- If your list includes two or more works by the same author, use the author’s name for the first entry only. For subsequent entries, use three hyphens followed by a period. List the titles in alphabetical order.**
- The format of the source information will vary depending on if the source is a book, a website, an article, etc. For the proper format by type, visit: <http://www.skylinecollege.edu/library/citingsources.php>**
- You can use sites like this one to properly format citations for you: <http://citationmachine.net/>**

EXAMPLE

Sample Works Cited Page

Works Cited

- Addonizio, Kim. "Affair." *Hunger and Thirst: Food Literature*. Ed. Nancy Cary. San Diego: City Works Press, 2008. 235-236. Print.
- Ahmedi, Fauzia Erfan. "Welcoming Courtyards: Hospitality, Spirituality, and Gender." *Feminism and Hospitality: Gender in the Host/Guest Relationship*. 3rd ed. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2010. 109-24. Print.
- "Business: The Economy and Global Warming." *The Economist* 29 May 2012: 82. Print.
- Gillespie, Paula, and Neal Lerner. *The Allyn and Bacon Guide to Peer Tutoring*. Boston: Allyn, 2000. Print.
- Murphy, Beth. "How to Dance the Macarena." Youtube. Youtube, 7 Sept. 2010. Web. 19 Apr. 2014.
- Nasar, Sylvia. "Manifold Destiny." *The New Yorker* Conde Nast Digital, 28 Aug. 2006. Web. 30 Mar. 2010.
- Poiger, Uta G. "Rock 'n' Roll, Female Sexuality, and the Cold War Battle over German Identities." *The Journal of Modern History* 68.3 (1996): 577. JSTOR. Web. 2 Jan. 2013.
- Pollan, Michael. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin, 2007. Print.
- Titanic*. Dir. James Cameron. Perf. Leonardo Di Caprio, Kate Winslett, Billy Zane. 20th Century Fox. 1998. DVD.

Brief MLA Citation Guide

You can use Skyline's Library page or other online sources to find the proper citation information to include based on the type of source you are citing, but here is also a brief guide for the most commonly types of sources cited.

CITATION FORMAT FOR BOOKS

Books with a single author:

Citation description:

Author's last name, First name Middle initial (if any). *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication. Medium of Publication.

Citation example:

Gamson, Joshua. R. *Claims to Fame: Celebrity in Contemporary America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994. Print.

Books with two, three or more authors:

Citation description:

First author's last name, First name Middle initial (if any), and Second author's First name Middle initial (if any) Last name. *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication. Medium of Publication.

Note: For a book with three authors, list all three author's names. Only the first author's name should be listed last name first. For a book with more than 3 authors, list only the first author's name followed by a comma and the words **et al.**

Citation examples:

Stewart, David W., and David H. Furse. *Effective Television Advertising: A Study of 1000 Commercials*. Lexington: Lexington Books, 1986. Print.

Jonson, Albert, Thomas Gray, and Jessie Muncy. *Information Access*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Print.

Baker, Nellie, et al. *Book Publishing*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. Print.

Books with editor(s) rather than author(s):

Citation description:

Editor's last name, First name Middle initial (if any), ed. *Title*. Place of publication: Year of publication. Medium of Publication.

Citation example:

Baughman, Cynthia, ed. *Women on Ice: Feminist Essays on the Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan Spectacle*. New York: Routledge, 1995. Print.

Essay, article, story, poem or chapter in a book with an editor (if the book is an anthology of works by multiple writers):

Citation description:

Author's last name, First name Middle initial (if any). "Title of Chapter or Essay." *Title of Book*. Ed. Editor's first and last name. Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication. Page numbers for the chapter. Medium of Publication.

Citation example:

Fox, Aaron A. "Split Subjectivity in Country Music and Honky-Tonk Discourse." *All That Glitters: Country Music in America*. Ed. George H. Lewis. Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1993. 131-139. Print.

Citation Format for eBooks

Citation description:

Begin the entry in the works-cited list like the entry for a comparable printed work and end it with a designation of the medium of publication. The medium is the type of electronic file, such as Kindle file, Nook file, EPUB file, or PDF file. If you cannot identify the file type, use Digital file.

Citation example:

Rowley, Hazel. *Franklin and Eleanor: An Extraordinary Marriage*. New York: Farrar, 2010. Kindle file.

Citation Format for Articles from Periodicals (Magazines, Journals & Newspapers)

Magazine article (the following information is for paper copies of articles)

Citation description:

Author's last name, First name Middle initial (if any). "Title of Article." *Title of Magazine* Day (if given) Month (abbreviated except May, June, and July) Year: Page numbers of article (if the article is not printed on consecutive pages, give the first page followed by a +). Medium of publication.

Citation examples:

Bazell, Robert. "Science and Society: Growth Industry." *New Republic* 15 Mar. 1993: 13-14. Print.

Frank, Michael. "The Wild, Wild West." *Architectural Digest* June 1993: 180+. Print.

Journal article (the following information is for paper copies of articles)

Citation description:

Author's Last name, First name Middle initial (if any). "Title of article." *Journal title* Volume number. Issue number (if each issue number begins on page 1) (Date of publication): page numbers. Medium of publication.

Citation example:

Babrow, Austin S. "Student Motives for Watching Soap Operas." *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 31.3 (Summer 1997): 309-321. Print.

Newspaper article (the following information is for paper copies of articles)

Citation description:

Author's last name, First name Middle initial (if any). "Article Title." *Title of Newspaper* Day Month (abbreviated except May, June, and July) Year: Section and page number(s) (if the article is not printed on consecutive pages, just give the first page followed by +). Medium of publication.

Citation example:

MacKenzie, Bill. "Packin' the Heat." *San Francisco Chronicle* 4 Nov. 1993: A16+. Print.

Citation Format for World Wide Web Pages

NOTE: The MLA format for online publications is not completely standardized. Various websites provide specific information on how to cite information from the Web according to their current interpretations of official citation formats.

General web page format:

Citation description:

- Author or editor's last name (if an author is given), first name, middle initial (if any)
 - "Title of the Page." (in quotation marks)
 - *Title of the Overall Website* (in italics)
 - Version or edition used
 - Publisher or sponsor of the site (if not given, use *n.p.*)
 - Date of publication (day, month, and year, as available). If not given, use *n.d.*
 - Medium of publication (Web)
 - Date of access (day, month, and year)
 - URL (optional – provide if it helps your reader locate the source or if your instructor requires it). Enclose the URL in angle brackets and end with a period.
- **NOTE : If you cannot locate any of the above components, leave it out.**

NOTE : Each of the above sections of your citation is followed by a period, except the publisher or sponsor, which is followed by a comma.

Citation example (basic web page):

Brenner, Eric. "Citing Sources." *Skyline College Library*. Skyline College, 28 May 2008. Web. 3 Dec. 2009. <<http://www.skylinecollege.edu/library/citingsources.php>>.

ANSWERS

TEN FORMATTING ERRORS:

- (1) The font is too large at size 16
- (2) The font is unconventional
- (3) In essay information in the top left, the class title is left out
- (4) The page numbering in the top right has the professor's last name, not the student's
- (5) The title "Revision of Essay #1" is generic, not creative and does not draw in reader interest
- (6) When the novel is introduced, it needs to also list the author
- (7) The title of the novel is in quotes when it should be italicized
- (8) The main character is referred to by different informal nicknames not used in the text and one is misspelled.
Always be accurate and consistent with character and author names and be sure they are spelled correctly.
- (9) There is an extra space after the first paragraph and the second paragraph needs to be indented.
- (10) The margins on the left side are not one inch

FORMATTING ERRORS CORRECTED IN VERSION BELOW:

Bell 1

Rachel Bell

Professor Lucia Lachmayr

English 100

21 May 2013

Education Denied: a Recipe to Control Human Beings

In Frederick Douglass's novel *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass reveals how this long and brutal control of human beings was partly accomplished through control over literacy. The control and limitations over reading and writing during slavery sought to make slaves like Douglass ignorant, powerless, and therefore more easily controlled, and this control over literacy and education is still happening in the world today.

In his narrative, Douglass exposes how being denied education was one of the main tactics used to keep so many blacks trapped within generations of enslavement. Douglass lived in Baltimore for 7 years as a house slave and was forbidden by his masters Mr. and Mrs. Hugh to read or write.