

# Working with MLA

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

## THE MLA STYLE SCOOP

**REMEMBER:**

**Numbers:** Spell out numbers containing one or two words (forty-four). Use figures for numbers with more than two words (530). Spell out a number if it begins a sentence.

**Capitalization:** Capitalize major words in titles and headings, proper nouns or names, and the first word after a colon or dash (if what comes after is a complete sentence). Capitalize the first word in a quoted sentence but NOT the first word of a quoted phrase.

**Plagiarism:** Always:

1. Give credit for quotations & borrowed ideas.
2. Enclose borrowed language in quotes.
3. Put summaries and paraphrases in your own words but with a citation!

**What is MLA Style?**

Essentially, MLA Style is a way to document works that you borrow to write a paper. It also serves as a universal style for papers so that they are uniform and can be graded on a similar scale.

Generally, MLA style is used in the humanities, especially for language and literature. It is seen as more streamlined than other documenting styles and features in-text parenthetical citations linked to a works-cited page.

The Association's guidelines are used in more than 1,100 scholarly journals, magazines, and presses. MLA has also been used by instructors for more than half-a-century. The guidelines are followed in North America, Brazil, China, and Japan, among many other places throughout the world ([www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)).



**MLA can be your friend!**

**General Instructions for Your MLA Paper:**

Type (12-pt Times New Roman)  
Margins (1 in., all sides)

Header with last name followed by page number (upper-right hand)

**Title Page:**

No title page is required for MLA format.

In the upper left-hand corner of any MLA paper, you should have the following:

- Your Name
- Your Instructor's Name
- The Course Title
- The Date

This comes before any writing in your document.

**Resources for MLA:**

**Research & Documentation Website by Diana Hacker** (great source with sample papers)  
[www.dianahacker.com/pocket](http://www.dianahacker.com/pocket)

**Modern Language Association**  
[www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org)

**UTSA Library**  
[www.lib.utsa.edu/research/subject/citingguide.html](http://www.lib.utsa.edu/research/subject/citingguide.html)

**UTSA Tomás Rivera Center**  
[www.utsa.edu/trcss](http://www.utsa.edu/trcss)

**The Writing Center**  
[www.utsa.edu/twc](http://www.utsa.edu/twc)

## TO DO AND NOT TO DO...

**Commas:**

Use in a series of three or more items.  
-Bushes, trees, and shrubs...

Use to set off nonessential clauses.  
-George Bush, who was at the summit, said...

Do NOT USE before an essential clause.  
-George Bush attended the summit that took place...

**Semicolons:**

Use to separate elements in a series that already contains commas.

Use to separate two independent clauses

that are not joined by a conjunction.

Use when connecting clauses with a conjunctive adverb or transitional phrase.  
-He documented the civil war; however, he did not serve as a soldier.

**Colons:**

Use after an independent clause (a complete sentence) to indicate a list, an appositive, or a quotation.  
-The grocery list includes the following:

**Parentheses:**

Use to introduce abbreviations. Ex. (NATO)  
Use to set off structurally independent elements. Ex. (see figure 5)

**Abbreviations:**

Use sparingly. DO NOT USE "etc."

**Brackets:**

Use to enclose material that is already in parentheses or enclose material inserted into the original quote.

## Q U O T A T I O N S I N T E X T

If a quotation has four or fewer typed lines, enclose it with quotation marks and insert it in the essay text with a page number.

- Williams asserts, "Eight out of ten Americans admit to believing in ghosts" (69).

If the quote is longer than four typed lines, use block quote formatting, with no quotation marks and a one-inch indentation. Also, be sure to double-space, as usual.

-Wilson also explores the voyage motif with regard to the *Man of Law's Tale*:

Constance's repeated voyages at sea clearly resonate of her journey through the unknown the moment her father sends her off to marry in a heathen land. Though this journey does have a specific destination, those that follow...

When inserting material, enclose in brackets.

- The researchers contend that "[women] tend to seek information while men tend to give information" (Smith and Jones 34).

## R E F E R E N C E C I T A T I O N S I N T E X T

MLA parenthetical citations usually include an author's name (unless given in the text) and a page number. No commas or dates should be included. The reference in the text must clearly point to a specific source in the works cited list.

### One Author

-The point has already been argued (Tannen 178-85).

-Tannen has argued this point (178-85).

### -Two or Three Authors

-Smith and Jones concur that "the end is nigh" (57).

- Both authors concur that "the end is nigh" (Smith and Jones 57).

### Four or More Authors

Name all authors or the first author followed by "et al."

-The scientists surveyed the participants (Smith et al. 56).

**Source Quoted in Another Source-** According to Ballard, "The future will not be violent or exciting, but merely average" (qtd. in Smithburg 17).

### Anonymous or No Author

Refer to the book or article by its title. In the parenthetical citation, shorten the title to its first word as it appears in the works-cited list.

-Anorexia affects an alarming number of teenage girls in America ("Anorexia" 22).

## W O R K S C I T E D

Remember to tab the second line of each entry or use the "hanging indent" in Microsoft Word. Each citation must also include a media notation (print, web, video, CD-Rom, or MP3 for example). When citing online sources, a URL is no longer necessary.

### Book with One Author

Tombs, Peter. *Immoral Tales*. New York: Doubleday, 1998. Print.

### Book with Two Authors

Tombs, Peter, and John Ripps. *Immortal Stories of Hope*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1990. Print.

### Work in an Anthology

Bordo, Susan. "The Moral Content of Nabokov's *Lolita*." *Aesthetic Subjects*. Ed. Pamela R. Matthews and David McWhirter. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2003. 125-52. Print.

### Book With an Editor & an Author

Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Works*. Ed. Jonas Salkerman. New York: Harcourt, 2000. Print.

### English Translation of a Book

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. New York: Viking, 1996. Print.

**Periodical Publication in an Online Database** (follow the guidelines for a regular periodical entry, but include also the title of the database, italicized, the medium of publication consulted, and the date of access)

Chan, Evans. "Postmodernism and Hong Kong Cinema." *Postmodern Culture* 10.3 (2000): n. pag. *Project Muse*. Web. 5 June 2008.