CMU WRITING CENTER

QUICK TIPS GUIDE: WRITING IN MLA STYLE


✓ Always check with your instructor to see if he or she has any different requirements or specifications for your paper.
✓ Text should be in 12-point font, Times New Roman, double-spaced with 1-inch page margins.
✓ Page header: Include your last name and page number in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin; all pages numbered consecutively.
✓ Do not use a title page unless requested by the instructor. Instead, below page header on the first page, upper left-hand corner put: your name, instructor's name, course designator (e.g. ENG 250), and date (e.g. 9 November 2010), each on one line and double-spaced like the rest of your document.
✓ The title of your paper is centered two lines below the date on the first page with each major word capitalized. If your title has a title within it, use quotation marks (for chapters, articles, poems, etc.) or italic (for books, plays) as appropriate:
  • Dubliners as Indicative of Trauma
  • Human Weariness in “After Apple Picking”
✓ Paragraphs are indented 5 spaces (one typical tab).
✓ Left margin is justified; the right margin is uneven (do not right- or full-justify the text).
✓ Italicize rather than underline for books or journal titles in the paper.
✓ If using endnotes, include them in a section titled “Notes” before the “Works Cited.”
✓ Use simple present tense for introducing texts (Smith states, “___”).
✓ Use non-gendered language (e.g., use “he or she” not “he”).

II. INTEGRATING SOURCES IN MLA

Like all documentation styles, MLA style provides a standard system for giving credit to others for their contribution to your work.

✓ Citations are used to identify sources of information and ideas and should be placed in sentences so that the source of information is clear.
✓ For MLA citations, the author's last name and page number(s) appear in the text, either through a signal phrase or in a parenthetical citation.
✓ Both direct quotations and paraphrases require citation information and page numbers. The page number(s) should always appear in a parenthetical format at the end of the source material.
✓ Direct quotations should be “framed” by using your own words before and after they appear.

Block indent quotations if 4 lines or longer:
✓ Begin a new line
✓ No quotation marks
✓ Double spaced
✓ Text is indented one inch from the left margin
✓ Introduced by signal phrase in the text generally followed by a colon
✓ Citation at the end is outside the final punctuation
✓ If quotation is more than one paragraph, subsequent paragraphs should be indented an additional quarter inch.
Example of block indent:

The “real” Lear or Lear were not seen on the English stage between 1681 and 1823, when Edmund Kean restored the tragic ending of the play, and it was not until 1838 that William Charles Macready fully returned to Shakespeare’s play. Rather, Tates’s emasculated tragi-comedy prevailed with the approval of none other than Dr. Johnson. (Weis 2)

A signal phrase including the author’s name can introduce the quotation you intend to use.
Example: Weis explains that the version of King Lear seen by theatre-goers for 142 years was Tate’s revision, as “the ‘real’ Lear or Lear were not seen on the English stage between 1681 and 1823, when Edmund Kean restored the tragic ending of the play” (2).

If the author’s name is not used to introduce the quotation, include the author in an end parenthetical. Example: The version of King Lear seen by theatre-goers for 142 years was Tate’s tragic-comic revision, as “the ‘real’ Lear or Lear were not seen on the English stage between 1681 and 1823, when Edmund Kean restored the tragic ending of the play” (Weis 2).

Paraphrase = using your own words to capture the author’s ideas
✓ Rearrange the order of the information from the original
✓ Use a dictionary or thesaurus to find synonyms for keywords
✓ Rephrase complex material into easy-to-understand language
✓ Enclose in quotation marks any “unusual terminology” from the original
✓ Double-check to make sure that you are presenting ideas in YOUR words and forms

Example: In 1823, Edmund Kean reinstated the tragic ending of Shakespeare’s King Lear; this ending had not been seen for 142 years (Weis 2).

Signal / Lead-in Verbs

- accept
- acknowledge
- add
- affirm
- agree
- argue
- assert
- believe
- caution
- challenge
- claim
- comment
- contend
- contradict
- concede
- declare
- deny
- describe
- disagree
- discuss
- dispute
- emphasize
- endorse
- explain
- grant
- highlight
- imply
- insist
- maintain
- negate
- note
- observe
- outline
- propose
- refute
- reject
- report
- respond
- show
- suggest
- think
- urge
- verify
- write
III. WORKS CITED PAGE IN MLA

List of sources cited are titled “Works Cited,” double-spaced, and listed alphabetically by author, with a “hanging indent” (lines after the first are indented 5 spaces). Note: sources that are found within the bounds of a larger work are considered to be within “containers” (or the larger work itself). The container’s title should be italicized and followed always by a comma within the citation.

Basic Order of Information (Print Sources):

1. Alphabetize the entries in your list by author’s last name.
2. Start each entry by listing the author’s last name, a comma, and then the author’s first name.
3. If a work has no author, alphabetize it by its title. If there are multiple authors, list them in the order in which they are listed in the source. Reverse the name of only the first author.
   a. Example: Williams, Julie, Kevin Carpenter, and George Milton.
4. Then, the title of the work cited.
   a. Book Titles are italicized.
   b. Article names are enclosed in quotation marks.
   c. Titles of Periodicals (e.g., journals, magazines, scholarly newsletters) are italicized and ALL key words are capitalized – these are “containers.” The Series number or name (if applicable) volume, issue, and date/year information, and page numbers are included. (See specific examples below for formatting for types of periodicals).
5. End with:
   a. Publisher for books and non-periodicals
   b. A page number range for periodicals and a work in an anthology.

Examples of MLA Works Cited

Basic Book Form

Author last name, first name. Title Italicized. Publisher, Year of Publication.


Book with Two or Three Authors


Book with More than Three Authors

First author listed followed by the phrase “et al.” (and others)


Book with Author and Editor

**Book with Editor(s)**


**Book with Author and Translator**


**Book with Corporate Author**


**Two or More Works by the Same Author**


**Book Edition Other than the First**


**Work in an Anthology**


**Encyclopedias and other Reference Works**


**Periodicals/Magazines**


**Article in Journal**


**Article from an Online-Only Journal**


**Basic Order of Information (Electronic Sources):**
1. Begin with Last Name, First Name of the author, performer, translator, director, compiler
2. Title of the work italicized if complete; in quotes if part of larger work
3. Title of site italicized and followed by version or edition used; if no title, describe the work, i.e. editorial
4. Publisher or sponsoring organization (N.p. if not available)
5. Date of publication or last update (n.d. if not available)
6. The date you accessed the source
7. The URL in angle brackets. Do not include the URL for online sources IF it can be easily retrieved with the title or the author’s name. DO include the URL if your instructor requires it, or the source is difficult to retrieve without it.


Short Work from a Website with no Author


Sources for Additional Information:

✓ CMU Virtual Reference Collection: <http://www.lib.cmich.edu/departments/reference/>


✓ Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

✓ CMU Writing Center: Park Library 400 (x2986); Anspach 003 (x1228); Wheeler Hall basement (x1002) <http://writingcenter.cmich.edu>