

Introduction

The Brigham Young University–Idaho MLA Guide serves as a quick reference for the following topics:

Formatting the Paper

Instructions on Formatting the Paper.....	2
Visual Example of Paper Formatting.....	3
Visual Example of a Works-Cited List.....	4

Integrating Sources

Quoting.....	5
Paraphrasing.....	6
Summarizing	7

Documenting Sources

In-Text Citation.....	8
Works-Cited List: Print Sources.....	11
Works-Cited List: Electronic Sources	12

Most-Common Mistakes	14
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This guide only highlights some of the major topics of MLA documentation. For further questions, see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th edition)*.

About MLA

The Modern Language Association (MLA) was founded to create a standard documentation style for those studying languages and literature. By following MLA guidelines, you can improve your credibility as a writer and avoid plagiarism.

The information in this document was adapted from the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th edition)*. Published 17 July 2007.

Formatting the Paper

The Body of the Paper

MLA requires you to format your paper in a very specific way. The following guidelines will help you format your paper correctly:

- Use a font similar to 12-point Times New Roman.
- Set all margins to one inch (left, right, top, and bottom).
- Left justify your paper; do not justify the lines of your paper at the right margin.
- Indent the first word of each paragraph one-half inch (one tab).
- Indent block quotations one inch (two tabs) from the left margin.
- Double-space the entire document.
- Insert only one space between sentences.
- Do not include a title page.
- Create a heading on the first page consisting of your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date (flush with the left margin, one inch from the top margin).
- Center the title of the paper and keep in the same font and size as the rest of the paper. Do not underline or put in quotation marks. Follow standard capitalization for titles (see MLA Handbook 3.6.1 for more information).
- Include a running header, consisting of your last name followed by the page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page (one-half inch from top margin).

See page 3 for a visual example of paper formatting.

The Works-Cited List

It is always necessary to include a works-cited list at the end of a research paper. Observe the following guidelines when formatting your research paper:

- Keep your works-cited list on its own page at the end of your document.
- Keep the formatting consistent with the rest of your paper. Use the same font, one-inch margins, double-spacing, and a header that includes your last name and the page number.
- The title of the works-cited list should always be Works Cited. Capitalize both words and center the title at the top of the page. The title should not be underlined, placed in quotation marks, nor punctuated in any way.
- Keep entries in alphabetical order by the authors' last names. For works with no author listed, alphabetize by the first word of the entry ignoring *A*, *An*, or *The*.
- Indent all but the first line of each entry one-half inch or five spaces (this is called a hanging indent).
- Do not add any extra spaces between entries.

See page 4 for a visual example of a works-cited list.

Maintain one-half inch top margin for header.

Johnson 1

Include a header on every page with your last name and the page number.

Mitchell Johnson

Professor Brown

English 251

4 May 2007

Include a heading with your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date.

The Story Teller and the Seaman

After spending years working at sea, Joseph Conrad felt as though a “story-teller were being born into the body of a seaman” (Fletcher 67). He had been working on various manuscripts for most of his adult life, but his experiences at sea gave him more material for his works. Conrad often puts himself, the people he knew, and the people he encountered during his voyages, into his stories. He puts his own voice, found through his life experiences, into his writings.

Indent first word of each paragraph one-half inch.

Conrad gave up a promising position to focus on writing.

Indent block quotes one inch.

The point was in his being a gifted creature, and that of all his gifts the one that stood out preeminently, that carried with it a sense of real presence, was his ability to talk, his words – the gift of expression, the bewildering, the illuminating, the most exalted, and the most contemptible. (Bloom 112)

In Heart of Darkness, Conrad gives this gift to Mr. Kurtz. The fascination of this gift drives the main character of the story, Marlow. By defining Kurtz through his voice and his gift of expression, the reader understands that the purpose of the narration is expression and articulation. This is “the goal of all storytelling” (Bloom 112).

Maintain one-inch margin on top, bottom, left, and right.

Double-space the entire document.

Of all his experiences as a sea-faring man, the ones Conrad had while in the Congo seemed to affect him the most (Jordan 40). Many of these experiences are given to Marlow in Heart of Darkness and Conrad put much of his feelings about the Congo into Marlow’s voice: “It

The title for the works-cited list should simply be Works Cited. It should be centered at the top of the page. It should not be underlined, italicized, or bolded.

Works Cited

Bloom, Harold, ed. Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.

Fletcher, Chris. The British Library writer's lives Joseph Conrad. London: The British Library, 1999.

"The Inner Heart." Down the Congo 12 Dec. 2001. 15 May 2006
<<http://www.conradresources.html>>.

Alphabetize the entries by authors' last names. If no name is given, sort by the first word of the entry ignoring *A*, *An*, or *The*.

Indent all but the first line of the entry one-half inch. This is called a hanging indent.

Jordan, Julie. "Racism in Literature." Analyzing Literature 18 (2002): 23-35.

Knowles, Owen and Gene M. Moore. Oxford Reader's Companion to Conrad. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

---. Children's Guide to Conrad's Congo. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.

---. Teaching Conrad. New York: Bantam, 1999.

The works-cited list is always on its own page. It should be formatted in the same way as the rest of the paper including font, margins, spacing, and header.

Integrating Sources

Using outside sources is a good way to support your own ideas in a paper. Often, your teacher will tell you to use sources in your work. You can incorporate sources through quoting, paraphrasing, or summarizing. The following are some guidelines for doing this.

Quoting

Direct quotations should be used sparingly. When quoting a source, remember to give appropriate credit to the author. Citing your sources in the text and in a works-cited list are both part of proper citation. See Documenting Sources (page 8) for more details.

Short Quotations

There are many ways to integrate quotations; here are the three most common: Work a short quotation into a sentence by using a complete sentence followed by a colon (example 1), by using an introductory phrase followed by a comma (example 2), or by inserting a quotation directly into your sentence with no additional punctuation (example 3).

Example 1:

Tolkien's descriptions of Elrond used literary similes: "He was as noble and as fair in the face as an elf-lord, as strong as a warrior, as wise as a wizard, as venerable as a king of dwarves, and as kind as summer" (61).

Example 2:

According to Richard A. Posner, "The characters and situations that interest us in literature are for the most part characters and situations that capture aspects of ourselves and our situation" (73).

Example 3:

Tan says that instead of looking at one another, Americans "talk to their reflections" (290).

Long Quotations

When a quotation is four typed lines or more, use block quotations. To do this, indent the quotation one inch (or two tabs) from the left margin. Do not use quotation marks. Maintain double-spacing in block quotations. The parenthetical citation should appear **after the period**, as in the following example:

Example:

In reference to fantasy like that of C.S. Lewis, Bruce Young agrees:

Though it ignores many of the superficial details of daily experience, fantasy of this kind, deeply connected with the truths of human psychology, the realities of social and spiritual life, even insights into the nature of the cosmos may be one

of the best vehicles for carrying truth into the human heart. Even fantasy of a lesser kind may excel as an object of beauty or a source of delight. (204)

Changing Quotations

Sometimes it is necessary to change a quotation to make it fit correctly with your wording. If this is the case, you will need to put any changes in brackets. (Changing a quotation without using brackets is considered plagiarism.) Notice how the following quotation is modified:

Original Quotation:

“I’ve never seen you so hysterical” (Tan 211).

Example:

Waverly told Rose that she’d “never seen [her] so hysterical” (Tan 211).

Omitting Words

If you want to leave out part of a quotation, use an ellipsis (three periods in a row with spaces between each, e.g., “. . .”).

Example:

“I would have told, except that a part of me was glad . . . that this would be over soon . . . I wanted that, to move on, to forget, to start with a clean slate” (Hosseini 105).

Paraphrasing

You can avoid quotations altogether by paraphrasing—putting the ideas into your own words. Paraphrasing will help you maintain your voice throughout the paper. Also, keep in mind that paraphrasing is a three-fold process. Without one of the elements, you will be plagiarizing someone else’s work, whether you meant to or not.

Here are the three components of paraphrasing:

- Make changes to the author’s original vocabulary—use words that are your own.
- Take the idea and re-form it using a different sentence structure.
- Always give credit where it is due. Cite your sources.

Here is an example of how to paraphrase from an original text:

Original Text:

“In a Gallup poll released last week, 50 percent said their opinion of the former First Lady was unfavorable...Clinton’s camp notes that other recent polls have not shown unfavorable as high as the Gallup number and says it is confident her favorable will increase as the campaign goes on.”

A Bad Example:

The people who work for Clinton note that other current polls have not shown other unfavorable as high as the Gallup number. They believe that her favorable will rise as the campaign progresses (Darman and Hosenball).

This is a bad example of paraphrasing because we simply went through the original and found a different way to say what had already been said without trying to change sentence structure.

Another Bad Example:

According to the Gallup number released last week, Clinton's camp notes that other recent polls have not shown unfavorables as high as the Gallup number. They are also confident that her favorables will increase as the campaign goes on (Darman and Hosenball).

This is a bad example because while we rearrange sentence structure, we have kept much of the author's original vocabulary.

A Good Example:

A Gallup poll released last week showed that 50 percent of the population has an unfavorable opinion of Hillary Clinton. The Clinton camp is optimistic, however; they have shown in other recent polls that her unfavorables were not nearly as high as the Gallup and are certain that her favorables will increase as election time grows closer (Darman and Hosenball).

This is a good example because we present the original information using our own vocabulary and sentence structure, while citing our source. We are following the three-fold criteria for properly paraphrasing information.

Summarizing

When a passage or idea is lengthy, you'll want to summarize. When summarizing, you take an original thought which may be several lines and condense it into one or two sentences comprised of your own words.

Here is an example of how to tighten and condense an original idea:

Original Text:

"The play does not mirror, or reflect, or state; it embodies, and often puts us at a loss to enunciate the ideas and feelings it calls forth. That's the thing about [*Death of a Salesman*]: it reverberates, echoes, resonates. Its rhythms roll deep down toward and into American desires and delusions" (Heyen 47).

Summarized Passage:

Death of a Salesman has the power to embody the emotion of the American dream, regardless of how incomprehensible it may seem (Heyen 47).

A Word on Plagiarism

Plagiarism means using other people's work or ideas without giving them credit. This includes copying quotes without documentation, turning in someone else's work as your own, or stating others' ideas or facts without saying where you got them.

The following sources were cited in this section:

- Hosseini, Khaled. *The Kite Runner*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2003.
- Posner, Richard A. "Against Ethical Criticism." *Ethics, Literature, & Theory*. Ed. Stephen K. George. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 63-77.
- Tan, Amy. *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: Ivy Books, 1989.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966.
- Young, Bruce W. "Literary Criticism and Religious Values." *Ethics, Literature, & Theory*. Ed. Stephen K. George. Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005. 197-209.
- "Paraphrase." *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. 4th ed. 2000.
- Darman, Jonathon and Mark Hosenball. "The New War on Hillary." *Newsweek* 18 June 2007. 30-33.
- Heyen, William. "Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and the American Dream." *Modern Critical Interpretations Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House, 1988. 47.

Documenting Sources

Documenting your sources, both in your works-cited list and in the body of your text, is important because it helps your readers identify where your information came from. It also gives proper credit to the sources you used, and keeps you from plagiarizing. For further questions, see the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (6th edition)*.

In-Text Citation

In-text citation (which includes parenthetical citation) is so that your readers can figure out where your information came from. Your in-text citation will correspond to an entry in your works-cited list where readers can find the full information for your sources.

Parenthetical Citation

Parenthetical citation applies to quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Immediately after a quote or paraphrase of a source, put the author's name and the page reference in parentheses. If the quote or paraphrase comes at the end of the sentence, put the period after the parentheses. If the citation is in the middle of your sentence, put other punctuation marks, like commas and semi-colons, after the parentheses.

Example:

“Sinkholes are a result of decaying limestone” (Fremont 52).

For the Fremont example above, the works-cited listing will look something like this:

Fremont, Jack. *Geologic Hazards*. New York: Bantam, 2004.

Author's Name in Your Sentence

Sometimes you include the author's name in your sentences. When you do this, you do not need to include the author's name in the parenthetical citation. Include only the relevant page numbers in the citation.

Example:

Fremont has done extensive research on this topic (55-82).

Example:

As Fremont maintains, we can “avoid disastrous sinkholes by restricting the amount of weight we place on the earth” (73).

Author Unknown

For works that have no obvious author, such as electronic sources and non-print sources, use an abbreviated version of the work's title.

Example:

According to an anonymous TV and film critic, “The TV series *Lost* has become an American occult” (“TV: America's Pastime” 35).

Citing a Work with No Page Numbers

When you have a work with no page numbers, try to include the name of the author in the sentence. This means you will not need a parenthetical citation.

Example:

Carlton's first film, *Under the Iron Fist*, was a monumental achievement in his career.

Example:

A great musical ear, according to Ivan Foster, is essential to singing Sondheim's music well.

Paragraph Numbers Instead of Page Numbers

Sometimes sources, like electronic journals, use paragraph numbers instead of page numbers. In this case, include the abbreviation *par.* or *pars.* before the corresponding numbers in your parenthetical citation.

Example:

"Postal mail," said Benjamin Billings, "has become almost obsolete with e-mail and the increasingly popular me-media" (par. 9).

Citing Indirect Sources

Although it's better to quote information from the original source, sometimes only an indirect source is available. Since you are quoting or paraphrasing an actual quotation, put the abbreviation "qtd. in" at the beginning of your parenthetical citation.

Example:

According to Johnson, compiling the first dictionary was a "herculean effort" (qtd. in Roberts 54).

Citing Volume Numbers

When your source is from a volume of work, you need to include the author or editor's last name, the volume number and the relevant page numbers. Separate the author's name and volume number with a comma and a space. Then separate the volume number and page numbers with a colon and a space. You don't need to include the words or abbreviations for *volume* or *pages* - the punctuation makes this understood.

Example:

William Blake honestly believed he had received divine revelation and been ministered to by the heavens (Nigel, 5: 3542-43).

Citing a Work from an Anthology

When you are working with an anthology, but only want to cite one work from the anthology, put the author's name in the parenthetical citation and not the name of the anthology's editor. This source will also be alphabetized in your works-cited list by the author's name, and not the book's editor.

Example:

“The Yellow Wallpaper” is a psychological story of a woman trapped by social climate and inactivity (Gilman 433-58).

Example:

T.S. Eliot’s “The Wasteland” is one of his most widely known and little understood poems (550-62).

Citing Literary Works

For classic works, such as plays and poetry, or works that are available in different editions, it is useful to include more detailed information in the parenthetical citation. Use abbreviations in the citation - *ch.* for *chapter*, *pt.* for *part*, *bk.* for *book*, *sec.* for *section*, and *sc.* for *scene*.

For classic verse plays and poetry, separate the various numbers with periods. For instance, 2.34 would refer to book 2, line 34.

For a classic prose work, separate the edition number and part, book, or chapter number with a semi-colon. After that first semi-colon, however, only use commas.

Example:

In *Eugene Onegin*, Onegin rejects Tanya when she is free to be his, and only decides he wants her when she is already married (Pushkin 4.452-53).

Example:

One of the most memorable scenes in *Don Quixote* is when the man of la Mancha charges and tilts at the windmills (Cervantes 4; pt. 4, bk. 5, ch. 16).

Long Quotations

For a long quotation, type one space after the concluding punctuation mark of the quote and then type the parenthetical reference. Long quotes are four lines or longer, can be standard prose or poetry, should be indented one inch (or two tabs) from the left margin, should be double-spaced, and do not need quotation marks.

Example:

Geologist and scientist Lindsey Sumner explains the process:

It begins as magma underneath the surface of the earth. This magma crystallizes and becomes igneous rock. The igneous rock can then re-melt and return to magma; succumb to heat and pressure and turn into metamorphic rock; or be exposed to the surface of the earth and be subject to weathering, erosion, and deposition. (358)

Poetry Short Quotations

For short quotations of poetry that don’t require special emphasis, simply place quotation marks around the selected text. If the selected text spans more than one line in the poem, signify those lines by placing a slash (/) at the appropriate place. Make sure you type a space before and after the slash.

Example:

Corbin loved “all things green / Sweet, new, and serene” (lines 3-4).

For poetry, include the word *line* or *lines* in your citation. Do not abbreviate as *l.* or *ll.* since these can be confused with roman numerals.

Citing Religious Works

When citing the scriptures, it is okay to use abbreviations for the different books of the scriptures. Separate chapter numbers and verse numbers with a period.

Example:

When God commanded Noah to build the ark, despite the people’s unrighteousness, Noah still preached repentance (Gen. 3.13-16).

Works-Cited List: Print Sources**Book with One Author**

Author’s Last Name, First Name and Middle Initial. *Book’s Title*. Volume or Edition. City: Publishing Company, Year it was Published.

Example:

Alcott, Louisa M. *Little Women*. New York: Penguin Books, 1997.

Book with Two Authors

First Author’s Last Name, First Name and Middle Initial, and Second Author’s First and Last Name. *Book Title*. Volume or Edition. City: Publishing Company, Year it was Published.

Example:

Powell, Thomas A., and Dan Whitworth. *HTML Programmer’s Reference*. 2nd ed. Berkeley: McGraw-Hill, 2001.

Book with Three or More Authors

First Author’s Last Name, First Name, et al. *Book Title*. Volume or Edition. City: Publishing Company, Year it was Published.

Example:

Edwards, Bruce H., et al. *Calculus with Analytic Geometry*. 5th ed. Massachusetts: D.C. Heath and Company, 1994.

Citing an Excerpt from an Anthology

Last name, First name. “Title of Excerpt.” *Title of Anthology*. Editor or Translator. Volume or Edition. City: Publishing Company, Year it was Published. Pages used

Example:

London, Jack. “To Build a Fire.” *American Literature*. Ed. William E. Cain. 2nd ed. New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004. 280-294.

Citing an Entire Anthology

Editor's Last Name, First Name and Middle Initial, ed. *Title of Anthology*. Volume or Edition. City: Publishing Company, Year it was Published.

Example:

Cain, William E., ed. *American Literature*. Vol. 2. New York: Pearson Education, Inc., 2004.

Religious Works

Name of Religious Work, Specific Version. City: Publishing Company or Entity, Year of Publication.

Example 1:

The Book of Mormon. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1989.

An Article in a Magazine

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of magazine*. Date of Publication: Page Numbers.

Example:

Hansen, Aaron. "The Pacific Ocean." *Marine Biology* 20 Mar. 2007: 24-27.

Works-Cited List: Electronic Sources**An Entire Web Site**

Author's last name, Author's first name. Title of the document. *Title of the website*. Latest update of website or original publication date. Name of web site sponsors, if any. Date of access. URL.

Example:

Kubler-Ross, Elisabeth. "Five Stages of Grief." *Elisabeth Kubler-Ross*. 2006. 16 Aug. 2006.

One Page on a Web Site

Author's last name, Author's first name. Title of the document. Title of the website. Latest update of website or original publication date. Name of web site sponsors, if any. Date of access. URL with specific description.

Example:

Embree, David. Oxford English Dictionary. 27 May 2003. 07 August 2006.

Long URLs

If the URL is over two lines long, don't include the entire Web address in your citation. Author's last name, Author's first name. Title of the document. Title of the website. Latest update of website or original publication date. Name of web site sponsors, if any. Date of access. URL/search.

Example:

Chan, Amado. Stereotypical, but revengeful and defiant: Addie Bundren in Faulkner's *As*

I Lay Dying. August 2001. 18 Aug. 2006.

Author's last name, Author's first name. Title of the document. Title of the website. Latest update of website or original publication date. Name of web site sponsors, if any. Date of access.

URL/Path: Library; Retrieve; Author's name.

Example:

Lewis, C. & Fabos, B. Instant messaging, literacies, and social identities. June 2005. 2 March 2006.

An Article in an Online Scholarly Journal

Author's last name, Author's first name. Title of the document. Title of the journal. Latest update of website or original publication date. Page numbers. Database. Date of access. URL.

Example:

Canaday, Jr., Nicholas. "Ironic Humor as Defense in *The Scarlet Letter*." JSTOR 21 (1961): 17-18.

David O. McKay Library, Rexburg. 31 May 2007 <<http://links.jstor.org/search>>

Online Newspaper, Magazine, or Journal Article

Author's last name, Author's first name. "Title of article." Date of print publication. Title of database. Publication medium. Date of electronic publication.

Example:

Maher, James. "Love and Family." June 2001. Arts and Foundations. Online article. UMI-

ProQuest. May 2003.

Most-Common Mistakes

This is a list of the errors that occur most often in papers and how you can fix them.

Mistake #1: No Works-Cited List

Any time you use an outside source, you must include a works-cited list with your paper. When doing your works-cited list, make sure to look everything up. If you are not looking it up, you are probably doing it wrong. (See the Documenting Sources page for several examples of properly cited sources.)

Mistake #2: No In-Text Citation

After you give a quotation in your paper, you need to make sure to cite the source. If I were reading *Frankenstein* and gave a quote in my paper, I would need to put in parenthesis the author's name and the page number the quote is on. (Note: there is no comma between the author's name and the page number.) **Example:** (Shelley 68)

Mistake #3: Improper Use of Italics, Underlining, and Quotation Marks

Underling and italics function in the same way. In your paper you can use either, but make sure to be consistent throughout the entire document. MLA suggests that titles of larger works (books, magazines, music albums, newspapers, etc.) should be underlined or italicized. Smaller works (chapters within a book, articles, individual tracks from an album, etc) should be placed in quotation marks.

Mistake #4: Incorrect Spacing

MLA requires the whole document to be double-spaced: from your name in the heading to the last source on the works-cited list. (This includes block quotations too. A block quotation is anything that is four lines or more.) Do not add extra spaces between paragraphs or after the title. Also, there should be only one space after the period.

Mistake #5: Formatting Problems (Margins, Headers, Font, and Size)

The margins in MLA should always be set at one inch on all sides. Insert a header on each page with your last name and the current page number. MLA recommends a "standard, easily readable" font and font size, such as 12-point Times New Roman.

Mistake #6: Incorrect Paraphrasing

When paraphrasing you must put other peoples' ideas into your own words. For instructions on paraphrasing, see page 6.

Mistake #7: Plagiarism

Make sure when you are paraphrasing that you are not plagiarizing—even unintentionally. If it is not your idea, put quotation marks around it and give the author credit. Make sure you are citing it on your works-cited list correctly. If you do not do these things you are plagiarizing.

More Information

For advanced questions on MLA guidelines, find a 6th edition copy of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. You can also talk with your professor, or you can meet with a writing assistant at the Writing Center, located on the 2nd floor of the east wing of the McKay Library.