MLA (9th ed.)

Writing Support Services

MLA: Overview

The Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style is used in English literature studies, and some other areas of study in the Humanities. This handout provides some basic MLA guidelines and examples. For more examples and detailed information, reveiw the *MLA Handbook* (9th ed.), the MLA Style Center or the Purdue OWL Online Writing Lab. It is very important to refer to one of these sources.

The 9th edition was published in April 2021 and has minor changes from the 8th edition. The format for both in-text and Works Cited has remained the same.

Notable changes include use of safe and appropriate language when discussing sensitive issues such as race, ethnicity, religion, gender, age, health, socio-economic status, etc. Inclusive language principles are now in effect. See Chapter 3.

Other changes include the capitalization styles that follow the rules for non-English publications and writers now must use those specific rules. See Chapter 2.6.

NB: Many of the examples in this document were borrowed from the "MLA Formatting and Style Guide" at *Purdue OWL*.

General Formatting

An MLA style paper

- does not have a separate cover page.
- uses 12-point Times New Roman (or similar) font.
- is double-spaced throughout (including the Works Cited page).
- has one-inch margins on all sides.
- has the author's (i.e. your) name and the page number in the top right-hand

corner of *every* page.

- has the following information in the top left-hand corner of the *first* page:
    - your name
    - your professor's name
    - the class name and number
    - the submission date for the paper
- on the *first* page, has the paper's title centred, and in plain text; i.e. not bold, underlined, or italicized, or in quotation marks EXCEPT…
- uses *italics* when a book is included in the title (see below), or "quotation marks" when a poem or short story is included in the title.
- indents the beginning of paragraphs by five spaces

Example

Smith 1

Jain Hygh

Dr. Zaius

ENGL 231

6 Oct. 2023

Taylor's Troubles with the Natural World in Pierre Boulle's *Planet of the Apes*

[Review a sample paper at Purdue OWL](#)

MLA Documentation: Summary

Documenting Sources

In academic writing, you must cite all sources of information and ideas you've borrowed from others. This includes quoted material as well as other people's ideas that you've put into your own words. You do not need to cite sources for common knowledge or generally known facts. However, if in doubt, cite your source.

MLA documentation consists of two main elements, which connect with each other:

In-text citations: These are also called "parenthetical references" because they appear in parentheses in the body (text) of your paper. In-text citations come after a direct quotation from someone else's writing, a paraphrase of that

writing, or a borrowed idea. In-text citations contain limited information about the work you're citing – usually the author's last name and the page number of the quoted material. Every in-text citation "points to" an entry in your Works Cited list.

Works Cited list: This is a list at the end of your paper that gives complete publication information for all sources cited in your paper. The list begins on a fresh page. It is in alphabetical order, based on the author's last name. If there is more than one author, it is based on the first author's last name. If there is no author, it is based on the first letter of the citation.

MLA In-text Quotations and Citations: Detail

Authors

There are two main ways of making note of authors in in-text citations:
   1) in a sentence you have written; OR
   2) in parentheses at the end of the sentence.

*In this example of a **direct quotation,** the author (Wordsworth) is noted the sentence:*

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

*In this example of a **direct quotation,** the author is noted in parentheses:*

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

*In this example of a **paraphrase,** the author is noted in the sentence:*

Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

The following is incorrect *because we use only one of the options (in sentence OR in parentheses):*

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Page numbers

In the examples above, the quoted or paraphrased material was all taken from a single page (i.e. page 263) in a document written by Wordsworth. *In this example, the quotation flows over two pages – from page 65 to page 66:*

According to Kulezic-Wilson, "we even perceive the ticking of a clock through patterns of strong and weak beats although they are all the same" (65-66).

If a quote goes over two pages that are in the hundreds, then state the hundred number
only once. *Examples*: (165-66); (225-26); (389-90).

Short and long quotations in prose

In the examples above, the short prose quotations are kept within the flow of the sentence. Longer prose quotations are those that would take up more than four lines in the regular text of your paper. These are removed from the sentence flow and indented 1/2 inch from the left margin. These long quotations are left-justified. They are *not* right-justified. Quotation marks are not used. The period (or other punctuation mark found at the end of the last line cited) is placed *before* the in-text citation. *Here is a **long prose** example:*

According to Kulezic-Wilson:

> Human perception of reality is defined by the Gestalt principles of pattern-
>
> making. Our mind organizes seemingly unconnected visual, auditory and
>
> temporal perceptual data into units that link together into comprehensible
>
> wholes. Our need to organize perceptive stimuli into patterns is so prominent
>
> that . . . we make units and accents even when there are none: we even
>
> perceive the ticking of a clock through patterns of strong and weak beats
>
> although they are all the same. (65-66)

TIP: In the example above, a few words have been left out of the middle of the quote. To indicate such an omission, use an ellipsis (i.e. three periods separated by single spaces, and with a space either side). Words can be omitted only if the original meaning of the quote remains intact.

Short and long quotations in poetry, plus page and line numbers

When citing poetry, the need to indicate page or line numbers varies greatly. In some cases, neither is used. Instead, the poem's page number is indicated only on the Works Cited page. [For a concise explanation of different possibilities.](#)

When quoting **one to three lines of a poem**, the quotation flows within the sentence and is contained within quotation marks. Poem lines are separated by a forward slash, spaces either side. The in-text citation is placed at the end of the sentence, but before the period. *Here is a **short poetry** example, from Shakespearean sonnet 116, where line numbers are provided by the book's editor, G. Blakemore Evans:*

In his iconic sonnet about the steadfastness of real love, Shakespeare says,

"Let me not to the marriage of true minds / Admit impediments; love is not

love / Which alters when it alteration finds . . . " (sonnet 116, lines 1-3).

In quoting **more than three lines** of a poem, the quotation is indented (as with prose) and then follows the original as poem formatting closely as possible. *Here is a **long poetry** example from a Jan Zwicky poem where no line numbers are provided, so the page number is used:*

In her poem of metaphors describing the sounds of violin strings, the Zwicky says:

> Open strings
>
> are ambassadors from the republic of silence.
>
> They are the name of that moment when you realize
>
> clearly, for the first time,
>
> you will die.   After illness,
>
> the first startled breath. (10)

MLA Works Cited

The "Works Cited" section:

- starts on a new page at the end of the paper.
- has Works Cited, in plain text, centred at the top of this page (*not* italicized, bolded, underlined).
- includes every source cited in your paper.

- is double-spaced within and between entries.

- starts each entry left-justified, then indents subsequent lines approximately ten spaces.

- uses capital letters on all 'major' words (e.g. nouns, adjectives), as well as the first word of a title, or after a colon, even if that word is a 'minor' word (e.g. a, an, the).

- is alphabetized according to these rules:

    o if one author, by author's last name (e.g. Zwicky, Jan)

    o if one to four authors, by the first author's last name, followed by the other authors in first/last name order. The first two to three names are separated by commas; the last name is separated by a comma and the word 'and'. (Brown, Mary, James H. Smith, and Paula Rempole)

    o if more than four authors, by the first author's last name followed by et al. (Jackson, Rhiannon, et al)

    o if a corporate author (i.e. the author is the organization that published a text), by the first keyword in the name (Modern Language Association)

    o if multiple works by the same author, after the first entry use three hyphens and period (---.) in place of the author's name

MLA Works Cited Examples

Citing in MLA style is very precise. In the examples below, pay close attention to where the following are used: periods, commas, italics, quotation marks, colons, capital letters, small letters, etc.

Book (print)
Author(s). *Title*. Publisher, year.

Ondaatje, Michael. *The Cat's Table*. McClelland and Stuart, 2011.

---. *In the Skin of a Lion.* Vintage, 1996.

NB: *In these examples, both books were written by* the same author, Michael Ondaatje.

E-Book (general)
Author(s). *Title*. e-book, Publisher, year.

Silva, Paul J. *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*.

e-book, American Psychological Association, 2007

E-Book (from electronic database)
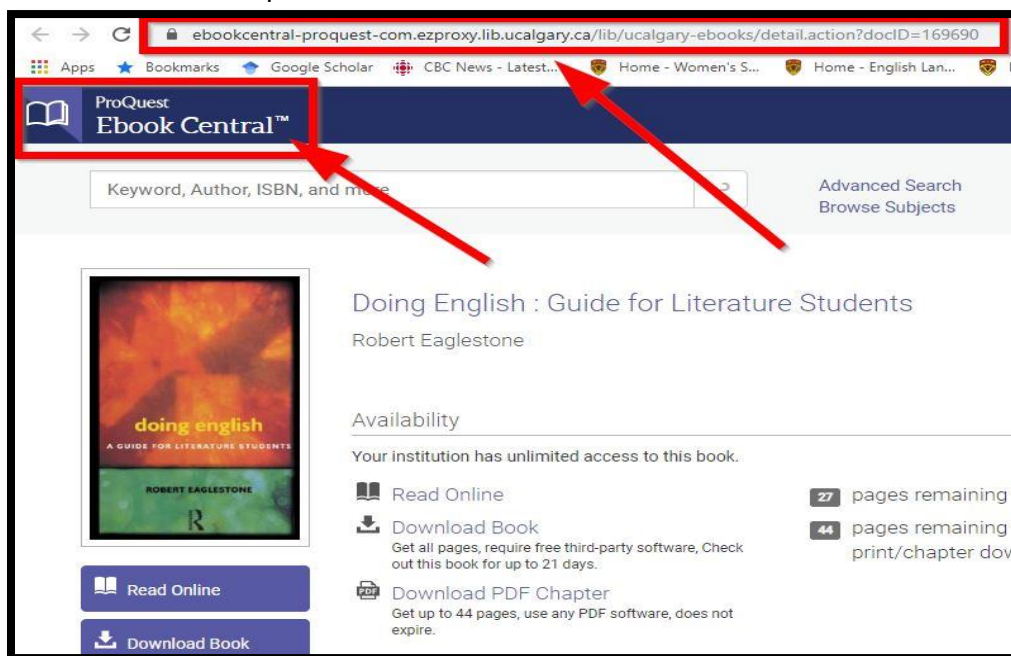Author(s). *Title*. Publisher, year. *Database,* DOI or URL.

Eaglestone, Robert. *Doing English: Guide for Literature Students*, Routledge, 2000.
ProQuest Ebook

   Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-
com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary-

   ebooks/detail.action?docID=169690.

TIPS:
- An electronic database is a collection of information that is labelled and organized so it can be easily found and retrieved. For example, an online catalogue for a company that sells shoes is an electronic database. Companies also create databases that sell access to information, such as e-books or e-journal articles. In MLA style, these databases are named in references on a Works Cited page. The database names are generally located in the top left corner of the webpage where the e-book or article is found.

- URL is short for "Universal Resource Locator" and is found in the top bar on a webpage.

- DOI means "Digital Object Identifier" and is much more stable and reliable than a URL. If it is available, use a DOI rather than a URL in a citation.

   Below is an example of where to find the database name in a URL.

Chapter or Article in an Edited Book (print)
Author(s). "Title of Essay or Chapter." *Title of Book*, edited by editor(s)
name(s), Publisher, year, pages.

May, Charles E. "Living in the Story: Fictional Reality in the Stories of Alice Munro."

Alice Munro's Miraculous Art: Critical Essays, edited by Janice Fiamengo and

Gerald Lynch, U of Ottawa Press, 2017, pp. 43-61.

Journal Article (print)
Author(s). "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, volume #, number or issue #,
year, pages.

Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in
Mahasweta
   Devi's *Bashai*

   Tudu." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* vol. 15, no. 1, 1996, pp. 41-50.

Journal Article (from an electronic database)
Author(s). "Title of Article." *Title of Journal*, volume #, number or issue #,
year, pages. *Database,* DOI or URL.

Lobodziec, Agnieszka. "Theological Models of Black Middle-Class Performance in
Toni

   Morrison's Novels." *Black Theology,* vol. 8, no. 1, 2010, pp. 32-52. *Taylor &*

   Francis Online, doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1558/blth.v8i1.32.

Below is an example of how you can find the name of the database located at the top left side of the screen. The example also shows where the DOI is commonly found below the article name.

Graphic Novel (print)
Follow the format for a book. If the author is the writer only, add the illustrator, ink artist, colorist, etc. as provided in publication information.

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.* Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Tamaki, Mariko. *This One Summer*. Illustrated by Jillian Tamaki, First

Second Books, 2014.

Translated Book (print)
Follow the book format, and add the translator.

Brossard, Nicole. *Notebook of Roses and Civilization*. Translated by Robert Majzels,

　　Coach House, 2007.

Electronic Encyclopedia or Dictionary Entry
"Entry name, with definition or entry number if applicable." *Title of Encyclopedia or Dictionary*, Publisher, year, DOI or URL.

"badger, n.1." *OED Online,* Oxford University Press, 2019,

　　www.oed.com/view/Entry/14556.

Newspaper Article (print)
Author(s). "Title of Article." *Newspaper,* edition if applicable, date, section letter and page.

Lowey, Mark. "Facing the Techno-gap." *The Calgary Herald,* 11 June 1994,

p.

   B8.

Krugman, Andrew. "Fear of Eating." *New York Times*, late ed., 21 May

2007, p.

   A1.

Newspaper Article (online)
Author(s). "Title of Article." *Newspaper,* date, DOI or URL.

Weiner, Jennifer. "The Abrupt End of My Big Girl Summer." *New York*

   Times, 17 Aug. 2019,

   https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/16/opinion/lizzo-kelly-

   mcgillis.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage.

Website
Author(s) if available. *Name of website.* Publisher of website, date of publication or last update, URL.

Felluga, Dino. *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory.* Purdue U, 31 Jan. 2011,

   www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/.

Web Page
Author(s) if available. "Title of Web Page." *Name of website.* Publisher of website, date of publication or last update, URL.

"MLA Formatting and Style Guide." *Purdue OWL,* Purdue Online Writing Lab,

   2019,

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_format

ting_and_style_guide/mla_formatting_and_style_guide.html.

Example:

Works Cited

Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta

   Devi's *Bashai   Tudu*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature,* vol. 15, no. 1, 1996,

   pp. 41-50.

Bechdel, Alison. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.* Houghton Mifflin, 2006.

Brossard, Nicole. *Notebook of Roses and Civilization*. Translated by Robert Majzels,

   Coach House, 2007.

Eaglestone, Robert. *Doing English: Guide for Literature Students*, Routledge, 2000.

   ProQuest Ebook Central, https://ebookcentral-proquest-

   com.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/lib/ucalgary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=169690.

Felluga, Dino. *Introductory Guide to Critical Theory.* Purdue U, 31 Jan.
2011,

   www.cla.purdue.edu/english/theory/.

Lobodziec, Agnieszka. "Theological Models of Black Middle-Class Performance in Toni

   Morrison's Novels." *Black Theology,* vol. 8, no. 1, 2010, pp. 32-52. *Taylor &*

   Francis Online, doi-org.ezproxy.lib.ucalgary.ca/10.1558/blth.v8i1.32.