MLA STYLE PACKET

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Please contact a writing tutor if you need more information on MLA style.
Helpful Hints for MLA Papers

**Typing or Word Processing:** Use familiar styles (Courier, Times Roman, Times New Roman, Helvetica) in a standard 10- or 12-point size. Do not use a script typeface or all italics or capitals for your text. Type on the front side of the paper; do not use the other side for any purpose. Try to use a letter-quality printer for your final copy. Be sure to keep a copy of each manuscript submitted.

**Paper:** Use white, 8 ½” x 11” paper.

**Margins & Indentations:** Except for page numbers, leave one-inch margins at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text. Indent the first word of a paragraph five spaces from the left margin. See below for indentation of long quotations.

**Spacing:** Double-space the entire paper, including the title, quotations, and Works Cited page(s).

**Quotations:** Set off a quotation of more than four typed lines from your text by beginning a new line, indenting ten spaces from the left margin, and typing it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a quotation displayed in this way. The right margin remains the same, one inch. If you quote four or more lines of poetry, indent ten spaces from the left margin (the right margin remains the same), but do not double space; present poetry exactly as it is in the original.

**Page Numbers:** Paginate consecutively throughout the manuscript (even the Works Cited page) by placing your last name and the page number in Arabic numerals in the upper-right corner of each page, approximately one-half inch from the top and one inch from the right edge of the page. Do not use the word page or any of its abbreviations p., pp., or use a period or any other mark of punctuation.

**Corrections and Revisions:** Proofread and correct the manuscript before offering it to your instructor. You may type brief corrections and revisions (or write them neatly and legibly in ink) directly above the lines involved, using carets to indicate where they go. Do not write below a line or use the margins. Redo any page that requires numerous or substantial changes.

**Titles:** Do not underline your title, put it in quotation marks, or type it in all capitals.

**Abbreviations:** These are often used on the Works Cited page but rarely in the text of a manuscript. The exceptions are lb., $, %, AM and PM.

**Numbers:** In general write as words all numbers from one to one hundred and use numerals for all numbers 10 and over, but never begin a sentence with a numeral.

**Binding:** Secure shorter manuscripts with paper clips--never staples.
An Explanation of Plagiarism

Fundamentally, plagiarism is the offering of the words or ideas of another person as one's own. While the most blatant violation is the use of another student's work, the more common error is carelessness with reference sources. Sometimes paraphrase never quite becomes paraphrase--too much of the original is left intact. The obvious form of plagiarism is to copy any direct quotation from a source without providing quotation marks and without crediting the source. The more subtle form, but equally improper, is to paraphrase material that is not properly documented. Remember that an author's ideas, interpretations, and words are his or her property; in fact, they are protected by law and must be acknowledged whenever borrowed. Consequently, the use of source materials requires conformity to a few rules of conduct:

1. Acknowledge borrowed material by introducing the quotation or paraphrase with the name of the authority. This practice serves to indicate where the borrowed materials begin.

2. Enclose all quoted materials within quotation marks.

3. Make certain that paraphrased material is rewritten into your own style and language. The simple rearrangement of sentence patterns or substitution of synonyms is unacceptable. Do not alter the essential idea of the source.

4. Provide specific in-text documentation for each borrowed item. MLA style requires the page number for all in-text citations and the author’s last name and the page number for all in-text references in which the author’s name is not already given in the sentence.

5. Provide a bibliography entry on the Works Cited page for every source cited in the paper. You may create a Works Consulted page for sources consulted but not used.

6. Quotations obtained from oral sources, such as conversations, interviews, and speeches, should also be treated like prose quotations. You will need to obtain approval from the speaker for statements you use in your text unless the material was recorded with the speaker’s permission.
Three Ways to Take Notes

1. Quoting is one convincing way to demonstrate and refute ideas and to gather evidence. Copy the quotations carefully, making sure to reproduce the spelling and punctuation exactly, even if they're unusual. Put quotation marks around the material. Use the ellipsis mark ( . . . ) to indicate your omission of transitions, parenthetical remarks, and other unneeded information.

2. Summarizing is sometimes called nutshelling. A summary gives the reader just a sense of a passage from another writer. Material is condensed into one's own words. Only the essential ideas are written.

3. Paraphrasing closely follows the original text, often sentence by sentence, recording in your own words the author's line of reasoning. Since the words and the sentence structures are yours, you do not enclose a paraphrase in quotation marks, although, of course, you must acknowledge the author of the idea. Here is an example paraphrase of the original quotation from Jessica Mitford's *Kind and Usual Punishment* (New York: Random House, 1973).

Original Quotation:

According to one critic of the penal system, "The character and mentality of the keepers may be of more importance in understanding prisons than the character and mentality of the kept" (Mitford 9).

Paraphrase:

One critic of the penal system maintains that we may be able to learn more about prisons from the psychology of the prison officials than from that of the prisoners (Mitford 9).

If you adopt or barely change the source's sentence pattern and simply substitute synonyms for key words, you are not paraphrasing but plagiarizing, even if you acknowledge the source, because you have used someone else's expression without quotation marks.
The largest part of your paper is taken up by evidence. What is evidence? It is anything that demonstrates the truth: facts, expert opinions, illustrations and examples, and reported experience. Obviously, if you aren't writing a term paper on which you can spend months, you're limited in the amount of evidence you can collect by the amount of time you have.

Categories of evidence:

1. Facts—statements that can be verified by objective means, such as going and looking for ourselves or accepting the testimony of others.

2. Statistics—facts expressed in numbers gathered in answer to a question. Most of us find numbers extremely convincing. As you take notes, collect any promising statistics to use when you write. To win your reader's confidence, when you use figures, use them fairly, and make sure they are accurate and current. Compare a doubtful statistic with facts and statistics reported by several other sources. A report that differs from every other report may well be true, but distrust it unless it is backed by further, incontrovertible evidence.

3. Testimony of experts—people with knowledge of a particular field gained from study and experience. The test of an expert is whether his or her expertise stands up to the scrutiny of others knowledgeable in that field. The best way to know whether someone is a highly regarded expert is to ask others familiar with his or her field. Experts may disagree, but in general, they treat one another with respect when respect is merited.

4. Memory and observation—first-hand experience and observation. They are persuasive and add life to any paper. Often they will be more persuasive than many facts taken from reference books or tables of figures.
Documenting Research

Proper documentation of your research need not be as formidable a task as you might suppose; ordinarily it means mastering just a few simple forms. Under the MLA system of citation of sources, you include the author’s last name and the page reference from your source within parentheses at the end of the sentence being documented if you do not give the author’s name in the sentence. Note that the name and page number are separated ONLY by one space (do not use a p. or punctuation mark).

Examples of in-text citations:

One proponent of the wind energy industry chides unions for supplying nuclear energy rather than recognizing "the potential for employment in this new low-technology, labor-intensive industry" (Inglis 46).

When the writer's name already appears in the sentence, you cite only the page number within parentheses:

From the perspective of David Inglis, "It is deplorable… that labor unions do not see the potential employment in this new, low-technology, labor-intensive industry" (46).

Special cases: If the source you are citing is anonymous, use a key word from the title, along with the page reference, as in ("Harnessing" 38). If two or more works have the same author, you distinguish between them by placing a key word from the title between the author's name and the page, as in (Inglis, "Answer" 43) and (Inglis, "Power" 17).
For each work that you think might be helpful, make a bibliography card. Using a 3 x 5-inch index card, record the Works Cited entry (information and form) on the card. As your collection of sources grows, alphabetize the cards by the authors’ last names. You will use your cards to form your Works Cited page, using only the cards for sources used in the paper. Having bibliography cards already completed saves time and energy when documenting sources later!

**MLA BIBLIOGRAPHY CARDS**

*Book*


*Monthly magazine*

WORKS CITED PAGE ENTRIES

Book

Book by two authors

Article in a monthly magazine

Article in a weekly magazine

Article in a newspaper

Government publication

Complete anthology

One work in an anthology
Multiple works in the same anthology


Article or essay that was published elsewhere before being included in an anthology (Reprint)


Work in a journal with separate pagination


Work from a CD-ROM database


Personal interview

Day, Michael. Personal interview. 31 May 1996.

E-mail (or other personal communications)

E-mail to you


E-mail between two parties, not including the author


Discussion group or forum

**Online encyclopedia entry**


**A web site**


**An article on or section of a web site**


**An article in an online journal or magazine**


**An online photograph**


**An article or publication from an online database**

