

## **A Short Guide to MLA Format (Eighth Edition)**

The College of Saint Rose Writing Center

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This handout is based on the Modern Language Association handbook: *MLA Handbook, Eighth Edition*. It is not meant to serve as a substitute for the handbook but as an overview of the most common formatting guidelines.

MLA format is a system that specifies the way academic papers should be set up and how sources within the paper should be cited. This format is used most frequently in the fields of English and other Humanities. It is always recommended, however, that students ask their professors which format they would prefer that their students use.

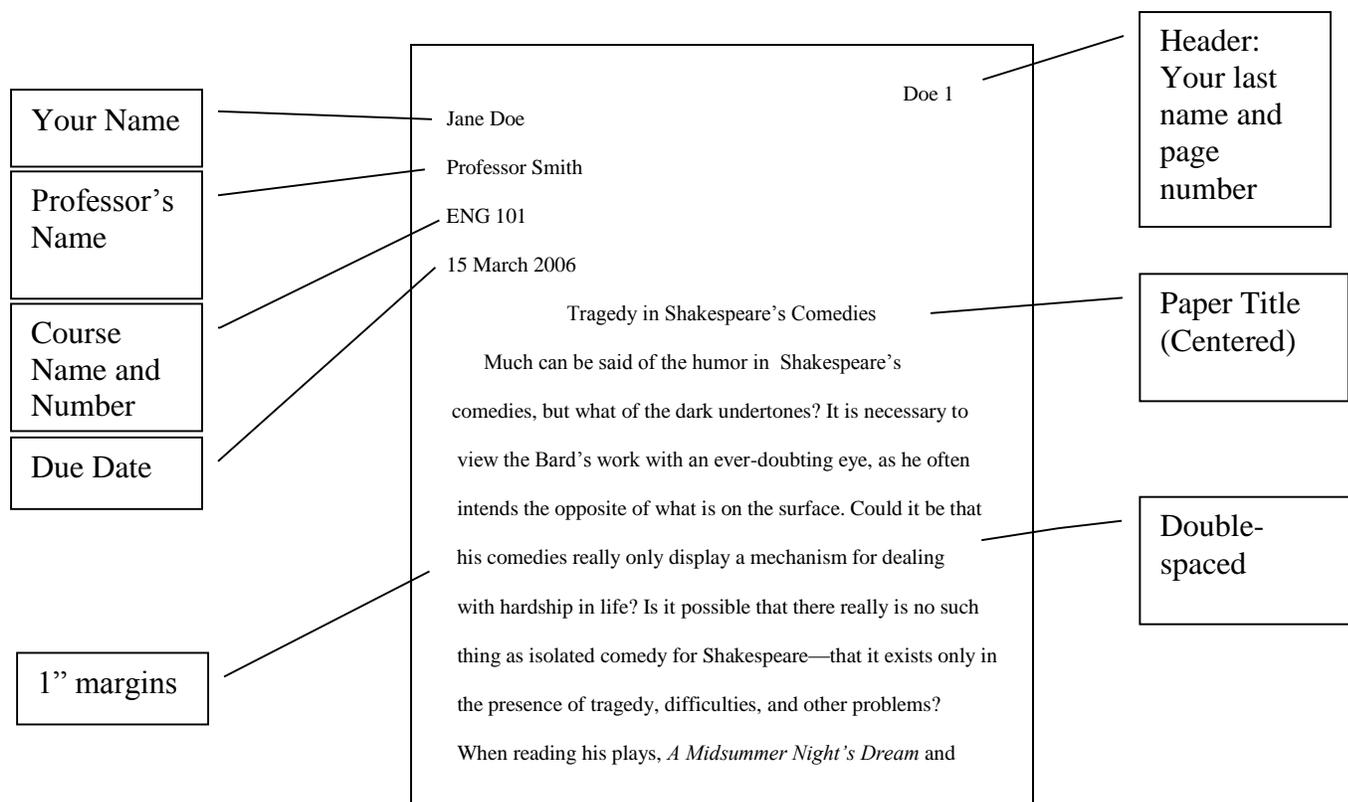
The purpose of MLA format is to give appropriate credit to originators of work, enable readers to find original sources, provide a model for writing conventions, and preserve academic integrity. The eighth edition of the *MLA Handbook* was developed to streamline the citation process and make citing new types of documents easier. The Modern Language Association realized that since there are many different ways to correctly cite the same source, citations should be formatted in a way that is most useful to both the writer and the reader.

### **Academic Integrity**

If appropriate credit is not given, plagiarism is a concern. The College of Saint Rose Catalog of Undergraduate Studies defines plagiarism as: including but not limited to “Purchasing, copying, down-loading, printing, or paraphrasing another’s book, article, paper, speech, exam, portfolio, creative work, argument, or any other work and presenting it as one’s own, either in whole or in part” or “Incorporating portions of another’s work without proper acknowledgement and documentation” ([strose.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy/](http://strose.edu/academics/academic-resources/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy/)). Plagiarizing can result in failure of the assignment, failure of the course, and/or expulsion from the college. Professionally, plagiarism could result in being fired and/or sued.

### General MLA Format:

- Typed, double-spaced
- Standard-sized paper (8.5 x 11), 1 inch margins on all sides
- Times New Roman 12 pt. font is recommended
- Header in the upper right-hand corner: last name and the page number
- A title page is **not** required, though a heading is: your name, the professor’s name, the course number, and the due date in the upper left-hand corner (see example)
- The title of the paper follows on the next line, centered. This should be capitalized, but have no other emphasis (no bold, italics, quotation marks, larger font, etc.)
- The body of the paper follows the title on the next line
- Capitalize major words in the titles of sources: verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns
- Titles of long works (books, journals, plays, movies, CDs, paintings, etc.) are *italicized*
- Titles of short works (articles, essays, poems, short stories, songs, etc.) are placed in “quotation marks.”
- Research papers consist of a works cited page at the end of the document to properly document the research presented in the paper



Cite sources whenever you:

- quote from a text (use the exact wording of the original text)
- paraphrase from a text (put a section of text into your own words)
- summarize a text (present a condensed version of a text)
- use facts, statistics, or data from a text
- refer to an idea or source in passing
- use a photograph, painting, chart, table, graph, or other visual from a source.

A safe guideline to use is: **ANY** time you use **ANY** idea, from **ANYONE** or **ANYWHERE** else, it is necessary to document it.

**In-Text Citations**-a brief mention of each source found in the body of the paper

Form 1- Author's name and page number in parentheses after the idea:

One of the great stories of our generation begins, "Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much" (Rowling 1).

Form 2- Author's name in the sentence and the page number in parentheses after the idea:

J. K. Rowling's famous first book begins, "Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of number four, Privet Drive, were proud to say that they were perfectly normal, thank you very much" (1).

Notice: No comma between the author's name and page number, no "p." or "page" before the page number.

The first time that you mention an author, use the author's full name. After that, use her/his last name only. **For special cases, see page 6.**

## Quoting

Quoting involves presenting the exact wording of a text, signified by the use of quotation marks to bracket the used material. The author's last name must be provided for most sources, along with page numbers (websites being a notable exception). A quote cannot stand on its own but must be introduced by and followed up with your own words.

Introduce-the author and/or quote

Cite-the quote

Explain-how the quote relates and/or supports your main idea

### Short Quotes

- Four or fewer typed lines
- Begin and end with “quotation marks”
- Author's last name and page number in the in-text citation
- Introduced, cited, and explained
- Punctuation:
  - A period is placed after the citation
  - A comma is placed before the first quotation marks, following words like the author states, writes, argues, asserts, etc.
  - A semicolon, question mark, or exclamation point is placed within the quotation marks when it is part of the quote or after the quotation marks when it is not part of the quoted material
  - An ellipsis (...) is used to indicate where you omit words within a quote
  - Brackets [ ] are placed around words that you have added to the quote or altered, for readability
  - Quoted words within a quote are marked by ‘single quotation marks.’

Example of a short quote:

In *Song of Solomon*, one character says to another, “And if [your life] means so little to you that you can just give it away...then why should it mean any more to him? He can't value you more than you value yourself” (Morrison 331). As the character cautions his friend, he is also making a broader statement about the impact of self-worth on relationships.

Long Quotes:

- More than four typed lines
- Introduced by a colon
- Printed in a block, tabbed in ½ inch from the left margin
- No quotation marks used (the block is doing the same work as the quotation marks)
- End punctuation comes **before** the citation, the **only** time it does
- Introduced, cited, and explained.

Example of a long quote: The first instance of Blanca’s complicated relationship with religion is shown when Isabel Allende writes:

Kneeling in her pew, Blanca would inhale the intense smell of the virgin’s incense and lilies, suffering the combined torment of nausea, guilt, and boredom. It was the only thing she disliked about school. She loved the high-vaulted stone corridors, the immaculate cleanliness of the marble floors, the naked white walls, and the iron Christ who stood watch in the vestibule. (142)

Allende mixes positive words like “immaculate,” “cleanliness,” and “white” with “nausea,” “guilt,” “boredom,” “naked,” and “iron” to show both positive and negative aspects of Blanca’s Catholic school.

### **Quoting Poetry**

Poetry is cited by line number, not page number.

When referencing a line or part of a line, follow guidelines for short quotes, citing by line number.

Example: In Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Raven,” the repetition of “nevermore” (1) contributes to the poem’s iconic tone of melancholy.

For two or three lines of poetry, be sure to maintain the punctuation and line breaks (end of a line) of the original. Line breaks are marked with a /.

Example: In “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening,” Robert Frost’s final lines “But I have promises to keep, / And miles to go before I sleep, / And miles to go before I sleep.” (14-16) challenge the reader’s expectations. The repetition disturbs the reader, promoting further contemplation.

For four or more lines, the lines should be set up like a long quote: tabbed in, punctuation comes before the citation, etc.

Example: In Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “Alone,” the speaker of the poem’s fixation on the single cloud in an otherwise clear sky hints at his state of mind:

From the thunder, and the storm—  
 And the cloud that took the form  
 (When the rest of Heaven was blue)  
 Of a demon in my view—. (19-22)

This focus on the negative aspects—thunder, storm, and cloud—surrounded by positivity (“the rest of” the sky was blue) may indicate the speaker’s depressed or negative mental state.

### **Quoting Drama**

When referencing dialogue in drama, the names of speakers should appear in ALL CAPS. Lines that wrap on the page are half-tabbed in (approximately five spaces). The text is otherwise set in a block like a long quote.

Example: One of the most famous misquoted lines in cinema history is from *Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back*:

VADER: Obi-wan never told you what happened to your father.  
 LUKE: He told me enough! He told me you killed him.  
 VADER: No. I am your father.

Notice that Darth Vader does not say, “Luke, I am your father,” as many people seem to believe.

### **Summarizing**

Summarizing involves taking information from a long passage and condensing it, then putting it into your own words (similar to a book report). The author’s name and page number or range are necessary.

Original text: These excerpts explain the very important role of emotions in sanctioning or promoting violence. First of all, the inability to experience empathy and thus the complete lack of self-restraint in the use of violence relies on one particular emotion: fear, or more precisely, the fear of death. For much of human history, the fear of death has pushed people to extreme behavior (Lacassagne 324).

Summary example: Throughout history, the fear of mortality has often been the driving force behind individuals resorting to violence (Lacassagne 324).

Extreme summary example: In William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, two teens fall in love, and six people die (1-96).

### Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves presenting in your own words an interpretation of the author's idea (usually a small section of text). The author's last name and relevant page number(s) must be provided for most sources. In order for a paraphrase to be successful, it is important to use **not only** different wording **but also** different sentence structure. Check the paraphrase against the original for wording, structure, and accuracy.

### Example:

Original text: "Violence is depicted in multifaceted ways in the series in accordance with the varied perspectives of the characters" (Lacassagne 320).

### Incorrect paraphrase:

Brutality shown many novels  
 "Violence is depicted in multifaceted ways in the series in accordance  
 viewpoints  
 with the varied perspectives of the characters" (Lacassagne 320).

**The incorrect paraphrase above would read:** Brutality is shown in many ways in the novels in accordance with the varied viewpoints of the characters (Lacassagne 320).

**Example of a correct paraphrase:** Throughout the series, it is the characters' differing viewpoints that depict violence in a variety of ways (Lacassagne 320).

### In-text Citation Special Cases

**Authors with the same last name:** for in-text citations, add the first initial of each author's name (N. Smith 76).

**Two authors:** Smith and Jones state... (76).

**Three or more authors:** Use the first author's last name followed by et al. (Smith et al. 76).

**More than one work by the same author:** Use the author's last name and the first important word from the title (Smith, "Strategizing" 76) and (Smith, "Failing" 92).

**No author:** Cite by the first important word in the title ("Youth" 47).

**Two or more works in the same citation:** Separate multiple citations with semicolons (Smith 76; Jones 100).

**Citing the same source multiple times in one citation:** Separate multiple citations within the same text with commas (Smith 76, 80, 100-102).

**Indirect source:** When using information that is cited in the text (the author is quoting, summarizing, or paraphrasing someone else), it is preferable to find and cite the original material. If that is not possible, use qtd. in \_\_\_\_ in your citation.

Example: According to Elias, literature allows scholars to study "the structures of the human psyche, the structures of human society, and the structures of human history" (qtd. in Lacassagne 321).

## Works Cited Page

The works cited page (or work cited page, if only one source is referenced) is a complete list of every source referenced in a paper. It provides the information needed for a reader to locate the sources used. Each source on the works cited page should appear in the paper, and each source in the paper should appear on the works cited page.

Format:

- The words “Works Cited” appear centered at the top of the page—no bold, underline, large font, or any other emphasis
- Header continues to appear
- Double-spaced throughout
- Sources are arranged alphabetically according to the first word in each entry
- Hanging indent—the first line is left-aligned, and any subsequent lines are tabbed in.
  - Hit “Enter” at the end of the first line and “Tab” at the beginning of the next line
- *Italicize* titles of long works (books, journals, plays, movies, CDs, paintings, etc.).
- Use “quotation marks” with the titles of short works (articles, essays, poems, short stories, , etc.).

Example:

Doe 8
Works Cited
<p>Allende, Isabel. <i>The House of the Spirits</i>. Translated by Magda Bogin, Bantam Books, 1988.</p> <p>Lacassagne, Auré. “War and Peace in the Harry Potter Series.” <i>European Journal of Cultural Studies</i>, vol. 19, no. 4, 2016, pp. 318-334. <i>Academic Search Premier</i>. <a href="https://ecs.sagepub.com/content/19/4/318.full.pdf+html">ecs.sagepub.com/content/19/4/318.full.pdf+html</a>. 21 Sept. 2016.</p> <p><i>MLA Handbook</i>. Eighth ed. Modern Language Association of America, 2016.</p> <p>Morrison, Toni. <i>Song of Solomon</i>. Everyman’s Library, 1995.</p> <p>Poe, Edgar Allen. “Alone.” <i>Poetry Foundation</i>, <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46477">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/46477</a>. 21 Sept. 2016.</p> <p>---. “The Raven.” <i>Poetry Foundation</i>, <a href="https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/48860">https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/48860</a>. 21 Sept. 2016.</p> <p>Rowling, J. K. <i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone</i>. Scholastic Inc., 1999.</p> <p>Shakespeare, William. <i>Romeo and Juliet</i>. Millennium Publications, 2014.</p> <p><i>Star Wars: Episode V - The Empire Strikes Back</i>. Directed by Irvin Kershner, Lucasfilm, 1980.</p>

## How to Create Works Cited Entries

Fill in the information based on the chart provided (a blank version of this chart is available on the last page for copying and reuse).

- For more complex citations, it may be necessary to repeat 3-9. Irrelevant elements are omitted.
- When the source is part of a larger whole, **the larger whole can be thought of as a container** that holds the source.
- For online sources, copy the website address or URL exactly.

**Punctuation** is streamlined. No angle brackets, colons, dashes, etc.

**Periods** after: author, title, abbreviations (pp., vol., no., etc.), each 3-9 block.

**Commas** after all other entries.

### Optional Elements

- Date of original publication
- City of publication
- Other facts about the source
- Date of access (not necessary for print materials but **essential** for online sources.)

Note: Sources should be cited based on the information most relevant to the paper. For example, when citing a movie that is referenced for the acting, cite it by the actor's name. If the paper is focused on the directing, cite it by the director's name.

**For special cases, see page 10.**

### Explanation of citation elements:

Author.	Last name, first name
Title of source.	Long works in italics, short works in quotation marks
Title of container,	Source of the text (journal, anthology, website (YouTube), etc.)
Other contributors,	Editors, translators, interviewer, etc.
Version,	Edition
Number,	For volume, use vol. # For issue number, use no. #
Publisher,	Name of publisher. If unknown, use N.p.
Publication date,	Year. If date is unknown, use n.d.
Location.	Page number(s). For one page, use p. For a page range, use pp. Paragraph numbers when listed.
Title of container,	Database (JSTOR), website (Netflix)
Other contributors,	General editor
Version,	
Number,	
Publisher,	
Publication date,	
Location.	URL, website copied exactly (no angle brackets)
Optional Elements.	Date of access

- 1 Author.
- 2 Title of source.
- 3 Title of container,
- 4 Other contributors,
- 5 Version,
- 6 Number,
- 7 Publisher,
- 8 Publication date,
- 9 Location.

**Example of a citation for a book:**

Author.	Rowling, J. K.
Title of source.	<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone.</i>
Title of container,	
Other contributors,	
Version,	
Number,	
Publisher,	Scholastic Inc.,
Publication date,	1999,
Location.	

Rowling, J. K. *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Scholastic Inc., 1999.

Note: While a comma is placed after the publication date when filling out the chart, it becomes a period in the citation because it is the last entry in a 3-9 block.

**Example of a citation for an article from a library database:**

Author.	Lacassagne, Auré.
Title of source.	"War and Peace in the Harry Potter Series."
Title of container,	<i>European Journal of Cultural Studies,</i>
Other contributors,	
Version,	
Number,	vol. 19, no. 4,
Publisher,	
Publication date,	2016,
Location.	pp. 318-334.
Title of container,	<i>Academic Search Premier,</i>
Other contributors,	
Version,	
Number,	
Publisher,	
Publication date,	
Location.	ecs.sagepub.com/content/19/4/318.full.pdf+html.
Optional Elements.	Date of Access: 21 Sept. 2016.

Lacassagne, Auré. "War and Peace in the Harry Potter Series." *European Journal of Cultural*

*Studies*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2016, pp. 318-334. *Academic Search Premier*. ecs.sagepub.com/

content/19/4/318.full.pdf+html. 21 Sept. 2016.

### Special Cases for Works Cited

**Two authors:** The second author's name is first name, last name: Smith, James and Sam Jones.

**Authors with the same last name:** These should be listed alphabetically by last name, then by first name.

**Three or more authors:** Use the first author's last name followed by et al. (Smith, James et al.).

**More than one work by the same author:** These should be listed alphabetically by the first important word in the title. Works beyond the first start with --- (see Poe example in the example works cited above).

**No author:** List these alphabetically by the first important word in the title ("Youth Violence in Chicago").

**NOTE:** This packet and the accompanying PowerPoint presentation, along with many other resources, are available on The College of Saint Rose Writing Center's website at

[www.strose.edu/academics/center-for-student-success/academic-success-center/writing-center/](http://www.strose.edu/academics/center-for-student-success/academic-success-center/writing-center/)

The College of Saint Rose Writing Center is located in the Academic Success Center, on the second floor of Saint Joseph Hall. Stop by or call **518-454-5299** to make an appointment.

Additional resources for student writers:

- *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed.
- *Prentice Hall Reference Guide*, 7<sup>th</sup> edition.
- *The Online Writing Lab at Purdue University*. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
- The Modern Language Association's website: [http://www.mla.org/style\\_faq](http://www.mla.org/style_faq)

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