

MLA Tips

When in doubt, do not guess—consult course materials; ask me.

[Essay Format, Works Cited Page, In-Text Citations]

At any point, if you have a question about your topic or content, about the essay format, about a source you are unsure how to set up on the works cited page and/or cite in text, ask me in class or send it to me in the on-line classroom email. Be sure to ask questions: I am strict about precise MLA work. Our librarians and tutors can also answer works cited questions or assist with key words when you are researching your topics. **But double check with me to make sure your works cited page and in-text citation form are correct, and save all questions about writing the essay itself for me.**

This is long: read through it, and then when you're working and trying to figure out what to do with a source, do the Control + F keys search on this page to find it. You can also ask the librarians, and **check the MLA on line or a reliable site like The Purdue Owl:**

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

Additional note: students in my classes are required to follow the writing process protocol: stage one—tell me your topic and focus; stage two—show me your thesis and brainstorming list; stage three—show me your rough draft with works cited page at the end (for the research paper, but also any other essay you submit that has sources used). Final research paper drafts (and any other essay you submit with sources) are always submitted with the essay and then works cited page attached. Follow this writing protocol throughout the semester: this is a college transfer course, and you must work with me to develop and improve the writing and research skills required by all college and university professors.

MLA [Supplement to latest edition]

Part 1--Basics

Titles of movies, TV programs, paintings, novels, epic poems, CDs, plays, musicals, etc. are **underlined or italicized**. Titles of short stories, short poems, essays, songs, etc. (works published 'inside' other works), go in **quotation marks**. Buildings, monuments, sacred writings, series, political documents, seminars etc. carry no special treatment. Never bold, italicize, or place quotation marks around your own title as your essay is not a published work. Refer to artists, writers, painters, actors, etc. by full name the first time you mention them; then by last name after, with no 'Mr' or 'Miss'. Space between initials just as you would between names.

In prose you always incorporate four typed lines or less into your sentence; in poetry it's 3 typed lines or less (with a blank, slash, blank between the lines). This slash is used also if you're analyzing a play (like *Antigone* or *Hamlet*) that is set up in lines. Otherwise, longer quotes are set off from the text by 10 spaces on the left only (two right indents), double-spaced, and cited with the period in front of the parentheses instead of after. No quotation marks. I'm not looking for set-off quotes, however, and I've limited you to 1 in short papers and 2 in the Research Paper so we don't have a problem with padding. Be sure when you quote that you comment on

these passages: don't let them begin or close your paragraphs and take over the paper. Though you must quote in these papers to support your arguments, quotations must not be excessive.

Work quotations into your sentences (colon [:] if it's a long quote and your intro is a sentence, comma or nothing if it simply finishes your sentence; the semicolon [;] is not used to incorporate a quotation). They must be worked in, and they must fit grammatically into your sentences, **without writing run-ons or comma splices.**

For in-text citation, use author's last name and page number (line number if poetry or verse play) in parentheses (no comma) with the period after. Omit final period, semicolon, and the like in the quotation. See below examples for what to do with more than one author. If you frame the quotation with the author's name, then only put the page number in the parentheses. If more than one work by the same author, then use last name, comma, first major word of the title, space and the page number. If no author is provided, then use the first major word of the title, which is alphabetized by title on your WC page. If it is in quotes or italicized on the WC page, then do the same in the in-text citation—or readers may wonder why that word is in parentheses.

Use square brackets within quotations (to indicate material added or explained), the ellipsis (three spaced points) to indicate material left out. (Be careful about brackets and ellipses; it's best to quote appropriately and accurately without too much altering of the source.) Smith writes, "he was the greatest President of the United States." Your reader wouldn't know who 'he' is, so you would write, "[Lincoln] was the greatest President of the United States" (Smith 249). If you left 'greatest' out, you would write "[Lincoln] was the . . . President of the United States" (Smith 249) or (Smith and Jones 249) if you have two authors (no comma between them). If there are **more than two authors** of a book or article, use only the name of the first author and et al. (which means 'and others') in the Works Cited page and in-text citation. That saves you having to type all those names.

If you are quoting an author quoting ANOTHER author (the **indirect quotation**), use qtd. in (short for 'quoted in'). Example: "Lincoln calls this a country 'of the people, by the people, for the people' (qtd. in Smith 234). You are quoting Lincoln from Smith's book, which is on your WC page. Knowing this skill can be very helpful for using quotes you really need but don't have the original sources at hand.

Part 2--Quoting and Citing Sources

Sources must be **authoritative** and **reputable**—not right-wing or left-wing blogs, but recognized academic journals, magazines, newspapers. If you are in doubt about the authenticity of a source, ask me. (Be sure to read the plagiarism document in the eClassroom.) **All word-for-word quotations must be cited with the authors, include quotation marks, must be integrated into your sentences with lead-in sentences or phrases, and must be cited with the original source and the period after the in-text citation** (you are 'nailing' the quotation and citation with the period). Do not 'strand' them, and do not write comma splices when you incorporate. Use colons, not semi-colons between your sentence and the quotation when both are independent clauses.

All paraphrased background material used (history, biography, descriptions, statistics, etc.) must be cited. Paraphrases must be in your own style and language. If you have a lot of

material paraphrased, clearly frame the selection with the author's name, then the page number where the paraphrase ends; you must make this clear to the reader. It is far better to quote short passages from a source rather than paraphrase at length. You must use direct quotations with quotation marks or **brief** paraphrases with sources after **all** borrowed material, even if that means there are several instances of citation in every paragraph. If you have a lot of material coming from several sources, you can put all of them in the parentheses, separated by semicolons (Smith 29; Baker 101; Jackson 52). But paraphrases need to be very careful not to use direct quotations without quotation marks. Again, I prefer that you use direct cited quotations rather than long paraphrases.

If you frame a quotation with the author's name, you do NOT have to include his book/article title; besides those titles are on the WC page. Quotations and paraphrases may NOT be used as thesis, topic, or closing sentences in any paragraph. They support you; don't let them dominate you.

Electronic sources. You may use them if they are written by authorities (they should provide a biography), though I do not want you to use only Internet sources; you also need to use the library databases. MLA calls for the URL but allows the simple word Web instead. Give the author, title, and the word Web typed (or Print typed if you actually read a print journal, which is rare these days). When you quote on-line sources (or media), you may not have page numbers; in that case cite with the author or **the first major word of the title if you don't have an author.**

Again: ALL background material (historical, biographical, descriptive, statistical, etc.) and all direct quotations must be cited in the paper, and you must cite ALL your sources on the Works Cited page. There are no exceptions to these requirements.

Part 3--Setting up the Works Cited Page

First: It is titled Works Cited, not bibliography, because this is a technological age that allows for many types of sources other than books and articles (which is a bibliography). The word is WORKS, not Work--you have more than one. The word is CITED, as in the sources you are ACTUALLY USING IN THE PAPER. There must be nothing on that page you don't cite in the paper; a source on the WC page not cited in the paper indicates the work was used and not cited, which is plagiarism. You must double check your WC page against the paper before submitting it. Use the CTRL key + F for 'find' on each of your sources to check they appear in-text in your essay. By the way, I've had papers where students spelled cited as 'sited' and even 'sighted,' both of which would be incorrect for obvious and humorous reasons. You don't want to do that.

Second: the WC page is **double spaced** throughout with 1" margins. The 2nd lines are indented, with the first lines flush against the left margin. Do a hanging indent (reverse of paragraph), with the first line with the source flush against the left margin; second line indented. This makes it easier to find sources—also set up in alphabetical order. The idea is to make the authors' names clear to the reader.

Third: Note that all WC entries have at least three sections with a period at the end of each: **author. title. publication.** If the source does not have an author given, then set it up on

the WC page by the title of the article, where it appears, publication information. Cite in text by the first major word of the article title (not something later in the source entry on the page; see the sample below at the end of this lecture). Again, keep the first line flush with the left margin and indent 2nd and 3rd lines--this keeps the author visible. Reverse the author and set up the page in alphabetical order by author (**by title if no author**, but that should not be occurring with academic sources). If you have more than one author, DO NOT switch them around to alphabetize -- the first author is first -- and reverse only that author's name. If you have more than one title by the same author, continue alphabetizing first by author, then by first major word of the title. [Do not number the Works Cited page or set up some kind of 'grouping'; it is alphabetized by authors.] Underline or italicize the title (sub-title takes a colon between main and sub-titles). Publication: the **publisher**, comma, and **date**. **Publishers' names are shortened** to the first surname (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich is Harcourt; Barnes and Noble is Barnes) or to UP (U of Texas P).

Finished Format

Please note: when you show me the **prewriting**, you will have your brainstorming list, thesis, rough draft and works cited pages in two stages. When you submit the **final draft**, give it a clear file name with your name included for downloading to my lap top (for example: Jack Sprat Research Paper). You'll also have full heading on the first page only (upper left corner, double spaced like the rest of the paper—your name, Prof. Samuelson, course number, and date—in that order: see my essay format lecture) and page numbers (last name and page number in upper right corner) on all pages. Upload the essay and the works cited attached to the end of the paper—one document. Do not run the Works Cited page off the bottom of the essay.

In our class labs, the more you show me and other students for peer review, the more we can double check, and the less correcting I have to do when I'm grading final drafts—which we hope also means higher grades for you. This is further enhanced when you take your papers to the writing tutors in the PAC lab. I do holistic reads in class labs; the tutors (professional tutors at the college only) can assist in your editing for grammar and syntax.

Examples of Incorporated, Cited Quotations

Example of incorporated, cited quotation from a novel, where the quotation finishes the frame (no punctuation): **The narrator begins *A Tale of Two Cities* with the famous observation that "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times" (Dickens 1).**

Example of incorporated, cited quotation from a novel, correctly using a comma: **As the narrator begins *A Tale of Two Cities* he sagely comments, "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times" (Dickens 1).**

Example of incorporated, cited quotation from a novel, correctly using a colon to prevent comma splice or run-on (both the frame and the quotation are sentences): **Dickens begins *A Tale of Two Cities* with one of the most famous opening lines: "It was the best of times; it was the worst of times" (1).** [Author's name is in the frame; not repeated in the parentheses]

Sample Works Cited Entries

[This is only a basic list; I can help with other sources you find]

I'm providing these as very basic samples of the form and punctuation. I show you how the source looks on the Works Cited page and then how to cite it in the paper. But see also many more examples and types of entries in the MLA (ch. 5 & 6) and sample student papers as well as the excellent handouts in the LRC.

Book with one author (except for changes in entry format, the authors are handled the same way for articles)

Smith, Jack. *Jane Eyre and the Mother Image*. Harvard UP, 1929.

[Cite as Smith and page number; no comma; period after (Smith 63).]

[if title of book being analyzed (primary source) is part of title of a critical book, don't italicize the primary book title]

A work as primary source with both author and editor (such as the novel for English 1302)

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. 1818. Ed. Paul J. Hunter. Norton, 2012.

Cite the author, not the editor: (Shelley 223).

Two or more books by the same author (would apply to articles and multiple authors as well; alphabetize by author, then by title)

Smith, Jack. *Character and Setting in Jane Eyre*. Harcourt, 1948.

---. *Imagery in Wuthering Heights*. Harcourt, 1941.

[Cite as Smith and page number; period after; in this case you must also include the first word of the title as the reader needs to know which source because they are both by Smith; there is a comma between the author's name and the title (Smith, *Imagery* 125).]

Book by two authors

Smith, Jack, and Helen Brown. *Character in Frankenstein*. U of London P, 2001.

[Cite as both authors and page number; no comma; period after (Smith and Brown 367).]

Book by more than two authors

Smith, Jack, et al. *The French Revolution and the Romantic Novel*. Harvard UP, 1959.

[Document as first author and et al. and page number; no comma; period after (Smith et al. 437).]

A Work in an Anthology (such as a collection of essays and essays at the back of the Norton edition of the novel for English 1302)

Essay is in another collection:

Johnson, Barbara. "My Monster/Myself." *Essays on Frankenstein*. Ed. Paul J. Hunter. Barnes, 1989. 129-140.

[Cite the author of the article, not the editor; no comma; period after (Johnson 148)].

Essay is in a Norton edition of the novel (include the novel's author after the title):

Johnson, Barbara. "My Monster/Myself." *Frankenstein*. By Mary Shelley. Ed. Paul J. Hunter. 1818 Norton, 1996. 241-251.

[Cite the author of the article, not the editor or novelist, no comma; period after (Johnson 136).]

Journal Article [see the MLA for magazines and newspapers]

Smith, Jack. "A Character Study of Victor Frankenstein." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 71.2 (1987): 321-67.

[Cite just as you do for a book (Smith 26).]

Internet or Electronic Database Article. Please note: the latest MLA includes the URL or other web site or database addresses, but it also allows for the instructor to omit those addresses. This is my preference because those can often be long and cumbersome, but I would certainly not penalize students who use these URLs.

Smith, Jack. "A Character Study of Victor Frankenstein." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 71.2 (1987). Proquest. 21 May 2002. Web. [Document as (Smith)]

"Imagery in Frankenstein." *Novel* 3 (1992). Proquest. 25 June 2004. Web.

[No author given; cite by a shortened version of the title also in quotes just as in the works cited page ("Imagery") .

Article with no author listed. Cite the article title or a **shortened version of the article title** also in quotes not the corporate or the journal etc, which is not the author.

"The Kindertransports During the Holocaust." Children in the Holocaust. The United States Holocaust Museum. Washington, D.C.: USHM 2012.

Cite as ("Kindertransports During the Holocaust") or simply ("Kindertransports") if there is no confusion with other sources. Most internet sources don't include page numbers: if yours does, then add it after the article, then a space, no period, no "p" ("Kindertransports During the Holocaust" 71).

You Tube Video

Obama, Barack. "Inaugural Address." Speech. 20 Jan. 2009. YouTube. 5 April 2009.

Cite as (Obama).