

MLA 9th Edition Quick Reference Guide

PAPER FORMAT

Margins: 1 inch on all sides

Font: Readable, legible font (Times New Roman 12pt recommended)

Line Spacing: Double-space entire paper, including heading, title, body text, block quotes, and Works Cited

Paragraph Indentation: Indent first line of each paragraph 0.5 inches (one Tab)

Page Numbers: Last name and page number in upper right corner of every page (header)

Alignment: Left-align text throughout

File Format: Save as .docx or .doc (unless instructor specifies otherwise)

PAPER STRUCTURE

First Page Header

Upper left corner (double-spaced): - Your Name - Instructor's Name - Course Name and Number - Date (Day Month Year format: 5 November 2025)

Title: - Centered on next line after date - Standard capitalization (capitalize first word and all major words) - Not bolded, underlined, or italicized (unless title includes another title)

Body: - Begin text on line after title - Double-spaced throughout

Works Cited Page

- Begins on new page after essay ends
- Heading "Works Cited" centered at top
- Entries in alphabetical order by author's last name
- Hanging indent (0.5 inches)
- Double-spaced throughout

MLA HEADER FORMAT

Example:

Smith 1

[Last name + page #]

John Smith

Professor Johnson
English 101
5 November 2025

The Impact of Social Media on Youth

The digital age has transformed the way young people communicate...

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Basic Format

Author's name in signal phrase: Smith argues that "quotation" (15).

Author's name in parentheses: The evidence suggests that "quotation" (Smith 15).

Two authors: (Smith and Jones 42) OR Smith and Jones argue that...

Three or more authors: (Smith et al. 78) OR Smith et al. found that...

Corporate/Organization author: (American Red Cross 25)

No author (use shortened title): ("Global Warming" 34) OR ("Article Title" 12)

Multiple works by same author: (Smith, *Book Title* 45) OR (Smith, "Article Title" 12)

Multiple authors with same last name: (John Smith 23) and (Mary Smith 45)

Indirect source (citing someone quoted in your source): (qtd. in Smith 67)

Multiple works in one citation: (Smith 15; Jones 42; Brown 88)

Special Cases

No page numbers (online sources): (Smith) - Use author name only

Numbered paragraphs or sections: (Smith, par. 4) OR (Smith, sec. 2)

Time stamps (audio/video): (Smith 00:12:35-41) OR (00:12:35-41) if no author

Scripture: (Bible, John 3:16) - Book, chapter:verse

Shakespeare/Classic works: (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.2.118-20) - Act.Scene.Lines

Entire work: Smith discusses... [No page number needed]

Block quotes (4+ lines of prose or 3+ lines of verse): - Indent entire quote 0.5 inches - No quotation marks - Citation after final punctuation - Double-spaced

Example: Smith makes this important observation: This is a long quote that continues for several lines and demonstrates the hanging indent format that should be used for block quotations in MLA style. (42)

WORKS CITED - CORE ELEMENTS

MLA 9 uses a flexible template with 9 core elements:

1. Author
2. Title of source
3. Title of container (larger work)
4. Other contributors
5. Version
6. Number
7. Publisher
8. Publication date
9. Location

Format: Each element is followed by the punctuation shown: Author. Title. Container, Contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Date, Location.

WORKS CITED ENTRIES

Books

One author: Smith, John. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year.

Two authors: Smith, John, and Mary Jones. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year.

Three or more authors: Smith, John, et al. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year.

Editor as author: Smith, John, editor. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year.

Chapter or essay in edited book: Brown, Lisa. "Chapter Title." *Title of Book*, edited by John Smith, Publisher, Year, pp. 45-67.

E-book: Smith, John. *Title of Book*. E-book ed., Publisher, Year.

E-book with URL/DOI: Smith, John. *Title of Book*. Publisher, Year. *Database Name*, doi:xxxxx.

Translated book: Author, First. *Title*. Translated by Translator Name, Publisher, Year.

Edition other than first: Smith, John. *Title of Book*. 3rd ed., Publisher, Year.

Multivolume work: Smith, John. *Title of Book*. Vol. 2, Publisher, Year.

Periodicals (Journals, Magazines, Newspapers)

Journal article (print): Smith, John. "Article Title." *Journal Name*, vol. 45, no. 3, Year, pp. 234-56.

Journal article (online database): Smith, John. "Article Title." *Journal Name*, vol. 45, no. 3, Year, pp. 234-56. *Database Name*, doi:xxxxx.

Journal article (website with DOI): Smith, John. "Article Title." *Journal Name*, vol. 45, no. 3, Year, pp. 234-56, doi:xxxxx.

Magazine article (print): Smith, John. "Article Title." *Magazine Name*, Day Month Year, pp. 42-48.

Magazine article (online): Smith, John. "Article Title." *Magazine Name*, Day Month Year, www.website.com/article.

Newspaper article (print): Smith, John. "Article Title." *Newspaper Name*, Day Month Year, pp. A1+.

Newspaper article (online): Smith, John. "Article Title." *Newspaper Name*, Day Month Year, www.newspaper.com/article.

Article with no author: "Article Title." *Publication Name*, Date, Location.

Websites

Entire website: *Website Name*. Publisher, Year, www.website.com.

Page on website: Author Last Name, First Name. "Title of Page." *Website Name*, Publisher, Day Month Year, www.website.com/page.

Website with no author: "Title of Page." *Website Name*, Publisher, Date, URL.

Website with no date: Author. "Title of Page." *Website Name*, Publisher, Accessed Day Month Year, URL.

Website with no publisher: Author. "Title of Page." *Website Name*, Date, URL.

Digital Sources

YouTube video: Author/Username. "Title of Video." *YouTube*, uploaded by Username, Day Month Year, www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxxxx.

Podcast: Host Last Name, First Name, host. "Episode Title." *Podcast Name*, season number, episode number, Publisher, Day Month Year, URL.

Tweet: @Username (Real Name). “Full text of tweet.” *Twitter*, Day Month Year, Time, URL.

Instagram post: @Username. “Caption text or description of post.” *Instagram*, Day Month Year, URL.

Facebook post: Author Name. “Full text of post.” *Facebook*, Day Month Year, URL.

Email: Smith, John. “Subject Line.” Received by Mary Jones, Day Month Year.

Online forum post: Username. “Title of Post or First Few Words.” *Forum Name*, Day Month Year, URL.

Multimedia Sources

Film: *Title of Film*. Directed by First Last Name, performances by First Last Name and First Last Name, Studio, Year.

TV episode: “Episode Title.” *Series Name*, season number, episode number, Network, Day Month Year.

TV episode (streaming): “Episode Title.” *Series Name*, created by Name, season number, episode number, Production Company, Year. *Streaming Service*, URL.

Music album: Artist. *Album Title*. Label, Year.

Song: Artist. “Song Title.” *Album Title*, Label, Year, streaming service or URL.

Personal photograph: Photographer Last Name, First Name. *Title or Description*. Year. Medium.

Artwork: Artist Last Name, First Name. *Title of Artwork*. Year, Institution/Collection, City.

Interview (personal): Interviewee Last Name, First Name. Personal interview. Day Month Year.

Interview (published): Interviewee. “Interview Title.” Interview by Interviewer Name. *Publication*, Date, Location.

Other Sources

Government document: Government Agency. *Title of Document*. Publisher, Year, URL.

Dissertation (published): Author. *Title*. Year. University, PhD dissertation. *Database*, URL.

Dissertation (unpublished): Author. *Title*. Year. University, PhD dissertation.

Conference paper: Author. "Title of Paper." Conference Name, Day Month Year, Location.

Lecture or speech: Speaker. "Title of Lecture." Sponsoring Organization, Day Month Year, Location.

Advertisement: Company Name. Advertisement. *Publication*, Date, Page or URL.

Review: Reviewer. "Title of Review." Review of *Title of Work*, by Author Name. *Publication*, Date, Location.

QUOTATIONS

Short Quotations (fewer than 4 lines of prose or 3 lines of verse)

Integrate into text with quotation marks: Smith argues that "direct quotation here" (45).

Punctuation: - Place periods and commas inside quotation marks - Place colons and semicolons outside quotation marks - Place question marks and exclamation points inside if part of quote, outside if not

Block Quotations (4+ lines of prose or 3+ lines of verse)

Format: - Start on new line - Indent entire quote 0.5 inches - No quotation marks - Double-space - Citation after ending punctuation

Example: According to Smith: This is a block quotation that extends for more than three lines and should be formatted with a hanging indent and no quotation marks around it. (42)

Poetry

3 or fewer lines: Use slash (/) with space before and after to show line breaks

Example: In the poem, the speaker states, "Line one / Line two / Line three" (1-3).

4+ lines: Use block format, maintaining original line breaks

FORMATTING TITLES

Italics (for longer, stand-alone works):

- Books: *The Great Gatsby*

- Journals/Magazines: *The New Yorker*
- Newspapers: *The New York Times*
- Websites: *Wikipedia*
- Films: *Inception*
- TV series: *Breaking Bad*
- Albums: *Abbey Road*
- Plays: *Hamlet*
- Ships/Aircraft: *Titanic*

Quotation Marks (for shorter works, parts of larger works):

- Articles: “Title of Article”
- Book chapters: “Chapter Title”
- Short stories: “The Lottery”
- Poems: “The Road Not Taken”
- Essays: “Self-Reliance”
- TV episodes: “Pilot”
- Songs: “Hey Jude”
- Web pages: “About Us”

No Italics or Quotation Marks:

- Sacred texts: the Bible, the Quran, the Torah
- Legal documents: the Constitution, the Bill of Rights
- Your own paper’s title (at top of first page)

CAPITALIZATION

In Titles (Title Case): - Capitalize first and last words - Capitalize all major words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns) - Lowercase articles (a, an, the) - Lowercase prepositions (of, in, to, for, with, etc.) - Lowercase coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet)

Example: *The Catcher in the Rye*

In Sentences: - Capitalize first word after colon if it begins a complete sentence
- Capitalize proper nouns and adjectives derived from proper nouns

ABBREVIATIONS

Common abbreviations in MLA: - ed. = edition or edited by - eds. = editors
- et al. = and others (use for 3+ authors) - n.d. = no date - n.p. = no publisher
- p. = page (rarely used in MLA 9) - pp. = pages (use for page ranges in Works Cited) - par. = paragraph - qtd. in = quoted in - sec. = section - vol. = volume
- no. = number

Months (in Works Cited): Abbreviate months longer than 4 letters: Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, June, July, Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec.

Time: Use a.m. and p.m. (lowercase with periods)

NUMBERS

Spell out: - Numbers that can be written in one or two words (twenty, forty-five, one hundred) - Numbers that begin sentences

Use numerals for: - Numbers that require more than two words (101, 1,275)
- Dates, addresses, exact sums of money - Page numbers, volume numbers, act/scene/line numbers - Percentages, decimals, statistics - Time with a.m. or p.m. (8:00 a.m.)

Special cases: - Large numbers: use combination (4.5 million) - Inclusive page numbers: 45-48, 120-25, 1365-401 - Ranges: use en dash (2020-2021) or hyphen (45-48)

PUNCTUATION WITH QUOTATIONS

Periods and commas: Always inside quotation marks “Quote,” Smith argues (15). Smith argues, “Quote” (15).

Colons and semicolons: Always outside quotation marks Smith discusses “the problem”; however, Jones disagrees (22).

Question marks and exclamation points: - Inside if part of quoted material: Smith asks, “Why?” (15). - Outside if part of your sentence: What does Smith mean by “the issue” (15)?

Ellipsis (...): Use to show omitted words from quotation “The beginning ... and the end” (Smith 15).

Brackets []: Use to add clarifying information or change capitalization “She [the author] argues that...” (Smith 15). “[T]he evidence shows...” (Smith 15).

SAMPLE WORKS CITED PAGE

Works Cited

Brown, James. “The Digital Age.” *Technology Review*, vol. 23, no. 4, 2020, pp. 45-67.

“Climate Change Effects.” *Environmental Science*, National Geographic,

15 Mar. 2021, www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article.

Jones, Mary, and Susan Lee. **Modern Literature**. Academic Press, 2019.

Smith, John. "The Future of Education." **Education Today**, 5 June 2020, www.educationtoday.com/future-education. Accessed 15 Oct. 2025.

---. **Understanding Technology**. Tech Publishers, 2018.

The Matrix. Directed by Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski, performances by Keanu Reeves and Laurence Fishburne, Warner Bros., 1999.

COMMON MISTAKES TO AVOID

1. Using "Works Cited" as a header with page number (should be centered title)
2. Forgetting hanging indent on Works Cited entries
3. Including URLs that are too long (use permalink or DOI when available)
4. Not alphabetizing Works Cited entries
5. Using first names first in Works Cited (always: Last name, First name)
6. Including access dates for stable sources (only for undated sources)
7. Underlining titles instead of italicizing
8. Single-spacing any part of the paper
9. Using "pg." or "page" before page numbers in citations
10. Forgetting to cite paraphrased information
11. Including retrieval statements ("Retrieved from") unless needed for unstable content
12. Using footnotes or endnotes for citations (use in-text parenthetical citations)

DIFFERENCES FROM MLA 8

Key changes in MLA 9: - Simplified URL formatting (use permalinks, remove "https://") - Greater flexibility with source types - Updated guidance on social media citations - New examples for contemporary digital sources - Streamlined treatment of online sources

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Official MLA Resources: - MLA Style Center: <https://style.mla.org> - MLA Handbook (9th edition)

When in Doubt: - Consult your instructor - Check the MLA Style Center for updates - Follow the core elements template for unusual sources

This quick reference guide covers the most common MLA 9th Edition guidelines. For comprehensive coverage, consult the MLA Handbook (9th ed.).

Last updated: Based on MLA 9th Edition (2021)