

MLA 9th Edition Cheat Sheet

Quick Reference Guide for Students

BASIC PAPER FORMAT

Font & Size: - Times New Roman 12pt (standard) - OR any readable, professional serif font 12pt

Margins: - 1 inch on all sides (top, bottom, left, right)

Spacing: - Double-space EVERYTHING - No extra spaces between paragraphs - No extra spaces between heading and title - No extra spaces after title

Alignment: - Left-aligned (ragged right edge) - Do NOT justify text

Indentation: - First line of paragraphs: 0.5 inch (Tab key once) - Exception: Do NOT indent first line after heading - Block quotes: Indent 1 inch from left margin

Page Numbers: - Top right corner of EVERY page - Last name + space + page number - 0.5 inch from top - Example: Chen 1

Title Page: - NO separate title page in MLA format - Everything begins on page 1

FIRST PAGE FORMAT

Top Right Corner (0.5 inch from top):

Last name Page#
Example: Chen 1

Top Left Corner (1 inch from top, double-spaced): 1. Your Name 2. Professor's Name (with title: Professor or Dr.) 3. Course Number and Name 4. Date (Day Month Year)

Title (centered, double-spaced from date): - Standard capitalization (Title Case) - NO bold, italics, underline, or larger font - Exception: If title contains another work's title, format that part

Example:

Sarah Chen
Professor Jennifer Martinez
English 102: Composition and Literature
15 May 2024

Symbolism in The Great Gatsby

Body text begins immediately below title (double-spaced)

HEADING & TITLE RULES

Heading Format: - Your full name (as you want it to appear) - Professor's title + name (Professor Smith, Dr. Jones) - Course number + name (ENG 101: Composition) - Date in Day Month Year format (15 May 2024)

Date Formats:

✓ 15 May 2024
✓ 1 Jan. 2024
✗ May 15, 2024 (American format - DO NOT USE)
✗ 5/15/2024 (numeric format - DO NOT USE)

Month Abbreviations (4+ letters): - Jan., Feb., Aug., Sept., Oct., Nov., Dec. - Do NOT abbreviate: May, June, July

Title Guidelines: - Center on page - Double-space from date - Title Case: Capitalize major words - NO special formatting (bold/italics/underline) on YOUR title - If your title includes another work, format that: - Books, films: italics (Symbolism in *The Great Gatsby*) - Poems, articles: quotes (Analysis of "The Road Not Taken")

HEADER (EVERY PAGE)

Format: - Last name + space + page number - Top right corner - 0.5 inch from top edge - Same font as body text - Continue on EVERY page including Works Cited

Setting up in Word: 1. Insert → Header → Blank 2. Type last name + space 3. Insert → Page Number → Current Position → Plain Number 4. Right-align 5. Close header

IN-TEXT CITATIONS

BASIC FORMAT

Author named in sentence:

Fitzgerald describes the light as "minute and far away" (21).

Author in parentheses:

The green light appears "minute and far away" (Fitzgerald 21).

KEY RULES: - Format: (Author page) - NO comma between author and page - NO "p." or "pp." before page number - Period comes AFTER parentheses - If author named in sentence, only page number in parentheses

AUTHOR VARIATIONS

One author:

(Smith 45)
Smith argues that... (45)

Two authors:

(Smith and Jones 45)
Smith and Jones argue... (45)

- Use "and" not "&"

Three or more authors:

(Smith et al. 45)

- "et al." = "and others"
- Include period after "al"

No author:

("Article Title" 12)

- Use shortened title

- Article titles in quotes
- Book/website titles italicized

Corporate/Organization author:

(American Medical Association 34)

- First use: Full name
- Later: Can abbreviate if clear (AMA 34)

QUOTES

Short quotes (4 lines or less):

According to Fitzgerald, the light is "minute and far away" (21).

Long quotes (more than 4 lines of prose OR 3+ lines of poetry): - Called "block quotes" - Start on new line - Indent entire quote 1 inch from left margin - Double-space - NO quotation marks - Citation AFTER final punctuation

Example:

Fitzgerald describes the valley:

This is a valley of ashes—a fantastic farm where
ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and
grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of
houses and chimneys. (23)

Poetry (3+ lines): - Maintain original line breaks - Indent 1 inch

Because I could not stop for Death -
He kindly stopped for me -
The Carriage held but just Ourselves -
And Immortality. (Dickinson 1-4)

Poetry (1-2 lines) in text:

Dickinson writes, "Because I could not stop for Death - / He kindly stopped for me -" (1-2).

- Use forward slash with spaces (/) to show line breaks

SPECIAL CITATIONS

No page numbers (websites, e-books):

(Author)

- Omit page number completely

Paragraph numbers:

(Author par. 5)
(Author pars. 5-7)

Section headings:

(Author, sec. 3)

Multiple works by same author:

(Fitzgerald, *Gatsby* 21)
(Fitzgerald, *Tender* 45)

- Include shortened title
- Italics for books, quotes for articles

Indirect source (citing something quoted in your source):

Hemingway stated "... (qtd. in Smith 45)

- “qtd. in” = “quoted in”
- Avoid when possible - find original

Multiple sources:

(Smith 45; Jones 78; Williams 90)

- Semicolons separate sources
- Alphabetical order

Literary works:

Novels with chapters:

(Fitzgerald 21; ch. 3)

- Helps readers with different editions

Plays (Act.Scene.Line):

(Hamlet 3.2.115-120)

- Example: Act 3, Scene 2, Lines 115-120

Poems (line numbers):

(Wordsworth lines 1-4) ← first reference
(1-4) ← later references

Bible (Book Chapter:Verse):

(John 3.16)

WORKS CITED PAGE

BASIC FORMAT

Page Setup: - New page after essay ends - Header continues (Last name Page#) - Title: “Works Cited” centered, NO bold/italics/underline - Double-spaced throughout - Hanging indent: First line flush left, rest indented 0.5 inch - Alphabetical by author’s last name (or title if no author)

General Pattern:

Author. Title. Container, Other Contributors, Version,
Number, Publisher, Publication Date, Location.

PUNCTUATION RULES

- Periods separate major elements
- Commas separate elements within sections
- End each entry with period

Capitalization: - Author names: As they appear - Titles: Title Case (capitalize all major words)

AUTHOR FORMATS

One author:

Last name, First name.

Two authors:

Last name, First name, and First name Last name.

- Note: First author reversed, second in normal order

Three or more authors:

Last name, First name, et al.

- List only first author + “et al.”

Corporate/Organization author:

Organization Name.

Editor as author:

Last name, First name, editor.

OR for multiple editors:

Last name, First name, and First name Last name, editors.

No author: - Start with title - Alphabetize by first major word (ignore A, An, The)

TITLE FORMATTING

ITALICIZE (independent works):

- Books
- Journals, magazines, newspapers
- Websites
- Films, TV series
- Albums
- Plays (published as books)
- Long poems (published as books)
- Pamphlets

QUOTATION MARKS (parts of larger works):

- Articles
- Book chapters
- Short stories
- Poems (not book-length)
- Essays
- Song titles
- TV episodes
- Web pages (on a website)

EXAMPLES:

- Book: *The Great Gatsby*
 - Article: “Understanding Gatsby”
 - Website: *SparkNotes*
 - Webpage: “The American Dream”
 - Journal: *American Literature Review*
 - Article in journal: “Symbolism in Modernist Fiction”
-

WORKS CITED EXAMPLES BY SOURCE TYPE

BOOKS

Basic book:

Author. Book Title. Publisher, Year.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Scribner, 2004.

Book with edition:

Author. Book Title. Edition number, Publisher, Year.

Strunk, William, and E. B. White. *The Elements of Style*. 4th ed., Longman, 1999.

Edited book:

Editor, First name, editor. Book Title. Publisher, Year.

Smith, John, editor. *American Literature Essays*. Oxford UP, 2023.

Book chapter/essay:

Author. "Chapter Title." Book Title, edited by First name Last name, Publisher, Year, pp. page-page.

Pelzer, Linda. "The American Dream in *Gatsby*." *Student Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, Greenwood Press, 2000, pp. 57-71.

Translated book:

Author. Book Title. Translated by First name Last name, Publisher, Year.

Camus, Albert. *The Stranger*. Translated by Matthew Ward, Vintage, 1989.

E-book:

Author. Book Title. E-book ed., Publisher, Year.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. E-book ed., Scribner, 2004.

Audiobook:

Author. Book Title. Narrated by First name Last name, Publisher, Year. Audible.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Narrated by Jake Gyllenhaal, Audible Studios, 2013. Audible.

ARTICLES**Journal article (print):**

Author. "Article Title." Journal Title, vol. number, no. number, Year, pp. page-page.

Smith, John. "Symbolism in *Gatsby*." *American Literature Review*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2023, pp. 123-145.

Journal article (online with DOI):

Author. "Article Title." Journal Title, vol. number, no. number, Year, pp. page-page., DOI.

Jones, Mary. "The American Dream Deferred." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 52, no. 3, 2022, pp. 234-256., doi:10.1093/jas/xyz123.

Journal article (online with URL):

Author. "Article Title." Journal Title, vol. number,
no. number, Year, pp. page-page., URL.

Williams, Sarah. "Fitzgerald's Legacy." Modern Fiction
Studies, vol. 67, no. 1, 2021, pp. 45-67.,
muse.jhu.edu/article/789123.

Magazine article:

Author. "Article Title." Magazine Title, Day Month Year,
pp. page-page.

Brown, David. "Gatsby at 100." The New Yorker,
10 Apr. 2025, pp. 34-39.

Newspaper article:

Author. "Article Title." Newspaper Title, Day Month Year,
pp. page-page.

Martinez, Ana. "Rereading American Classics." The New York
Times, 15 May 2024, pp. C1-C3.

Article from database:

Author. "Article Title." Journal Title, vol. number,
no. number, Year, pp. page-page. Database Name, URL.

Garcia, Robert. "Modernist Symbolism." Contemporary
Literature, vol. 55, no. 4, 2020, pp. 678-702.
JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/12345678.

WEBSITES

Entire website:

Website Title. Publisher/Sponsor, Year, URL.

SparkNotes. SparkNotes LLC, 2024, www.sparknotes.com.

Web page:

Author. "Page Title." Website Title, Publisher,
Day Month Year, URL.

"The American Dream." SparkNotes, SparkNotes LLC,
2024, www.sparknotes.com/lit/gatsby/themes/.

Web page, no author:

"Page Title." Website Title, Publisher, Day Month Year,
URL.

"Understanding Symbolism." Literary Devices,
literarydevices.net, 12 Jan. 2024,
www.literarydevices.net/symbolism/.

Web page, no date:

Author. "Page Title." Website Title, URL. Accessed
Day Month Year.

Smith, John. "Gatsby Analysis." American Lit Online,
www.amlit.com/gatsby. Accessed 15 May 2024.

Blog post:

Author. "Post Title." Blog Name, Day Month Year, URL.

Johnson, Emily. "Why Gatsby Still Matters." The Literary
Blog, 20 Mar. 2024, literaryblog.com/gatsby-matters.

MULTIMEDIA

Film:

Title. Directed by First name Last name, Distributor, Year.

The Great Gatsby. Directed by Baz Luhrmann, Warner Bros., 2013.

Film (focus on specific contributor):

Contributor role. Title. Directed/Performed by names, Distributor, Year.

DiCaprio, Leonardo, performer. The Great Gatsby. Directed by Baz Luhrmann, Warner Bros., 2013.

TV episode:

"Episode Title." TV Series Title, season number, episode number, Network, Day Month Year.

"The One Where..." Friends, season 5, episode 14, NBC, 11 Feb. 1999.

YouTube video:

Username or Author. "Video Title." YouTube, Day Month Year, URL.

CrashCourse. "The Great Gatsby - Thug Notes Summary." YouTube, 15 June 2014, www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxxxx.

Podcast episode:

"Episode Title." Podcast Name, hosted by Host name, season/episode numbers, Publisher, Day Month Year, URL.

"Understanding Gatsby." The Literary Podcast, hosted by Sarah Jones, season 2, episode 5, NPR, 10 Jan. 2024, www.npr.org/podcast/episode.

Song:

Artist. "Song Title." Album Title, Label, Year.

Lana Del Rey. "Young and Beautiful." The Great Gatsby Soundtrack, Interscope, 2013.

Music streaming:

Artist. "Song Title." Album Title, Label, Year. Streaming Service, URL.

Lana Del Rey. "Young and Beautiful." The Great Gatsby Soundtrack, Interscope, 2013. Spotify, open.spotify.com/track/xxxxx.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter/X post:

Author/Handle. "Full text of tweet." Twitter, Day Month Year, Time, URL.

@LiteraryQuotes. "The Great Gatsby remains one of literature's finest examinations of the American Dream." Twitter, 10 Apr. 2024, 2:30 p.m., twitter.com/user/status/xxxxx.

Instagram post:

Author. "First 20 words or description..." Instagram,
Day Month Year, URL.

@bookstagram. "Just finished Gatsby for the third time..."
Instagram, 5 May 2024, www.instagram.com/p/xxxxx.

Facebook post:

Author. "Post text or description." Facebook,
Day Month Year, URL.

OTHER SOURCES**Personal interview (conducted by you):**

Interviewee name. Personal interview. Day Month Year.

Smith, Professor John. Personal interview. 15 May 2024.

Published interview:

Interviewee. "Interview Title." Interview by Interviewer
name. Publication, Day Month Year, pp./URL.

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. "An Interview with F. Scott
Fitzgerald." Interview by Charles C. Baldwin.
The Paris Review, Spring 1925, pp. 23-34.

Lecture/Speech:

Speaker. "Presentation Title." Sponsoring Organization,
Day Month Year, Location.

Martinez, Dr. Ana. "Symbolism in American Literature."
Modern Language Association Annual Convention,
7 Jan. 2024, Chicago.

Email:

Sender. "Subject Line." Received by Your name,
Day Month Year.

Smith, Professor John. "Re: Essay Question." Received by
Sarah Chen, 10 May 2024.

Dissertation/Thesis:

Author. Title. Year. Institution, Degree type dissertation.

Johnson, Emily. The Evolution of the American Dream in
20th Century Literature. 2023. Stanford U,
PhD dissertation.

Government document:

Government Body. Title. Publisher, Year, URL if online.

United States, Department of Education. Education
Statistics Annual Report. Government Printing
Office, 2023.

SPECIAL FORMATTING SITUATIONS**MULTIPLE WORKS BY SAME AUTHOR****List chronologically (earliest first):**

Fitzgerald, F. Scott. *The Great Gatsby*. Scribner, 1925.
---. *Tender Is the Night*. Scribner, 1934.
---. *The Last Tycoon*. Scribner, 1941.

- Use three hyphens (—) followed by period for repeated author
- If same year, alphabetize by title

NO PAGE NUMBERS

For sources without page numbers: - Omit page numbers from in-text citations - Just use (Author) - Common for websites, e-books, videos

SHORTENED TITLES

When title is long: - Use first major word or two - Maintain formatting (italics or quotes)
- Example: *The Great Gatsby* → *Gatsby* - Example: “Understanding Modern American Literature” → “Understanding”

FORMATTING TIPS & TRICKS

SETTING UP YOUR DOCUMENT

Before you start writing:

1. **Set margins:** 1 inch all sides
2. **Choose font:** Times New Roman 12pt
3. **Set spacing:** Double-space (2.0)
4. **Set paragraph indent:** 0.5 inch first line
5. **Create header:** Last name + auto page number
6. **Type heading:** Name, professor, course, date
7. **Center title:** Type title, center it

USING HANGING INDENT(WORKS CITED)

In Microsoft Word: 1. Select all Works Cited entries 2. Right-click → Paragraph 3. Indentation → Special → Hanging 4. Set to 0.5 inch 5. Click OK

OR

1. Select entries
2. Press Ctrl + T (Windows) or Cmd + T (Mac)

In Google Docs: 1. Select entries 2. Format → Align & indent → Indentation options 3. Special indent → Hanging 4. Set to 0.5 inch

QUICK KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

Indentation: - Tab = First line indent (0.5 inch) - Ctrl + T = Hanging indent

Formatting: - Ctrl + B = Bold - Ctrl + I = Italics - Ctrl + U = Underline - Ctrl + E = Center
- Ctrl + L = Left align

GRAMMAR & STYLE FOR LITERARY ANALYSIS

VERB TENSE

Present tense for discussing literature:

- ✓ Fitzgerald describes the green light...
- ✓ The symbol represents hope...
- ✓ Gatsby believes in the dream...

- ✗ Fitzgerald described...
- ✗ The symbol represented...

Past tense for historical context:

- ✓ Fitzgerald published Gatsby in 1925.
- ✓ The novel was written during Prohibition.

TITLES IN TEXT

Referring to authors: - First reference: Full name (F. Scott Fitzgerald) - Subsequent: Last name only (Fitzgerald) - NOT: Fitzgerald, F. Scott or Mr. Fitzgerald

Referring to titles: - Full title, properly formatted - *The Great Gatsby* (not “The Great Gatsby” or The Great Gatsby)

INTEGRATING QUOTES

Use signal phrases:

- ✓ According to Fitzgerald,...
- ✓ The narrator explains that...
- ✓ As Gatsby reveals,...
- ✓ Fitzgerald writes,...

Avoid “says”:

Better alternatives: writes, states, argues, suggests, claims, asserts, explains, demonstrates, reveals

COMMON MLA ERRORS TO AVOID

- ☐ Creating separate title page (not used in MLA)
- ☐ Including “p.” or “pp.” in citations: (Smith p. 45)
- ☐ Using comma in citations: (Smith, 45)
- ☐ Wrong date format: May 15, 2024 (should be 15 May 2024)
- ☐ Using “&” instead of “and”: Smith & Jones
- ☐ Bold/italics on your title
- ☐ Extra spaces between paragraphs
- ☐ Not indenting paragraphs
- ☐ Forgetting header on Works Cited page
- ☐ Not using hanging indent for Works Cited
- ☐ “Bibliography” instead of “Works Cited”
- ☐ Alphabetizing by first name instead of last
- ☐ Including “http://” or “https://” in URLs (omit these)
- ☐ Underlining instead of italicizing titles
- ☐ Not double-spacing Works Cited entries

PRE-SUBMISSION CHECKLIST

FORMATTING: ☐ Times New Roman 12pt (or approved font) ☐ 1-inch margins all sides ☐ Double-spaced throughout (no extra spaces) ☐ Header on every page (last name + page number) ☐ First line of paragraphs indented 0.5 inch

FIRST PAGE: ☐ Heading in top left (name, professor, course, date) ☐ Date format: Day Month Year ☐ Title centered, standard formatting ☐ No separate title page

IN-TEXT CITATIONS: ☐ All quotes/paraphrases cited ☐ Format: (Author page) - no comma, no “p.” ☐ Period after parentheses ☐ Present tense for discussing literature

WORKS CITED: ☐ New page with header ☐ “Works Cited” centered ☐ Hanging indent for all entries ☐ Double-spaced ☐ Alphabetical order ☐ All sources properly formatted ☐ Every in-text citation has Works Cited entry ☐ Every Works Cited entry is cited in paper

CONIENE: ☐ Clear thesis statement ☐ Strong topic sentences ☐ Analysis, not summary

☐ Proper quote integration ☐ Proofread for errors

HELPFUL RESOURCES

Official MLA Resources: - MLA Handbook (9th edition) - MLA Style Center:
style.mla.org - MLA formatting videos - Purdue OWL
(owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/)

Citation Generators (ALWAYS VERIFY): - EasyBib - Citation Machine - BibMe -
Zotero (free, most reliable)

Note: Citation generators make mistakes. Always double-check against MLA Handbook.

WHEN IN DOUBT

1. **Check MLA Handbook (9th ed.)** - Official source
 2. **Ask your instructor** - May have preferences
 3. **Purdue OWL** - Excellent free resource
 4. **Be consistent** - Pick one format and stick to it
 5. **Cite everything** - When unsure, cite it
-

PRINT THIS CHEAT SHEET FOR QUICK REFERENCE WHILE WRITING!

Remember: This is a quick reference guide. For comprehensive rules and unusual situations, always consult the MLA Handbook (9th edition).