Research Documentation

MLA FORMAT
Once you learn the proper format, writing a research paper isn’t as difficult as it looks.

This presentation will outline the major components of an MLA research paper.

You’ll begin by setting up a page header, which will be on every page of the paper.
Setting up the Paper

- All pages (including the Works Cited page) in an MLA paper should have a page header in the upper right-hand corner.

- This page header is placed ½ inch from the top of the page and contains your last name and page number.

- Check your word processing program for a page header that automatically inserts the appropriate page number.

- This is also a good time to set your word processor for double spacing and 1 inch margins.
Setting up the Header

1. Double click at the top of the page in the margin space.
2. Click on “Page Number” and choose the “Top of the Page,” “Plain Number 3.”
3. Before the page number, type your last name and one space.
4. Click on “Close Header and Footer” in the upper right hand corner of the screen.
Don’t forget to use *only* your last name in front of the page numbers.

*An additional example of a header can be found in *The Writer’s FAQs: A Pocket Handbook* page 214.*
First Page Format

• Next, you’ll set up headings on the first page.


• One inch from the top of the page, on the left-hand margin, double space the following:
First Page Format

Your Name
Instructor’s Name
Course Number and Title
Date Submitted

• Following this information, double-space again and center the title.

• Double-space one more time and begin the first paragraph of your paper.
John Smith  

Dr. Jane Doe  

ENG 124: College Composition  

17 May 2011  

An Accurate Representation:  

An Exploration Mel Stuart’s *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* and Tim Burton’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*  

In her 2005 review of Tim Burton’s *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* “Depp’s Chocolate Factory:’ Not a Tasty Morsel,” Natasha Grant writes, “[...] as friend who tagged along with me to the screening admitted, ‘I like the original much better, not that this was bad; it was great! It just wasn’t—Johnny Depp doesn’t compare to Gene Wilder.’” The indication in this quote is one that is accepted throughout the cinematic world, and rarely questioned as false.
Use Sources for Credibility

- The purpose of a research paper is not to give your opinion but to report what others have written about a topic.

- You increase your credibility (and usually your grade!) when you include references (called citations) to scholars who have written about your topic.

- You do this by including summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotes in your paper.
MLA format uses parenthetical citations to give credit to sources.

- Include the author’s last name and page number.
  - “Quote” (Smith 42).

- If no author is given, use a shortened form of the title in quotation marks. This shortened form should use the first major title word (not “a” or “the”) used to alphabetize your source on the Works Cited page.
  - “Quote” (“Going” 42).

- Citations are used for summaries, paraphrases and quotes.
What is a signal phrase?
- A signal phrase introduces the author, the title of the document, author credentials, or context for the quote or paraphrase being used.

How do I cite a signal phrase?
  - The signal phrase is in red.
  - Notice that the parenthetical citation does not need to include the author’s name because it is already mentioned in the signal phrase.
## Summary vs. Paraphrase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Paraphrase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- A summary is a shortened version of a passage rephrased in your own words.</td>
<td>- A paraphrase is approximately the same length as the original passage but is rephrased in your own words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- A summary is briefer than the original text and only contains main ideas.</td>
<td>- It contains main ideas and sub-points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Include a parenthetical citation followed by a period.</td>
<td>- Include a parenthetical citation followed by a period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summary (Smith 42).</td>
<td>- Paraphrase (Smith 42).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Direct Quotes

- A direct quote is an original text’s words copied exactly.

- Direct quotes are introduced by a signal phrase, a short, introductory phrase, to give the quote context.
  - According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Breast cancer is the number one cause of cancer death in Hispanic women” (Smith 42).

- The quote should be enclosed with a set of quotation marks and followed by a parenthetical citation which includes the page number.
For long quotes (more than four lines of your paper), introduce the quote with a signal phrase followed by a colon. Then start the quote on a separate line which is indented 10 spaces (press Tab twice).

Type the entire quote, double-spaced, without quotation marks.

End the quote with a period placed before the citation.

Next, include the page number where the quote was found inside a set of parentheses.

At the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. (186)
All sources cited within your paper should be included on your Works Cited page.

- Top of page should contain Last Name/Page header and the phrase Works Cited centered in the middle of the page.

- Double space citations throughout.

- Alphabetize by author’s last name (or title if no author).

- Use hanging indent format.
Also . . .

- Make sure your page header contains the correct page number.

- Italicize titles of independently published works (such as books and magazines).

- Indicate the publication medium (Print, Web, DVD, TV, etc.).
Sample Works Cited Page

Works Cited


More Sample Works Cited

All sources cited within your paper should be included on a Works Cited page.

- A sample page may be seen at: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/55/7/14/

- An extensive Works Cited page is also found on page 215 of the *The Writer’s FAQs: A Pocket Handbook*.

- One inch from the top of the page, you should center the phrase Works Cited.
Common Items on the Works Cited Page

- The next six slides show the format for the most common Works Cited citations.

- If you are trying to cite a source not covered in this presentation, check pages 183-216 in the *The Writer’s FAQs: A Pocket Handbook* for a more extensive list of sources and their formats.
Citing a Book

- Author. Title. City: Publisher, Year. Publication Medium.


Citing an Article


- Whalen, Tom. “Romancing Film: Images of Dracula.”


- See pages 199-201 in *The Writer’s FAQs: A Pocket Handbook* for variations of article format.
Citing electronic sources is similar to print sources, but you will need to include the date you accessed the source online. Listing the URL is no longer required.

List Web as the publication medium.
Citing a Journal Article from a Database


  


- See pages 201, in *The Writer’s FAQs: A Pocket Handbook* for additional online citations.
Citing a Web Page—MLA

- Author(s). “Title of Web Page.” Web Site Name. Date of Update. Publication Medium. Date Accessed.


Citing an Article from a Website

- Author(s). Title of Document. *Source Title*. Web Site Name. Sponsor, Date. Medium. Access Date.


  - If there is no publisher or sponsor use N.p.
Additional Help

If you have additional questions about MLA citations, consult the following resources:

- *The Writer’s FAQs: A Pocket Handbook*
- Your Instructor
- The Writing Center
- The Digital Library found in your Mystarkstate portal.
Research Documentation: MLA Format was presented by the Stark State Writing Center, room G200a.

Created July 2009
Updated August 2011
Updated June 2012