Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation

MLA documentation and formatting style is often used in the humanities (except history and theology) and the fine arts. This handout provides some of the key rules, but for additional help, use the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (9th edition), visit the Purdue OWL (http://owl.english.purdue.edu), or schedule an appointment at University Writing Services.

Each time you use any information from a source, include a 1) works cited entry and 2) parenthetical reference (sometimes called "in-text").

STEP 1: WORKS CITED PAGE *(see example on reverse)*
As you find each source you want to use, create a citation. Note: don't wait to cite; do so early! Those citations you've created will then be placed at the end of the paper, on a page entitled "Works Cited".

Formatting: List entries alphabetically by the first word (often an author's last name). Double-space each line. Place the first line of each entry flush with the left margin and indent subsequent lines using the "hanging indent" feature. Italicize titles of major works, like books, websites, films, and journals. Put quotation marks around the titles of shorter works, like articles, webpages, and short poems.

Missing information: Some electronic sources may not list all the information expected in a standard MLA citation. If an author's name isn't listed, omit it and start the citation with the title of the work. Don't include placeholders or abbreviations for missing information such as dates or publishers.

STEP 2: PARENTHETICAL REFERENCES
Place a parenthetical reference at the end of each sentence (or a major clause) that contains a borrowed concept or data that is not common knowledge. Cite both quotations and paraphrases.

Formatting: There are two main ways to cite parenthetically: providing all information at the end of the idea (in-text citation) *or* incorporating the author's name into the sentence (narrative).
>*Type 1*: In parentheses, put the author's last name(s) and the page number(s) on which the cited information appears. The period goes after the parentheses.
>>Ex. Pirates' lives typically ended within two or three years "and often ended ignominiously at the end of a rope" (Cawthorne 12).
>*Type 2*: If you include the author's name in the sentence, omit it from the parenthetical reference.
>>Ex. Nigel Cawthorne explains that pirates' lives typically ended within two or three years "and often ended ignominiously at the end of a rope" (12).

Cite borrowed information even when you don't quote the source directly, such as paraphrasing:
>Ex. Pirates were often hung after just a few years of marauding at sea (Cawthorne 12).

Sources without page numbers: If the source doesn't have page numbers, simply omit them.
>Ex. According to Wilczynski, "Julius Caesar struggled with the Roman Era Pirates and today many seas are still plagued as Modern Piracy is common off the coast of Somalia."

Sources without authors: If the source doesn't list an author, use the piece of information that comes first in the works cited entry (usually title, in italics or quotation marks, shortened as much as is clear).
>Ex. Pirates designed their flags to intimidate opponents through their grizzly, skeleton imagery ("Pirate Flags").

Works Cited

Print book. Author last name, First name. *Title*. Publisher, year of publication.

Cawthorne, Nigel. *A History of Pirates: Blood and Thunder on the High Seas*.

Chartwell Books, 2004.

Electronic book. Print book entry. *Database* or *Website Title,* URL.

Ellms, Charles. *The Pirates Own Book: Authentic Narratives of the Most*

Celebrated Sea Robbers. Sanborn & Carter, 1837. *Project Gutenberg*,

www.gutenberg.org/files/12216/12216-h/12216-h.htm.

Journal article in print. Author last name, First name. "Article Title." *Journal Title*, volume, issue, year, article page #s.

Gabbert, Janice J. "Piracy in the Early Hellenistic Period: A Career Open to

Talents." *Greece and Rome*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1986, pp. 156-63.

Journal article from an online database Author last name, First name. "Article Title." *Journal Title*, volume, issue, year, article page #s (if given). *Database Name*, URL or doi.

Luft, Gal, and Anne Korin. "Terrorism Goes to Sea." *Foreign Affairs*, vol.

83, no. 6, Nov. – Dec. 2004, pp. 61-71. *JSTOR*,

www.jstor.org/stable/20034137.

Online newspaper or magazine article. Author last name, First name. "Article Title." *Periodical Title*, Publication date, page #s (if given). *Database Name*, URL or doi.

Mele, Christopher. "Tens of Thousands Evacuated as Fire Rages in

Southern California." *The New York Times*, 17 Aug. 2017. *LexisNexis*,

http://www.lexisnexis.com/hottopics/lnacademic/?verb=sr&csi=23792

4&sr=HLEAD(california%20w/20%20fire)+AND+DATE%3E=%25C

URRDATE-14%25.

Webpage without author. "Webpage Title." *Website Title*. Publisher (if different from website), Date published (if given), URL or doi.

"Pirate Flags." *The Way of the Pirates*. The Way Network, 2012,

http://www.thewayofthepirates.com/pirate-life/pirate-flags/

Part of an anthology or a chapter in a print collection of essays. Author last name, First name. "Chapter Title." *Book Title*, edited by Editor Name, Publisher, year, page #s.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. "Pirate Story." *A Victorian Anthology, 1837-1895*,

edited by Edmund Clarence Stedman, Riverside Press, 1895, pp. 523-

24.

Personal or professional webpage. Author last name, First name. "Webpage Title." *Website Title*. Publisher (if different from website), Date published (if given), URL or doi.

Wilczynski, Krzysztof. "Introduction to Piracy." *Pirates! Fact and Legend,*

www.piratesinfo.com/cpi_pirate_history_of_pirates_piracy_510.asp.

MOST IMPORTANT DIFFERENCES BETWEEN MLA 8TH AND MLA 9TH EDITIONS

HOW THIS WORKS: Universal rules are presented first. Deviations between the two editions are given after.

RULE #1: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE. Avoid using terms that specify the subject's race, gender, social orientation, disability, age, or social status if it is not critical for your context. For example, use "they/them/theirs" not only for multiple people and nonbinary people, but also in place of he/she when the subject's gender is unspecified or unimportant.

On the other hand, when your argument does require you to mention these aspects of a subject's identity, avoid sweeping generalizations. For instance, if you are writing about women, specify other important factors about the women you are referring to such as nationality, socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, etc. to avoid making a sweeping generalization about all women.

RULE #2: FOREIGN LANGUAGE CAPITALIZATION. Foreign language sources or quotations use their native grammar and punctuation.

RULE #3: CONSULTED WORKS. If you include anything that you have merely consulted, use "Works Cited and Consulted" by placing your consulted sources after any endnotes if necessary.

MLA 8	MLA 9
Only include sources cited in the body of the paper in the Works Cited Page.	Include sources that helped you in the research process but were not cited in the body of your paper.

RULE #4: CONTAINER RULES. The research paper must include at the title of the container for digital sources. The "Title of Container" container will appear right at the end of your citation. This may represent the website or online database where your source has been published. Some examples include SoundCloud, Facebook posts (direct), blogs, articles, tweets, songs, Bible verses, or artworks.

MLA 8	MLA 9
For digital sources, cite the author, title, other contributors (if any), publisher, URL (if any), date published (if given), and date accessed.	For digital sources, cite all the same information as before (in the same order), but at the end of the Works Cited entry, add the container. Some examples of containers include Spotify, MP3 format, Vinyl, Netflix, etc.

NOTE: For additional information, checked out the comparison center published by the MLA Style Center at https://style.mla.org/handbook-editions-comparison-chart/.

FORMATTING RESEARCH PAPERS

WRITTEN BY 1 STUDENT: One inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name, your instructor's name (or instructors' names, if there is more than one instructor), the course name and number, and the date on separate double-spaced lines. On a new double-spaced line, center the title (fig. 1). Do not italicize or underline your title, put it in quotation marks or boldface, or type it in all capital letters.

WRITTEN BY 2+ STUDENTS: If the paper is a group project, create a title page and list all the authors on it instead of in the header on page 1 of your essay (fig. 2).
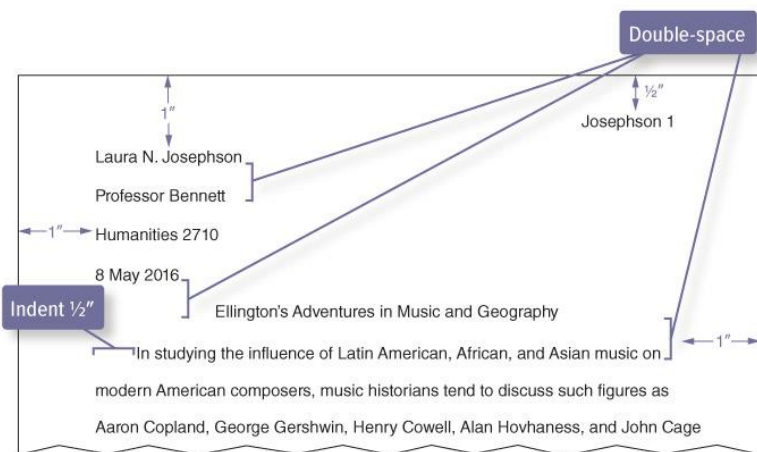
Fig. 1. The top of the first page of a research paper.

Fig. 2. The title page of a paper written by several students.

RUNNING HEAD: Number all pages consecutively throughout the research paper in the upper right-hand corner, half an inch from the top and flush with the right margin. Type your surname, followed by a space, before the page number (fig. 3). If a project has several authors and all authors' surnames won't fit in a running head, include only the page number. Do not use the abbreviation "p." before the page number or add a period, a hyphen, or any other mark or symbol.
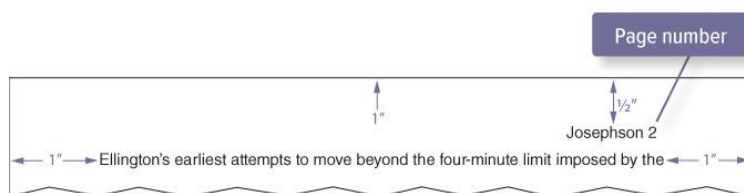
Fig. 3. The running head of a research paper.

NOTE: All of this information about formatting (including the three figures) was published by the MLA Style Center at https://style.mla.org/formatting-papers/#margins. *The link also contains additional information about internal headings and subheadings, tables and illustrations, sets and bulleted lists, etc.*