

## Hollins University Writing Center

### *MLA Documentation*

This handout contains simplified instructions for the Modern Language Association's (MLA) preferred style documentation. For more specific information, you can refer to the manual, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, by Joseph Gibaldi. Copies of the most recent edition of this manual are available for use in the Writing Center and tutors are also happy to answer any questions you may have.

**What is it?** MLA documentation is used for parenthetical citation only. *Footnotes and endnotes are not part of MLA citation.*

**When do I use it?** MLA documentation is most commonly used for citation when the date of publication is not vital to understanding the paper. For example, knowing that *Wuthering Heights* was published in 1837 is not crucial to understanding a paper undertaking criticism of the novel. The author's last name and the page number of the specific passage cited, on the other hand, instantly give the reader access to the information he or she needs most; namely, where to find what you've just cited.

**Why do I use it?** The purpose of all citation is essentially the same. Citations allow the reader to verify and evaluate the sources you used to write your paper. With parenthetical citation the reader can easily locate the source of your information. Because we often rely on what has been said before to aid us in our own writing, it becomes necessary to give credit where credit is due. On a more practical note, attributing, borrowing, and citing sources correctly is the easiest way to avoid plagiarism charges. The Writing Center has handouts available for information regarding attribution and borrowing. This particular handout, however, will be most helpful to you in the last stage of the documentation process—citing your sources correctly using MLA guidelines.

#### **In-Text Citations:**

An in-text citation is placed at the end of the sentence containing the material that needs to be cited, like so (Gibaldi 241). The parenthetical citation usually includes the author's last name followed by the page number. *Do not put a comma between the author's name and the page number.* Make sure that the sentence punctuation is on the *outside* of the closing parenthesis. Also, when quoting directly from a source, make sure that the citation is *outside* of the ending quotation mark, "like so" (Gibaldi 241). According to Gibaldi, if you mention the author's name in your text, then you only need to cite the page number in parenthesis at the end of the sentence, like so (240). What follows is a few more examples of forms for in-text citations:

*More than one work by the same author* (Note the shortened versions of the titles and use of comma.)

(Nash, Bloodletters 76)

(Nash, Crime Chronology 102)

*Three authors*

(Williams, Harris, and Burns 438)

*More than three authors*

(Simon et al. 502)

*A work in an anthology* (Cite the author of the piece, *not* the editor of book.)

(Hazlitt 185)

*Indirect quote* (Meaning that you are quoting a writer or speaker's words that appear in a source written by another author; you cite the original writer)  
(qtd. in Krauss 40).

*Corporate Author*  
(Chamber of Commerce 34)

*No Author*  
(World Almanac 66)

*Websites* (give author or sponsoring organization, with paragraph in which the phrase is found)  
(Landers, par. 17)

*Poetry, drama and the Bible*  
Poetry—line numbers (17-20)  
Drama—act, scene, and line numbers (4.2.30-32)  
Bible—book, chapter, and verse numbers (Ps. 55.16-17)

**Longer quotes:** The *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* has some guidelines for using longer quotations in your papers:

If a quotation runs more than four lines in your paper, set it off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin, and typing it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a quotation displayed in this way (as shown above) ... If you quote only a single paragraph or part of a paragraph, do not indent the first line more than the rest. A parenthetical reference to a prose quotation set off from the text comes at the end of the last line of the quotation, one space after the closing punctuation. (241)

The most important things to remember when using quotations longer than four lines are to *not* use quotation marks and to put the parenthetical citation *outside* of the final punctuation.

**Citing Poetry:** When citing lines of poetry, you should include the name of the author and set the title of the poem set off in quotation marks. A slash (/) is used to designate line breaks and a double slash (//) is used to indicate a stanza break. For the citation at the end of the sentence, it is important that you include the line or lines of the poem, rather than the page number.

In her poem, "Arrival At Santos" Elizabeth Bishop presents a discontented speaker searching "...for a different world/and a better life" (10-11).

When citing more than three lines of poetry, remember to indent one inch from the margin and single space the quote. Remember to maintain the line breaks as they appear in the poem:

here, after a meager diet of horizon, some scenery:  
impractically shaped and—who knows?—self-pitying

mountains,  
sad and harsh beneath their frivolous greenery, (2-5)

If the verse you wish to quote begins in the middle of a line, then position the beginning of your quotation where it appears in the book (*not* shifted to the left margin).

I remember  
He glanced at me in just that way, independent  
And unabashed, the handsome sidelong look  
that went round and about but never directly met my eyes,  
for that would betray his soul. (43-48)

## **Works Cited**

At the end of your paper you should include a Works Cited page. You should use a fresh page to begin your list, but continue numbering from the last page of your paper. If you want to include sources that you looked at, but did not cite from, then you should title your source list *Works Consulted* instead of *Works Cited*. Your entire source list should be double-spaced (both within and between entries), using hanging indentation and alphabetized by authors' last names.

Attached is a sample Works Cited page with examples of how to document common types of sources. This is by no means a comprehensive list and we encourage you to come to the Writing Center with any questions about other kinds of sources.

## **Works Cited<sup>1</sup>**

Albada, Kelly F. "The Public and Private Dialogue about the American Family on Television."

Journal of Communication 50.4 (2000): 79-110.<sup>2</sup>

Allende, Isabel. "Toad's Mouth." Trans. Margaret Sayers Penden. A Hammock beneath the

Mangoes: Stories from Latin America. Ed. Thomas Colchie. New York: Plume, 1992. 83-

88.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> All examples taken from: Joseph Gibaldi. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999.

<sup>2</sup> An article in a scholarly journal that pages each issue separately

<sup>3</sup> A work in an anthology

“Azimuthal Equidistant Projection.” Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary. 10<sup>th</sup> ed. 1993.<sup>4</sup>

Borroff, Marie. Language and the Past: Verbal Artistry in Frost, Stevens, and Moore.

Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1979.<sup>5</sup>

---, trans. Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. New York: Norton, 1967.<sup>6</sup>

“City Profile: San Francisco.” CNN.com. 2002. Cable News Network. 14 May 2002

<<http://www.cnn.com/TRAVEL/atevo/city/SanFrancisco/intro.html>>.<sup>7</sup>

Douglass, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself. 1845. Slave Narratives. Ed. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. New York: Lib. Of Amer., 2000. 267-368.<sup>8</sup>

Eggins, Suzanne, and Diana Slade. Analysing Casual Conversation. London: Cassell, 1997.<sup>9</sup>

Marsalis, Wynton. Foreword. Beyond Category: The Life and Genius of Duke Ellington. By John Edward Hasse. New York: Simon, 1993. 13-14.<sup>10</sup>

Mehta, Pratap Bhanu. “Exploding Myths.” New Republic 6 June 1998: 17-19.<sup>11</sup>

National Research Council. Beyond Six Billion: Forecasting the World’s Population. Washington: Natl. Acad., 2000.<sup>12</sup>

Quirk, Randolph, et al. A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language. London: Longman, 1985.<sup>13</sup>

Trumpener, Katie. “Memories Carved in Granite: Great War Memorials and Everyday Life.” PMLA 115 (2000): 1096-103.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> An article in a reference book

<sup>5</sup> Book by one author

<sup>6</sup> Two or more books by the same author

<sup>7</sup> A document from an internet site (basic entry)

<sup>8</sup> A previously published work found in an anthology, with original publication information.

<sup>9</sup> A book by two authors.

<sup>10</sup> A foreword (same format can be used for prefaces, introductions, and afterwords)

<sup>11</sup> An article in a magazine

<sup>12</sup> Corporate author

<sup>13</sup> Book by three or more authors

<sup>14</sup> An article in a scholarly journal with continuous pagination