

# **MLA**

## **Style Guide\***



Guidelines for Making a  
Bibliography and Documenting Sources

Shoshone School District  
English Department  
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\*Adapted from Lakewood City Schools, October 2008, Style Guide

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with some guidance on how to write your essays in MLA style. In the following pages you will find information about the basics of the style and how to correctly cite your sources. It is important to remember that in the space of this small handbook, only the most important elements of the style are covered; therefore, your teacher may need to share other material with you in order for you to complete your assignments in MLA format.

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## **1. MLA Style Guide Basics** (click to return to top)

### **What is MLA Style?**

The **M**odern **L**anguage **A**ssociation (MLA) developed a style guide for academic writing. Part of the style guide deals with standardized ways to document the writer's source materials.

MLA provides guidelines for the creation of a bibliography (called a "Works Cited" page) and the corresponding parenthetical (within the text) citation.

### **How do I use this MLA Style Guide?**

Students and teachers in the **middle schools** are expected to use this MLA style guide when writing pieces that require information to be cited from other sources.

### **Why is it Important that I Cite Sources?**

As a writer, it is your responsibility to give proper credit to your sources. It is also very important that you give this credit in accordance with MLA style. If you fail to give proper credit to a source, you have committed plagiarism.

## **2. Plagiarism—What is it? How can I avoid it?**

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### **What is plagiarism?**

If you have not given proper credit to your sources, you have committed plagiarism. Essentially, it is like you are lying to your reader. You have used someone else's ideas without telling your reader where you took it from.

Whether you have intentionally tried to pass off someone else's ideas as your own or, through careless research, you unintentionally "forgot" to cite a source, the charge is plagiarism.

### **How can I avoid plagiarism?**

Basically, any idea or fact that you received from a source needs to be cited. Any idea or fact that is common knowledge does not need to be cited. For example, facts like the earth rotates around the sun or Abraham Lincoln was assassinated while in office are common knowledge and would not have to be cited.

### **3. [Works Cited Page](#)** (click to return to top)

#### **What is a “Works Cited” Page?**

A “Works Cited” page is the name that MLA gives to a bibliography. It is a listing of all of the sources you cited in the body of your paper.

Here are a few things to keep in mind about the “Works Cited” page:

1. The “Works Cited” page is always going to be the last page of your essay or report. You should type the words “Works Cited” and center it on the page.
2. Each entry must be complete and accurate. To see examples of common sources in correct bibliographic format check out pages 5 and 7.
3. Each entry reads like one long sentence. What this means is that it does not matter where the second line begins in an entry; it begins on the second line only because you ran out of room on the first line.
4. The second and subsequent lines are always indented five spaces.
5. The sources are listed alphabetically by the first word or name of the entry. This first word or name should be what you use in your parenthetical citation.

**Example of a "Works Cited" page:** (click to return to top)

Works Cited

- Dias, Elizabeth. "Let There Be Night." *Time* 28 Apr. 2014: 36-41. Print.
- "Edgar Allan Poe - Biography." *Edgar Allan Poe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 May 2014.  
<<http://www.ega.edu/library/edgar-allan-poe/biography/>>.
- Finn Knight*. Dir. Lew Zucker. Perf. Sean Connery, Richard Gere, Julia Ormond. Columbia TriStar Home Video. 1995. VHS.
- Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1995. Print.
- Maupassant, Guy de. "The Necklace." *The Interactive Reader Plus*. Evanston: McDougal Littell, 2003. 2-16. Print.
- Raffel, Burton. "from Beowulf." *The Language of Literature: British Literature*. Evanston: McDougal Littell, 1997. 26-40. Print.
- William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet (2009)*. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. Perf. Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes. Twentieth Century Fox. 1996. DVD.

## 4. [Parenthetical Citation](#) (click to return to top)

### What is Parenthetical Citation?

Parenthetical citation is when a writer directly puts into the text a note from where he or she got the information. Parenthetical or “in-text” citation allows your reader to know from what source each idea/fact came.

This is how it looks in the text of your paper:

**“In 2007, 37 percent of American adults sought medical information from the internet regarding a health problem they were experiencing before consulting a doctor” (Smith 38).**

In the example above, notice that the author’s name and the page number on which this fact was found are set off from the text within parenthesis. Note also that the punctuation of this parenthetical citation is also important. The reader would understand from this citation that on page 38 of Smith’s book, this fact is mentioned. Furthermore, since the words are contained within quotes, the above example illustrates that this is a **direct quote** from that page.

Here is an example of the same idea presented as an **indirect quote**:

**Instead of going to a doctor right away, a recent study found that 37 percent of Americans are now turning to the internet for medical information (Smith 38).**

See the difference between direct and indirect quotes in the [glossary](#) section.

## 5. Examples of Common Forms of Sources for Citation (click to return to top)

**\*\*NOTE\*\*** The details are important in these citations--the order of the information, punctuation, underlining and quote marks all must be exact.

### **Book:**

**Lastname, First. *Book Title*. City: Publisher, Year. Print.**

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. *The Scarlet Letter*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1995. Print.

### **Magazine:**

**Lastname, First. "Article Title." *Magazine Title* : Pages. Print.**

Dias, Elizabeth. "Let There Be Night." *Time* 28 Apr. 2014: 36-41. Print.

### **Textbook:**

**Lastname, First. "Title of Story." *The Title of the Book*. City: Publisher. Year. Page #s.  
Print.**

Maupassant, Guy de. "The Necklace." *The Interactive Reader Plus*. Evanston: McDougal Littell, 2003. 2-16. Print.

Raffel, Burton. "from Beowulf." *The Language of Literature: British Literature*. Evanston: McDougal Littell, 1997. 26-40. Print.

### **Website:**

**Lastname, First. "Article Title." *Edgar Allan Poe*. Publisher, 20 Sept. 1987. Web. 1 May 2014. <WWW.URL.COM>.**

"Edgar Allan Poe - Biography." *Edgar Allan Poe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 May 2014.  
<<http://www.egs.edu/library/edgar-allan-poe/biography/>>.

### **Film:**

***Movie Title*. Dir. First Lastname. Perf. Performer 1, Performer 2. Distributor, Year. Blu-Ray.**

*William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*. Dir. Baz Luhrmann. Perf. Leonardo DiCaprio, Claire Danes. Twentieth Century Fox, 1996. DVD.

*First Knight*. Dir. Jerry Zucker. Perf. Sean Connery, Richard Gere, Julia Ormond. Columbia TriStar Home Video, 1995. VHS.

## **6. On-line Tools and Resources for Writing Citations In MLA Format**

### **[EasyBib.Com](#)**

EasyBib.Com is an automated bibliography creator. The user fills in the required information in the separate fields and, with the press of a button, EasyBib creates the citation! Easybib will export the list into Microsoft Word in correct MLA format as a "Works Cited" page. The user must create a free account to login.

### **[Middle School MLA Citation Handout](#)**

This PDF file is a printable version of two pages earlier in this handbook called "Examples of Common Forms of Sources for Citation."

**[Essential Information Needed for Creating Bibliographic Citations](#)** This handout (PDF Format) is a tool that will help you collect the necessary information for citing each of the common sources.

### **[MLA Citation Guide](#)**

This PDF file is a condensed overview of MLA style.

### **[Citation Data Form](#)**

This is a single sheet for collecting citation data for each source. You may print it and use it while doing research.



## 7. [Formatting your final paper:](#) (click to return to top)

### General Guidelines

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- **Double-space** the text of your paper, and using **Times New Roman font**. The font size should be **12 pt**.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks (unless otherwise instructed by your instructor).
- Set the margins of your document to **1 inch** on all sides.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. MLA recommends that you use the Tab key as opposed to pushing the Space Bar five times.
- Create **a header that includes your last name and numbers all pages** consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. (Note: Your instructor may ask that you omit the number on your first page. Always follow your instructor's guidelines.)

### [Formatting the First Page of Your Paper](#) (click to return to top)

- Do not make a title page for your paper unless specifically requested.
- In the **upper left-hand** corner of the first page, list **your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date**. Again, be sure to use **double-spaced text**.
- Double space again and **center the title**. Do not underline, italicize, or place your title in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case (standard capitalization), not in all capital letters.
- Use quotation marks and/or italics when referring to other works in your title, just as you would in your text: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as Morality Play; Human Weariness in "After Apple Picking"
- Double space between the title and the first line of the text.

### Example of formatting your first page:

The diagram illustrates the formatting of the first page of a paper. It shows a page with a header, name, instructor's name, class information, date, and centered title. Red arrows and text indicate 1-inch margins on all sides and double-spaced text throughout.

Header: Last name & page number Walden 1

Your Name

Instructor's Name

Class information (English 1A)

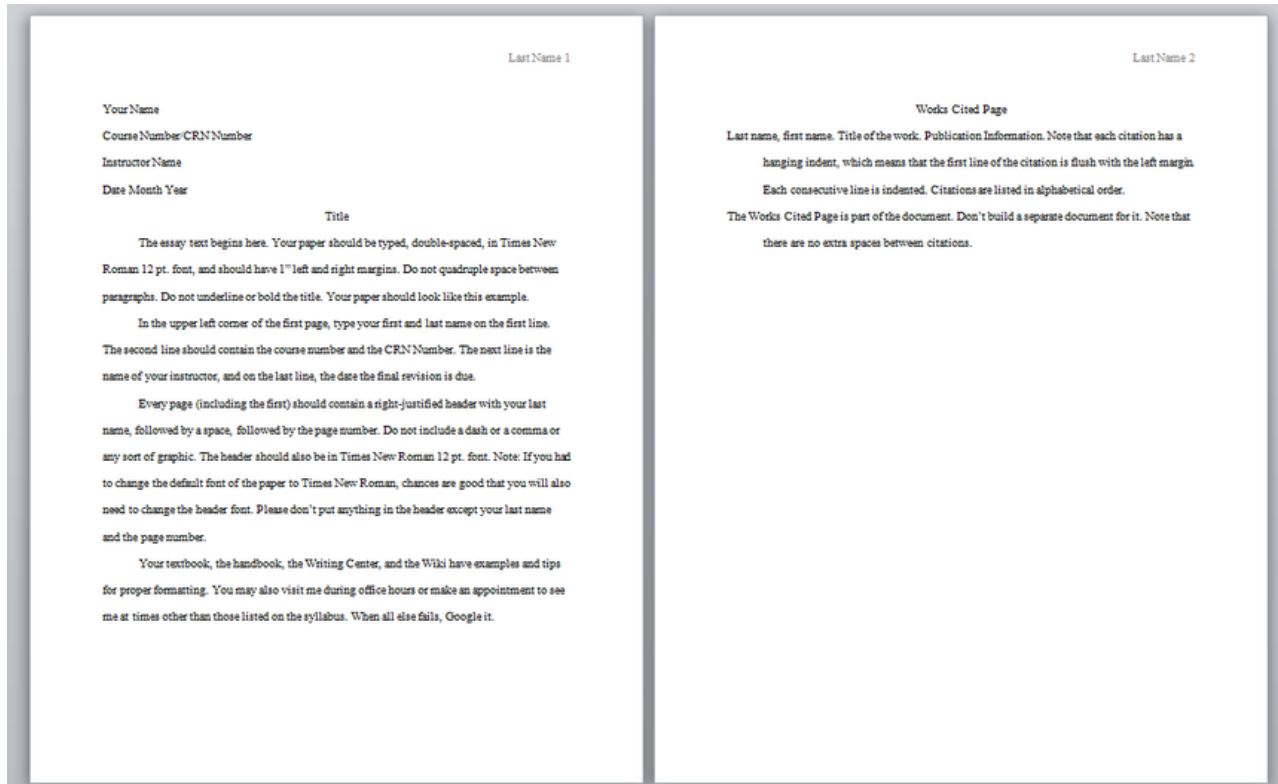
Date

Center Title of Essay

Begin your paragraph one double-spaced line below

your centered title; the paragraph should begin with a 1/2" tabbed indent. The paper's heading goes in the upper-left corner of the first page only. Use 1" margins all around. Double space everything, including blocked quotes. Do not justify the right margin.

## Example of a completed paper in MLA format: (click to return to top)



## 7. [Glossary](#) (click to return to top)

**Bibliography**—a listing of sources that a student used to write his/her essay or report.

**Citation**—is the identification of a specific idea or quote taken from a source.

**Direct Quote**—is a quote in which the author uses words from a source exactly as they were written. The words are taken verbatim. A direct quote is indicated by putting the words in quotation marks (“ ”). A direct quote must be cited.

**Indirect Quote**—is a quote in which an author paraphrases, or puts into his/her own words, an idea from a source. An indirect quote must be cited.

**Works Cited**—is the name that MLA gives to a bibliography. It is the last page of an essay or report. It lists all of the sources the student has used in his/her writing.