

DOCUMENTATION GUIDE: MLA

What:

The MLA (Modern Language Association) style is used for most research reports (with the exception of the social and health sciences where the APA style is required). If you are in doubt about what style to use, consult your teacher, or, if writing a report for the workplace, ask your colleagues.

Why:

If you keep in mind the reasons for documenting reports (honesty, reliability, utility), you will realize **the primary function of documentation is to enable your readers to find, consult, and evaluate your sources for themselves if they wish to do so**, and the most important thing about your documentation is that it should make this possible. This is the reason for standardization.

Before attempting to put these instructions into practice, you should understand what plagiarism is and how to avoid it. See the **Student Survival Guide: avoiding plagiarism**.

How:

The standard format is given in simplified form here: it covers most situations. In the interest of teaching you the principles rather than the many details, and in order to make your college experience with documentation as painless as possible, we are simplifying very complex requirements. When your source doesn't fit this model, or when you need to use MLA outside the college, we suggest you consult

<http://www.essayessentials3e.nelson.com>

<http://www.pearsoned.ca/rogers>

<http://www.englishresources.nelson.com>

As you are researching:

Make the process easier on yourself: You should record the publishing information for each source you consult *as soon as* you consult it. You don't want to waste time searching for the information later, when you put the report together, as this will more than double your work. We also recommend you print Web pages and e-mails, and photocopy printed sources for later reference, noting the publishing details at the top. Documenting each source as you obtain it means you don't have a rush at the end when

you put your report together, and enables you to become acquainted with the MLA system a little at a time.

Writing the report:

Readers expect information in two places:

1. **at the end of the report**, in a list of **Works Consulted** (anything you looked at) or **Works Cited** (only those works you actually refer to in your report). Your employer, teacher or situation will decide which is the most suitable. In either list, you must give complete publishing details of every source.
2. **within the report** to identify the source of ideas or information you have borrowed or words you have quoted (actual quotations also need quotation marks). Here, brief references in parentheses supply just enough information to allow the reader to consult your list at the end and recognize to which item you are referring.

At the end of the report: Works Cited

- Double space the list (as you do the rest of the paper).
- Use a hanging indent (first line starts at margin, subsequent lines indented 5 spaces - your word-processor can do this for you) for each entry, so that the first word is quickly visible to the reader.
- List the works alphabetically in a single list by author, or if no author is given by, in order of preference, editor/s followed by a comma then **Ed.** or **Eds.** or title.
- Place the last name of the author or editor first as in **Smith, Jean.**
- More than one author? After the name of the first author, add the others, but don't reverse the order of the later ones. **Smith, Jane, and George Brown.** More than three? Give the first author and add **and others.**
- Place titles of whole published sources (books, newspapers, journals, encyclopaedias, anthologies, etc.) in italics but titles of parts of sources (articles, essays, chapters, etc.) in quotation marks.
- More than one source by the same author? Place them in date order, starting with the oldest.
- Supply additional information where required, such as **2nd ed. Vol. 3. Videotape. Audiotape. Interview. CD. Lecture. Radio Broadcast. Television Broadcast.** etc. after the title.
- Do not use p. or pp. before page numbers here, or anywhere in the report. **201-2** is enough.
- If you obtained words or information from a source which originated in another source (called a secondary source citation), give the name of the original author (or title if no author is given), followed by the publication details for *your* source.

Models:

We suggest that you use common sense to adapt as closely as possible to one of the five models described below, following the order and punctuation as shown in each model.

1. Whole printed source
2. Part of a whole printed source
3. Material originally from a printed source but obtained by you from the Internet
4. Material originating on the Internet
5. Personal sources: Email, letter, lecture, interview

Model 1: Whole printed source (often a book)

- The principle is to give all the information necessary to find the source in the library.

Author/Editor's last name, first name. *Title in italics.* Place of publication: Publisher, date.

For example:

**Cricket, Jiminy. *The Most Famous Frogs and Toads I Have Known.* New Savannah:
Swamptown Press, 2001.**

Model 2: Part (article, chapter, essay, etc.) of a whole printed source (newspaper, anthology, book, encyclopaedia)

- Note: articles retrieved from CD ROMs are set up in exactly the same way giving the original source, but with **CD ROM** added after the title of the original whole source.

Author's last name, first name. "Title of part in quotation marks." *Title of Whole in italics*

**Date (include edition number if it's an encyclopaedia): section and page numbers
of part.**

For example:

**Newmarsh, Ernest. "My First Encounter with Toad of Toad Hall." *The Globe and Mail* 31
July 2000: C31-32.**

Model 3: Material originally from a printed source but obtained by you from the Web

- The principle is to give the original printed source information.
- Add the information connected with the Web page including the date you accessed the page and <the complete address inside angle brackets>.
- Don't split Internet addresses at the end of a line.

Author's last name, first name. "Title of part in quotation marks." *Title of Whole in italics*

Date (include edition number if it's an encyclopaedia): page numbers of part.

<Internet address>. (Date of access) .

For example:

Newmarsh, Ernest. "My First Encounter with Toad of Toad Hall." *The Globe and Mail* 31

July 2000: C31-32. <<http://www.globeandmail.com/science/frogs.htm>>. (6 August 2002) .

Model 4: Material originating on the Web

- The principle is to give, as far as you can deduce from the page, the same information as you would for a printed source and then add the information connected with the Web including <the complete address inside angle brackets> and the date you accessed the page.
- Don't split Internet addresses at the end of a line.
- A complication here is that material on Web pages may print out on several sheets of paper but traditional page numbers are not provided. To make it easier on your reader, give paragraph or section numbers where available. If no page numbers are supplied, put n.pag. (for "no pagination") where page numbers would normally be placed. Do not give the page number of your printout as this varies from one situation to another.
- If no individual author is given, you may also have to decide whether it is appropriate to place an organization's name in the position usually reserved for the author, or place a page title first and place the organization's name where the publisher name usually goes.
- If a page has a title, place it in quotation marks. If it's an untitled home page, use the words **Home Page** (no quotation marks or italics).

Author or sponsoring organization. Title of page. Date when page last updated.

Sponsoring Organization if not already mentioned. <Internet address>.

(Date of access) .

For example:

**Mole, K. "Keeping Toads as Pets". 7 March 1999. Veterinary Association of Ontario.
<<http://www.vetsofon.ca/toads/pets.htm>>. (5 January 2001).**

Model 5: Personal sources: Email or letter (keep a paper copy) with lecture and interview variant

Author of email or letter. "Title of message." E-mail to First name and Last name of recipient. Date.

Lecturer or interviewee (Official position). Subject in quotation marks. Lecture or Interview with interviewer. Date of lecture or interview.

For example:

**Arnott, Bob. "Frog Colonies at Red Bay." E-mail to Margaret Jones. 19 April 2002.
Doe, Hermann (President of CEO Enterprises). "Succeeding in the Pet Business."
Interview with Jay Doe. 23 March 1999.**

Documentation within the report (this is the easy part!)

Here you give the minimum amount of information that will allow the reader to go straight to the right item in your list of **Works Cited** or **Works Consulted**, plus page number/s if available.

- Therefore, immediately following an idea, summary, paraphrase or quotation you have used, put the author's or editor's last name and the relevant page/s in parentheses: **(Smith 104-5)**.
- More than one author with the same last name? Include initials: **(A.T. Jackson 5)**.
- If the work is divided into volumes, show this with volume number, colon and page numbers, for example, **1: 34-6**.
- You need not repeat the author's name if it's obvious from your report: **Smith finds no evidence that toads are friendlier than frogs (104-5)**.
- If the work has no named author or editor, use the title or an easily recognizable short form of it which must correspond to the first few words on the entry in the list of Works at the back.
- Remember, book titles are placed in italics (***Toads and Frogs* 54**) and article titles in

quotation marks (**“Friendliness quotient” 45**).

- If your source has no page number, as often happens in the case of Web pages, just give the author (or title if no author) with no page number: (**Andrews**) or (**“Toads in History”**).
- If you are referring to material you found in a source that originated in another source, give the name (or short title) of the original source, followed by “quoted in” or (if the exact words weren’t given) “cited in” and the source *you* used (**Mole quoted in Smith 90**).
- If you quote up to three lines from your source, put the words in quotation marks and give the source using one of the formats above, for example, **“Toads have a wonderful sense of humour” (Smith 87)**. As the following paragraph demonstrates, four lines or more are set up differently:

If the quotation is four lines or more, start a new line. Instead of using quotation marks, indent the quotation ten spaces from the margin (using the indent command, not the tab key to do this). Continue to use double spacing as in the rest of your report. Finish with a period and then use the parentheses as you do for your other references. (Doe 23)

Telling the reader you have adjusted a quotation:

- If you wish to omit words within a quoted sentence, use three periods to show where words were omitted: **According to Don, he was “lying face down ... flat on the ground” for six hours (Jackson 31)**. At the end of a sentence add an extra period: **According to Don, he was “lying face down....” (Jackson 31)**.
- If you wish to show you have changed a word (perhaps to explain who was meant by a word like “She” in a quotation), put the new words in [square brackets]: **[Marie] gave the toad a kiss”(Canby 32)**.

Formatting your report

Your teacher or place of work may have different requirements, so it would be wise to check if you should adapt these MLA guidelines.

- § Ask about requirements for holding pages together. These may vary from paper clips or staples through various forms of binders to spiral bindings.
- § Page numbering: The title page is not numbered; the remaining pages are numbered at the top right. You may be asked to include your name, five spaces and then the page number at the top right of every page. Your word processor can be set up to do this automatically.
- Set 1" margins all round, unless 1½" is requested. If you have been asked to bind

your report down the left side (as, for example, with a spiral binding) you should leave 1½" at the left to accommodate this.

- Double space all text including **Works Cited** (or, if you are using it, **Works Consulted**).
- Title page: All information should be double spaced and be centred both horizontally and vertically. Include, in this order, title (with all significant words capitalized), and your name. In school, add your course and section and your teacher's name. At work, find out what is normal practice.
- Use common sense and consistency in setting up your headings. If you are given specific instructions, follow them.
- For format of quotations, parenthetical references in the text, and individual entries in **Works Cited** or **Works Consulted**, see the appropriate sections above.
- For the list of references at the end of your report, start a new page and type **Works Cited** (or **Works Consulted**), centred, and continue to double space.

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