

MLA and Other Writing Notes for ENG 251

When analyzing the text itself, you will quote short phrases, possibly even longer passages to show examples of the things you are explaining and/or to support your main points when completing cultural analysis. Anytime you use actual words from the work, you must use quotation marks. If you are quoting three or fewer words, and it is clear that the words are from the text, you do not have to include an in-text citation, but you still place the words in quotation marks.

Type in 12-point Times New Roman (regular type) font. Note that Times New Roman is not the default font in Word 2007, so you will need to change the font style and size.

Double-space the entire paper, including the heading, any block quotations, and the works cited page.

The heading of your paper will begin at the left margin. Do not place the heading in a header.

An example of an MLA heading for a formal writing assignment is as follows:

John Wayne
Professor Miller
English 299, Section 4
14 September 2000

The heading for most of my classes varies somewhat from this format:

Name
Course
Assignment
Date

The date will be the date you turn in the paper (the due date). Use the above format for the date.

The title of your paper will be centered on the line directly under the heading (still double spacing). It should be typed in regular font (NOT placed in quotation marks, all-caps, bolded, underlined, larger...). You should give your paper a creative, catchy title that gives your reader a clue of its content.

Each paragraph will be indented about a 1/2 inch or 5 spaces (you may hit tab once). Quotations should be blocked if you are quoting 4 or more lines from the original text. Each line of the blocked quotation is indented 10 spaces (tab twice, 1 inch).

Your page numbers should be at the top right margin (in a header) with your last name in front of each page number. All pages, including the Works Cited will be numbered.

The period will come before the parenthetical citation in a block quotation: xxx. (52)

Do not use quotation marks with a block quotation.

The period follows parenthetical citation with a regular quotation: Xxx" (52).

Introduce all quotations. Begin sentences with your own words, working quotations into your sentences smoothly.

The list of works cited is always the last page of your essay. It should have the title "Works Cited" centered at the top (NOT in quotation marks, underlined, or bolded).

Your textbook is considered an anthology (a collection of works by various authors) when preparing your works cited page.

Use the format for a work in an anthology.

Format:

Last Name, First Name. "Poem Title." *Title of Book*. Edition. Volume. Editors. City of Publication: Publishing Company, date. Page numbers. Print.

(Indent the second line and include the publication medium at the end—Print, Web, etc.)

For web sources, use the following abbreviations when these situations apply:

N.p. for no publisher given

n.d. for no date given

n. pag. for no pagination if the page numbers are not given

You may use a citation service such as KnightSite (<http://www.calvin.edu/library/knightcite/index.php>).

The works cited page must be alphabetized. **All sources used must be cited.** Avoid plagiarism.

Cite secondary sources when quoting, paraphrasing, and summarizing.

On your works cited page, use three hyphens (instead of the author's name) to indicate the same author as the preceding entry.

The first time you mention an author in the body of your paper use his or her first and last name.

After that, use only the last name. Use the last name in parenthetical citation. If you use the same author twice in a row in a paragraph you do not have to cite the author's name the second time; it will be understood.

Cite the author, using his or her last name, in the signal phrase or in parentheses (but not both). Cite the page number in parentheses.

Example:

According to Smith, "xxxxxxxx xxx xxxxxxx xxxxxx xxxxxx" (23).

Vintage collectables "xxx xxxxx xxx xxxxxxxxxxx xxx" (Smith 24).

Once you have cited an author in a paragraph, if the next citation is from the same author, you do not need to use his or her name again. Start over with each new paragraph and with each new author. You do not need to include the author's name, only the page number, if it is clear who the author is. If you use the author's name in the signal phrase you do not have to place it in parentheses too.

Quotations cannot stand alone as sentences; you must introduce them in the sentence of yours in which they are included (begin each sentence with your own words). Examples:

1. Frost shows how "two roads diverged in a yellow wood" (1) symbolize choices made in life.

2. Goodman Brown fights with "Faith at his side" (213) against evil.

3. According to O'Connor, "a good man is hard to find" (103).

4. Stuckey writes, "it was all over when he swung the bat" (52).

5. People once believed that the earth "could not be spherical" (Brown 13).

(Note where commas have been used and where they have been left out in these quotations—these are correct.)

Cite line numbers instead of page numbers for poetry: (4-5).

Cite act, scene, and line for drama: (3.1.23-25).

Cite the paragraph number using the abbreviation par. For electronic sources that include paragraph numbers rather than page numbers.

When a web source has no page or paragraph numbers, try to include the titles and/or author in your sentence rather than using parenthetical documentation.

Use an ellipsis...if the **middle** part is left out of a quotation. An ellipsis is not necessary at the beginning or end of a quotation. Include the ellipsis in brackets [...] to show that it is not part of the original quotation.

If a mistake is made in material you are quoting, note it by typing [sic] immediately following the error. It is not necessary to type [sic] every time if you are quoting extensive dialect.

If more explanation of part of a quotation is needed, such as a definition (or the inclusion of a synonym), or if a word must be included or changed slightly in order to make more sense (such as *he* instead of *I*), or if you must change the verb tense in a quotation to match the rest of your essay, enclose the word(s) in brackets [] to indicate the change. You are not allowed to change the overall meaning of a quotation; changes are only intended to make the quotation more readable.

Titles of shorter works should be placed in quotation marks. Shorter works include short poems, short stories, songs, articles, essays, speeches, episodes of a particular television series, etc. Titles of shorter works should NOT be underlined or italicized when you write about them, although they may be italicized in the index or table of contents of a book. Titles of shorter works (articles, essays (not your own title), short stories, songs, short poems) are placed in quotation marks.

Titles of longer works or works published separately (books, plays, magazines, films, long poems, pamphlets) are italicized or underlined. Titles of essays published as part of a larger work (as in a book or almanac) are placed in quotation marks. Titles of essays published as pamphlets are usually italicized.

When we hand-write, we underline titles of books, plays, movies, television series, album titles, and other longer works.

When we type, we italicize (instead of underlining) these titles in the sentences we write as well as in parenthetical citation and on the works cited page.

Basically, italicizing and underlining mean the same thing concerning titles of works, but current MLA guidelines recommend italicizing when typing.

Titles of speeches and sermons are sometimes italicized, sometimes placed in quotation marks, and sometimes written as plain text.

Do not use contractions; spell out words such as *cannot*, *do not*, and so on.

The correct spelling for *a lot* is **not** *alot*. *A lot* is informal; instead use other words such as *much*, *many*, *most*, or *often*. Use formal language instead of casual, conversational language when writing essays.

Use a variety of sentence structures and sentence beginnings. Avoid writing in passive voice. Use active voice as much as possible.

Use present tense when writing about literature. (Things *happen* in the story, poem, or work.)

Avoid writing "I," "we," "us," and "you." Use third person.

Remember to use present tense when writing about literature, even if the story itself is told in past tense.

Be sure to cite sources for all information that is not common knowledge, i.e. all information you had to look up.

Be sure to give credit for both the words and ideas of others that you use in your papers. Not citing these sources constitutes plagiarism.

Cite the editors as authors when you use the information they have written in your anthology (as in the author biographies).

Use single quotation marks for quotations within quotations.

Be sure to use credible sources from literary and scholarly databases, journals, and/or books.

Do not use essays and websites that are not written by reputable people. Avoid looking to websites that offer free essays or websites that advertise cheating. Often these sources are not very good. If you do not know who the author is, how can you tell if you are using a credible source? These essays also tend to have numerous errors and some incorrect information. Using this information without documenting it in your paper is considered plagiarism, which is a punishable offense that could affect you the rest of your life (see Academic Honesty Code). Documenting sources that are not credible does not look good either.

Do not capitalize the *l* in American literature, unless you are referring to the name of the course.