This handout is designed to give you quick assistance with using MLA rules for undergraduate papers at WCU. The information presented here is based on the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (7th ed.). We strongly encourage you to consult this handbook for detailed questions. You can find a copy in the Writing and Learning Commons (Belk 207), at Hunter Library’s Reference Desk, or you can purchase your own copy from any bookseller. There are also many examples and detailed explanations on the MLA website: <www.mla.org>.

**What is MLA?**
“MLA (Modern Language Association) style” represents a consensus among teachers, scholars, and librarians in the fields of language and literature on the conventions for documenting research. MLA is used primarily in liberal arts and humanities, but it is common in many classes at WCU. MLA guidelines cover more than just citations; MLA provides rules on the structure, style, and look of a paper, including headings, tables, and research methods.

**Formatting Your Paper** (See *MLA Handbook* 115-122)

- Type and print your paper on 8 ½-by-11-inch paper.
- Set your word processor to double-space the entire research paper, including quotations, notes, and the list of works cited. Always choose a legible font (preferably Times New Roman) in which the regular type style contrasts clearly with the italic, and set it to a standard size (preferably 12 points).
- Leave one space after a period or other concluding punctuation mark, unless your instructor prefers two spaces.
- Except for page numbers, leave margins of one inch at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text.
- Indent the first word of a paragraph one-half inch from the left margin. Indent set-off quotations one inch from the left margin. See the handbook for information on when to offset quotations.
- Do not use spaces to set margins. Use the margin feature of word.
- Align your text to the left; do not justify

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<thead>
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<th>Title Page</th>
<th>The Content/Body</th>
<th>Sources page</th>
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The Title Page

- Do not include a title page for your paper unless specifically requested. Instead, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name, your instructor’s name, the course number and the date on separate lines, double-spacing between the lines.

The Content/Body

- Double space between the lines of the title, and double-space between the title and the first line of the text.
- Do not italicize, underline, or put your title in quotation marks or boldface. Nor should you type it in all capital letters.
- Do not use a period after your title or after any heading in the paper
- Create a header in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. Type your last name before the page number, as a precaution in case of misplaced pages.

Headings

- See above (Title Page and Content/Body)

Tables and Figures

- Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the parts of the text to which they relate.
- A table is usually labeled Table, given an Arabic numeral, and titled. Type both label and title flush left on separate lines above the table, and capitalize them as titles (do not use all capital letters). Give the source of the table and any notes immediately below the table in the caption.
- To avoid confusion between notes to the text and notes to the table, designate notes to the table with lowercase letters rather than with numerals. Double-space through-out; use dividing lines as needed.
- Any other type of illustrative visual material – for example, a photograph, map, line drawing, graph, or chart – should be labeled Figure (usually abbreviated Fig.), assigned an Arabic numeral, and given a caption: “Fig. 1. Mary Cassatt, Mother and Child, Wichita Museum, Wichita.”
- A label and caption ordinarily appear directly below the illustration and have the same one-inch margins as the text of the paper.
- If the caption of a table of illustration provides complete information about the source and the source is not cited in the text, no entry for the source in the works-cited list is necessary.
Rules for Works Cited List (See MLA Handbook 123-211)

NOTE: Good research requires you to select your sources carefully and read them closely. Start by finding reliable, relevant sources. Develop an understanding of your topic, build your source list, and then start writing. Remember, the research always comes first! All sources should be included in a list at the end of your paper.

- Center the title Works Cited at the top of the list, and then double-space to start your first entry. Double-space each entry. (See MLA Handbook 130)
- The first line of each entry is flush with the left margin. The second line and any subsequent lines are indented ½ inch. Use the MS Word Format Paragraph function to create hanging indentations.
- New with the 7th edition, every entry includes the publication medium, for example; Print, DVD, and Web. Pay attention to its placement, especially in electronic entries. (See MLA Handbook 136, 148, 185, 194)
- Only one letter space follows periods.
- Every entry ends with a period, including electronic entries.
- Capitalize each word in the titles of articles, books, etc, but do not capitalize articles (the, an), prepositions, or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title or subtitle. (See MLA Handbook 86)
- Use italics (instead of underlining) for titles of larger works (books, plays, movies, magazines) and quotation marks for titles of shorter works (poems, articles) (See MLA Handbook 88)
- Corporate authors are organizations. Omit any A, An, or The from the name and also multiple names, and inc. etc. If the corporate author is also the publisher, in place of a publisher’s name write Author. (See MLA Handbook 156) See 248–49 for a representative list of publisher name abbreviations.
- To cite a work by a corporate author, you may use the author’s name followed by a page reference. It is better however to include a long name in the text, so that the reading is not interrupted with an extended parenthetical reference. When giving the names of a corporate author in parentheses, shorten terms that are commonly abbreviated: “Natl. Research Council 15”. (See MLA Handbook 224)
- To cite a work from a periodical in an online database, list the author’s name, the title of the article, the name of the periodical, the series number or name, volume number, issue number, date of publication, inclusive page numbers (if possible). Use n. pag. If pagination is not available), the title of the database (italicized), the medium of publication (Web) and the date of access (day, month, and year). (See MLA Handbook 192)
- You should include a URL as supplementary information only when the reader probably cannot locate the source without it or when your instructor requires it. (See MLA Handbook 182)
- If you present a URL, give it immediately following the date of access, a period, and a space. If a URL must be divided between two lines, break it only after the double slashes or a single processing program to do so. If possible, give the complete address, including http, for the specific work you are citing. (See MLA Handbook 182)
- It is necessary to list your date of access for electronic sources because web postings are often updated, and information available on one date may no longer be available later. (See MLA Handbook 185)
- Entries appear on the Works Cited list in alphabetical order by the author’s last name, or if there is no author, by the first letter of the first meaningful word in the title. (See MLA Handbook 131)
- Sources: Scholarly sources are easier to cite than informal ones. If you are having trouble with a citation, look for a more reputable source. For any academic paper, use library resources. Don't just "Google" your topic.

Documentation within Your Paper (See MLA Handbook 214-225)

- Documentation within your research paper gives parenthetical credit for ALL direct quotations, paraphrases, and summaries of facts, ideas or opinions. What appears inside the parentheses (called an in-text citation or a parenthetical citation) functions as a short, specific address that corresponds to the complete address on the Works Cited list. The position of the in-text citation, usually at the end of the pertinent sentence, shows your reader exactly what information has come from the source and from which page, or its alternative. See 214–19 in the Handbook.
- An in-text citation includes the last name(s) of the author(s) and page number(s), or the alternative(s), from which a quotation, paraphrase, or summary is taken.
- If there is no author, use a shortened version of the title. Article titles and titles of other short works should be in quotation marks. Book, journal, and Web site titles should be italicized.
If you are referring to an entire source, or if a source has only one page, page numbers are unnecessary. If you are using a selection within a larger Web site with no page numbers, choose an alternative such as section name/number or designated paragraph number (do not count unnumbered paragraphs). See Electronic Sources with Authors and Electronic Sources without Authors.

Once you have cited a source, if you refer to that source again without citing any other source, you may simply put page number(s) in parentheses. This guideline applies only to consecutive citations of one source.

If you are using more than one work by an author, include the title of the work, or a shortened version of a longer title in parentheses.

If you introduce an author/title within a sentence, you need to include only the page number(s) in parentheses. See Author Mentioned in Text and Pages in Parentheses.

Page numbers, or their alternative, are always provided parenthetically.

For a source with three or fewer authors, list the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation.

For a source with more than three authors, et al. is used to signify there are three or more authors or editors and it follows the first author’s last name.
Source List Examples
Below are the basic formats and examples of sources often used in research papers.

Books (print) (See MLA Handbook 148-180)

Books by a Single Author


Books by Two or Three Authors


Books by More Than Three Authors


OR


Two or More Books by the Same Author


NOTE: Works by the same author are arranged alphabetically by title (exclude A or The when sorting).

Books by Corporate/Non-Profit Authors


NOTE: Corporate authors are organizations. Omit any A, An, or The from the name. If the corporate author is also the publisher, in place of a publisher’s name write Author.

Anonymous Books, Including the Bible


Later Editions of Book


Edited Book with Selections by Different Authors (to cite editor or compiler)


NOTE: You will use this entry only if you are citing the editor or compiler (comp.). If you are citing an individual author within an edited anthology, use work in collection of writings by different authors below.

Work in Collection of Writings by Different Authors (to cite an author)


NOTE: The editor/compiler’s name is included but after the title of the anthology. A translator’s name comes after the title of the piece.

Books in a Series (See MLA Handbook 170)


A Multivolume Work (See MLA Handbook 168)


Article in Encyclopedia or Other Reference Work (See MLA Handbook 160)


Author’s Work Translated or Edited by Another (See MLA Handbook 164)


Periodical Articles (See MLA Handbook 136-47)

Article in Journal with Volume and Issue Number (applies to most scholarly journals)


NOTE: "50.4" indicates the volume and issue numbers of the journal in which the article is found.

Article in Journal with Issue Number Only


Signed Article in Monthly or Weekly Magazine


Anonymous Article in Monthly or Weekly Magazine


Signed Article in Daily Newspaper


NOTE: The plus (+) sign indicates that the article continues on subsequent pages.

Anonymous Article in Daily Newspaper


Editorial or Letter to the Editor in Daily Newspaper


Film Review

Government Publications (See MLA Handbook 174)


NOTE: In the Senate entry, each set of three hyphens followed by a period (---.) stands in for the name in the previous entry, in this case, United States and Cong. GPO stands for Government Printing Office, the publisher of many government documents.

Non-Print Sources and Unusual Print Sources (See MLA Handbook 193-211)

NOTE: You must include the medium in which you viewed/found the source.

Television or Radio


Sound Recording or Individual Song


Film or Video Recording

**Performance**


**Musical Score or Libretto**


**Painting, Sculpture, or Photograph**


**NOTE:** N.d. indicates there is no date available.

**Interview**


Hudson, Michael. Personal interview. 20 Apr. 2009.

**Map or chart**


**Cartoon**

Advertisement


Lecture, speech, address, or reading

Adams, Catherine Ann. “From Carl or Moloch to Beyond: Communism and Capitalism in Allen Ginsburg's *Howl.*” Graduate Research Symposium of Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, NC. March 2013. Reading.


NOTE: Choose an appropriate ending descriptor such as Lecture, Keynote Speech, Reading, Address, etc.

Course lecture (adapted using MLA guidelines; see both format and examples below)

Instructor’s last name, instructor’s first name. “Title” (if available). Course prefix, code and section. College or University, location. Date. Course Lecture.

Harris, Darby. "Plasma Membranes and Plasma Membrane Potential." Biology 293 01. Western Carolina University. Stillwell, Cullowhee, NC. 10 July 2013. Course Lecture. (in MLA)

Original manuscript or typescript


NOTE: MS = manuscript, i.e., hand-written; TS = typescript; N.d. = no date available.

Letter, memo, or e-mail


Cahill, Daniel J. Memo to English dept. fac., Brooklyn Technical High School, New York. 1 June 2000. TS.

Harner, James L. Message to the author. 20 Aug. 2002. E-mail.

NOTE: TS = typescript.

**Legal source**


**Pamphlet**


**MLA: Electronic Information** (See *MLA Handbook* 181-193)

When citing websites and other electronic sources, your goal is to provide enough information to help your reader find them. While MLA previously recommended including URLs at the end of all citations, the 2009 guidelines now recommend including a URL only if finding the source requires it or if your instructor requires it. Most web sources are retrieved more easily by searches using titles and authors’ names, rather than by typing in lengthy http:// addresses. Remember, higher quality websites provide more useful information. Further, because web sources can disappear, always download important web information to your files for easy retrieval during the research process.

**Basic entry for documents from web sites**

- Name of author, compiler, director, editor, narrator, performer, or translator
- Title of work (italicized if work is entire and independent; enclosed in quotation marks if work is part of a larger work)
- If pertinent, title of official Web site (italicized), for example *CNN.com*, *New York Times*, and *Google Maps*
- If pertinent, version or edition, for example Vers. 1.2 and 13th ed.
- If available, publisher or sponsor, for example Cable News Network, New York Times, and Google; if not available, use N.p. (Note that a comma follows the publisher; otherwise, all entries end with a period.)
- Date of publication (day, month, and year); if no date, use n.d.
- Medium of publication (Web)
- Date of access (day, month, and year)
- If your instructor requires a URL address, place the complete http:// address within brackets < > and end with a period.

See the following example, which includes the optional URL.

Works without authors


Entire websites


Home pages


Articles in online scholarly journals, including editorials and reviews


NOTE: In the entry above, 7.4 stands for the volume number (7) and issue number (4).


NOTE: In the entry above, the Michigan Family Review is published by volume (11) only.


NOTE: If no page numbers are available, use n. pag.

Documents from an online database (includes all Hunter Library databases)


Web. 5 June 2008.

NOTE: In the entry above, 10.3 stands for the volume number (10) and issue number (3).


**NOTE:** If no page numbers are available, use n. pag.

**Online government publications**


**NOTE:** Follow the same guidelines as print government publications. However, instead of ending with Print as the publication medium, replace it with the title of the Web site, followed by Web as the publication medium and by date of access.

**Articles in online newspapers, magazines, and news networks**


**Letter to editor**


**Maps**


**E-mail communications** (See *MLA Handbook* 204)

Boyle, Anthony T. “Re: Utopia.” E-mail to Daniel J. Cahill. 21 June 1997. E-mail.

Harnar, James L. E-mail to the author. 20 Aug. 2002. E-mail.
Digital file (exists on your computer independently of Web or CD-ROM/ DVD-ROM, for example, PDF file, Microsoft Word file, JPEG file, MP3 file, etc.) (See MLA Handbook 210)


In-Text (Parenthetical) Citations (See MLA Handbook 213-231)

Author and pages in parentheses

- This point has already been argued (Tannen 178-85).

NOTE: The period follows the in-text citation.

Author, shortened title, and pages in parentheses

- One’s death is not a unique experience, for “every moment we have lived through we have also died out of into another order” (Frye, Double Vision 85).

NOTE: MLA includes the title, or a shortened version of it, to identify the exact work by Frye when Frye has two or more works in the Works Cited.

Author mentioned in text and pages in parentheses

- It may be true, as Robertson maintains, that “in the appreciation of medieval art the attitude of the observer is of primary importance” (136).

- In the late Renaissance, Machiavelli contended that human beings were by nature “ungrateful” and “mutable” (1240), and Montaigne thought them “miserable and puny” (1343).

- In his Autobiography, Benjamin Franklin declares that he prepared a list of thirteen virtues (135-37).

Two or three authors or editors

- “Poetry, like any art, requires practice” (Behn and Twichell xi).

- The idea of a writing center is worth debating, analyzing, and reflecting upon (DeCiccio, Rossi, and Cain 26-27).

More than three authors or editors

- “In cultures whose religion, unlike Christianity, offers no promise of an afterlife, a name that will live on after one’s death serves as the closest substitute for immortality” (Abrams et al. 3).
Note: et al. is used to signify there are three or more authors or editors and it follows the first author’s last name.

No author, only title available

- International espionage was as prevalent as ever in the 1990s ("Decade").

- A presidential commission reported in 1970 that recent campus protests had focused on “racial injustice, war, and the university itself” (Report 3).

Work by a corporate author

- By 1992, it was apparent that the American healthcare system, though impressive in many ways, needed “to be fixed and perhaps radically modified” (Public Agenda Foundation 4).

- A study prepared by the United States Department of State defined terrorism as “premeditated, politically motivated violence against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents, usually intended to influence an audience” (par. 16).

Electronic sources with authors: The author’s name is usually sufficient, but if the source provides additional cues such as section headings/numbers, internal page numbers, or paragraph numbers, also make use of those.

- William J. Mitchell’s City of Bits discusses architecture and urban life in the context of the digital telecommunications revolution.

- Beethoven has been called the "first politically motivated composer," for he was "caught up in the whole ferment of ideas that came out of the French Revolution" (Gardiner, screens 2-3).

- “The debut of Julius Caesar,” according to Sohmer, “proclaimed Shakespeare’s Globe a theater of courage and ideas, a place where an audience must observe with the inner eye, with the inner ear” (par. 44).

Electronic sources without authors: Use a shortened version of the title. If two sources have the same title, include additional information to distinguish them. See “Snowy Owl” example below:

- In fresco painting, “the pigments are completely fused with a damp plaster ground to become an integral part of the wall surface” (“Fresco Painting”).

- In winter the snowy owl feeds primarily on small rodents (“Snowy Owl,” Hinterland), but in spring it also feeds on the eggs of much larger waterfowl, such as geese and swans (“Snowy Owl,” Arctic).

Literary and religious sources: For prose sources such as novels and plays, cite the page number, if available, from the edition you are using but also include other pertinent identifiers that would be consistent for all editions, such as a chapter and/or section. For religious verses, verse plays and poetry, omit the page number and cite by appropriate division(s) and line.

- In A Vindication of the Rights of Women, Mary Wollstonecraft points out how “women who, not led by degrees to proper studies, and not permitted to choose for themselves, have indeed been overgrown children” (185; ch.13, sec. 2).

- A Biblical passage that demonstrates the mythical quality of prophetic visions comes from Ezekiel, who describes “four living creatures,” one with the face of a man, a second with the face of a lion, the third with the face of an ox, and the fourth with the face of an eagle (New Jerusalem Bible, Ezek. 1.5-10).

Long quotations: More than four typed lines of quoted prose are indented one inch from the left-hand margin as a double-spaced block. No quotation marks are used.
Margaret Wheatley describes how the new physics is changing our perceptions of the world:

Something strange is happening in the quantum world. No longer is there a lonely void. Space everywhere is now thought to be filled with fields, invisible, non-material structures that are the basic substance of the universe. We cannot see these fields, but we do observe their effects. They have become a useful construct for explaining action-at-a-distance, for helping us understand why change occurs without the direct exertion of material "shoving" across space. (48)

**NOTE:** In a long quotation, parentheses stand outside the final period.
Plagiarism (See MLA Handbook 51-60)

Plagiarism is representing the words or ideas of someone else's as one's own in any academic exercise. Whether intentional or unintentional, plagiarism can result in an "F" in the course and/or expulsion from the University as well as other financial sanctions. WCU's Academic Integrity Policy (http://academicintegrity.wcu.edu), the Western Carolina University Code of Student Conduct (<http://www.wcu.edu/WebFiles/PDFs/WCU_Code_of_Student_Conduct.pdf>), and your instructor’s syllabus outline the reporting and resolution process, and the various sanctions for plagiarism.