

MLA

This page is updated to *MLA* 8th edition.

****In discussion posts, there is no control guaranteeing the hanging indent required for Works Cited. I appreciate those of you who have tried to solve this creatively and hope Canvas hears our woe. Do not forget to use hanging indents when you are uploading essays or extra credit work.

Highlights from the *MLA* and other treacherous issues including tagging, inclusive numbers, and other hazards

How often should you cite?

You must clearly document the source of the ideas and the words in your writing, but you don't want to clutter your papers with endless interruptions. Some students mistakenly believe that a citation must follow every sentence that refers to material from a source.

When only one sentence is drawn from a source, place the citation at the end of that sentence. By writing carefully, you can distinguish your own ideas from those that come from sources.

SAMPLE TAG

According to Alvin Toffler, in order to save the "nuclear family" in America, we would have to "forcibly drive women back into the kitchen" and prohibit the use of contraception (*Wave* 210-11). I disagree with Toffler since most women in our society - not to mention a good many men - would oppose such reactionary measures.

SAMPLE PARAPHRASE

Toffler explains further that our current energy supply, still mainly based as it is on fossil fuels and nuclear power, is consumable and centralized; it's a profitable commodity to sell and control (*Wave* 132-38). *Wave* is mentioned only because this Works Cited includes two different books by Toffler.

When you clearly indicate indebtedness to a source, one citation can usually suffice for an entire paragraph of summary: If your source is clearly mentioned in the text, you may omit his/her name when you parenthetically cite the appropriate pages.

SAMPLE BIBLIOGRAPHY ENTRIES

N.B. In the newest *MLA* handbook (8th edition), a key change occurs for works cited: for entries that include page numbers, the number(s) are now labeled with p. or pp. (see page 46 of handbook).

Example: Leachman, Julianna. "Faulkner's Dirty Little Secret: I am Temple Drake." *The Faulkner Journal*, vol. 27, no. 2, Fall 2013, pp. 3-22.

The *MLA*, 8th edition, identifies the following items as the core elements of any works cited entry Author. Title of source. Title of container, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

Fill in these slots with any information you can find about your source, but if an entry (such as a book with no editor or an article with no listed author) does not have all of these elements, simply leave them out.

Sources you will encounter frequently are books by a single author, websites, articles accessed through an online database, and films. For more detailed information on these or for instructions on citing other types of sources, see the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed.

A book by a single author

Lee, Harper. *Go Set a Watchman*. Harper, 2015.

(this book does not have a container/other contributor/version/number/location so those elements have been left out)

An story in a collection with two editors

Erdrich, Louise. "The Flower." *The Best American Short Stories of 2016*, edited by Junot Diaz and Heidi Pitlor, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016, pp. 73-85.

An article on a website

"July 2016 was Earth's Warmest Month on Record." *The Weather Channel*, 11 Aug. 2016, weather.com/news/climate/news/july-2016-warmest-global-temperature-record

(no author was listed for this article. The article title is the "source" and the website itself is the "container")

An article from an online database

Fenstermaker, John. "Hemingway's Modernism: Exploring its Victorian Roots." *South Atlantic Review*, vol. 76, no. 3, Summer 2011, pp. 77-92. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/43739124 ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#) ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

(note that when listing a URL, do not include <http://>) ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#) ([Links to an external site.](#))[Links to an external site.](#)

A Short Story from an Anthology

Howells, William Dean. "Editha." *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, edited by Paul Lauter, concise edition, Houghton Mifflin, 2004, pp. 1445-54.

(note that titles of short stories, essays, articles, and poems are always placed in quotation marks, while book titles [including anthologies] are always italicized)

A Film

The Great Gatsby. Directed by Baz Luhrmann, Warner Brothers, 2013.

Key participants such as the director and/or screenplay writer or actors are included after the name of the film in the spot where “other contributors” would be included for a book.

If you wish to highlight the contribution of one individual in particular, however, their name can be placed in the spot where the author’s name would usually appear.

For example: Mulligan, Carey, performer. *The Great Gatsby*, Warner Brothers, 2013.

Two (or more) works by the same author

In the case of two works by the same author, list alphabetically, but only list the author's name with the first entry. For the following entries, use three hyphens and a period where the author's name would appear (as in the *Sanctuary* example below).

Faulkner, William. *As I Lay Dying*. Vintage, 1985.

---. *Sanctuary*. Vintage International, 1993.

Inclusive Numbers—1.4.3

For a range of numbers through ninety-nine, provide the second number in full:

3-4 11-13 22-49 88-99

In the case of larger numbers, provide only the last two digits of the second number, unless more are necessary:

95-102 104-05 394-402 924-1,004 1,005-06 1,607-773

Ellipsis—1.3.5

An ellipsis consists of three periods spaced out:

Correct . . . Incorrect ...

McCarthy always provides specific details: “Billy took the stub of chalk from the patchkit and circled the leaks in the tube . . . then walked it down till it was dead flat” (32)

(The source would appear in the Works Cited as follows: McCarthy, Cormac. *Cities of the Plain*. Knopf, 1998.)

If language is omitted at the end of the sentence—perhaps dropping the next sentence too—the ellipses requires 4 periods: the first period of the four serves effectively as a period,

signaling the words that have been dropped completed a sentence. This “period” is followed by the 3-period ellipses (see above. Correct: “And so the story will go on forever. . . .” not “And so the story will go on forever” or “And so the story will go on forever”

Quotation Marks—1.3.1

Quotations are effective when used selectively. Keep all quotations as brief as possible, quote only words, phrases, lines, and passages that are related to your topic.

1. Use quotation marks around a word or phrase when 1) used in someone else's sense. 2) used in a special sense. 3) Purposely misused.

Example: A silver dome concealed the robot's “brain.”

Example: Their “friend” brought about their downfall.

[1.3.8]

1. Use quotes for a translation of a foreign word or phrase.

Example: *Texere* means “to weave.”

[1.2.2]

Use quotation marks for titles of stories and poems published within larger works, essays, and articles:

“Vanquished by a Different Set of Rules: Labor vs. Leisure in William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*” (journal article)

“Vanquished by a Different Set of Rules: Labor vs. Leisure in William Faulkner’s *Absalom, Absalom!*” (journal article)

[1.3.7]

Quoted material is generally preceded by a colon in a compound sentence. The colon signals that the quotation is supporting the explanation in the sentence that introduced the quote.

Example: Thoreau makes the planting of beans an extended metaphor about poetry: “I was determined to know beans” (121).

This is especially important when using critics. If the source of the quotation is not clearly identified within the paragraph, the explanatory clause must include the source. Just as the quote needs to be clearly credited, the paraphrases of a critic’s explanations must also be clearly credited.

Thoreau makes the planting of beans an extended metaphor about poetry: “I was determined to know beans” (121). James Aldridge maintains in his article about “The Bean Field” chapter that this single announcement serves as the core of *Walden* (212). He goes on to identify several similar examples of the work’s “lyrical harvest” and the “oscillation between the mundane and the aesthetic” (213-14). In so doing he argues for *Walden* as a “writing manual” (215-18). Though I think Aldridge compiles a strong case for the book’s potential to teach writing in the guise of farming, I think he fails to show how the economics fits into his reading.

Not fair:

Thoreau makes the planting of beans an extended metaphor about poetry: “I was determined to know beans” (121). It is easy to see how this quotation is the core of *Walden*. It is interesting to note that in many other places Thoreau is creating a writer’s manual by shifting back and forth from ordinary farming language to artistic images turning *Walden* into an instruction manual for writers (Aldridge 212-18).

A comma or nothing at all is used when the quotation is an integral part of the sentence.

Example with a colon:

In the early 1910s, the poet Pound had struggled with the related question of how to best capture the on-rushing of faces witnessed in a Paris metro station: “I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy” (qtd. in Ruthven 52).

Example with comma:

As Harry notes in his defense of his pulp fiction practices, “if Venus returned [today] she would be a soiled man in a subway lavatory with a palm full of French postcards” (115).

Double quotation marks are used when a quote is incorporated into a text. Use single quotation marks around quotations within those quotations:

“The instructor walked into the room, stood before the class, and said, ‘Good morning.’”

[1.3.2]

Use block quotes when any quotation takes up more than four lines in your text. Introduce the quote with either a colon or punctuation that makes grammatical sense when combined with the first sentence of the quote. Indent the entire block and do not use quotation marks. If a new paragraph begins within the quote, indent its first line. The in-text citation goes at the end, outside of the ending punctuation. Following the block quote, your text should be flush left (no paragraph indent) if it is a continuation of your paragraph above the block quote; otherwise indent the new paragraph as per usual (See Chicago 13.22).

At the conclusion of *Lord of the Flies*, Ralph, realizing the horror of his actions, is overcome by

great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

In *Moll Flanders* Defoe follows the picaresque tradition by using a pseudoautobiographical narration:

My true name is so well known in the records, or registers, at Newgate and in the Old Bailey, and there are some things of such consequence still depending there relating to my particular conduct, that it is not to be expected I should set my name or the account of my family to this work. . . .

It is enough to tell you, that . . . some of my worst comrades, who are out of the way of doing me harm . . . know me by the name of Moll Flanders. . . . (1)

*Note that the lines here are very short because the formatting works differently--check out the handbook p. 77 to see these examples in context of the book's margins.

Miscellaneous

Square Brackets

[1.3.6]

Square brackets [] indicate words that you, as writer and editor, insert into a quote to clarify it or make it grammatically correct.

The school board candidate then concluded: "Our efforts in this direction [improving graduation rates] have never appeared more promising.

The bracketed phrase clarifies the vague reference to "this direction" in the original source.

He [Quentin] needs him [Shreve] to understand.

[3.6]

To distinguish levels of subordination, use brackets around a parenthesis within a parenthesis. *Correct:* "The sect known as the Jansenists (after Cornelius Jansen [1585-1638]) faced opposition from both the king and the pope."

Incorrect: (after Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638)) *Incorrect:* [after Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638)]

Centuries and Decades—1.5:

Spell out centuries in lowercase letters.

Correct: the twentieth century *Incorrect:* the Twentieth Century

Hyphenate centuries when used as adjectives before nouns.

Correct: eighteenth-century literature *Correct:* nineteenth- and twentieth-century thought

Incorrect: eighteenth century literature *Incorrect:* nineteenth and twentieth century thought

Decades can be written in lowercase (the sixties) or numerically (the 1960s or the '60s). Make sure to be consistent with the chosen style.

Short quotations

Use quotation marks and incorporate quoted material within your own sentence. Short quotations, up to four typed lines of text, should be worked into the fabric of your own language. Make sure a sentence containing a quotation reads fluently and is correct grammatically. Use quotation marks to indicate which words, phrases or passages come directly from a source, as in the following two examples:

Ernest Becker writes often about the control of children: "The process of socialization is characterized by one fundamental and recurring fact: the child's natural urge to move freely forward, to manipulate, experiment, and exercise his own assimilative powers is continually blocked" (58). But when Alcott creates a scene with children they seem unfettered.

Note: The last sentence above makes clear why Becker has been quoted. The source should not just "plop" into your paragraph without a connection/purpose that you have elaborated.

Ernest Becker writes that "the process of socialization is characterized by one fundamental and recurring fact: the child's natural urge to move freely forward, to manipulate, experiment, and exercise his own assimilative powers is continually blocked" (58).

Note: When the introductory phrase ends in "that" you do not use a comma before the quotation.

Often, you do not need to include a whole sentence from a source if all you want to quote is a word or phrase. Select quoted material carefully so that you control the sentence. However, even if you are just excerpting a phrase there should be no question if it yours or your source's.

Pointless quoting

Sources are excerpted when the phrasing or idea is necessary for you to explain your argument. Sources are not excerpted because it is easier than thinking of something to say.

Pointless: Jane Wilder notes that "Eudora Welty has written stories and novels" (23).

Useful: Jane Wilder was the first to refer to Eudora Welty as "an angel of Gawd" (24) a phrase that has too easily been applied to fiction that does not in the least suggest angelic origins.

Basic grammar tip

Note where the punctuation is placed with quotation marks when parentheticals aren't an issue. Handle colons like semicolons and commas like periods in these situations.

I loved discovering the complexity of Thoreau's "The Bean Field"; in fact, I think it is even better than Emerson's essay "Nature."