MLA Style:
An Introduction

Presented by the ULM Library Reference Department
Session Overview

- What is MLA style?
- General Guidelines
- Quotations/Paraphrasing
- In-text Citations
- Works Cited
- Resources
- Q & A Time
What Is MLA Style?

- A set of rules intended to encourage and maintain clear, concise writing
- Provides guidelines for formatting papers
- Used to create citations for resources
What Is MLA Style?

Primarily used by the liberal arts and humanities, like Art and English, but sometimes used in disciplines like:

- Communication Studies
- Foreign languages and literatures
- Cultural Studies
- Media Studies
Like any style format, it is intended to establish and maintain consistency and quality in research.

It also supports scholarly communication by facilitating documentation, i.e., it demonstrates a common way of citing sources so other scholars can consult the resources you used.
So You Will Use It To...

- Format your paper, including...
  - Margins
  - Spacing
  - Font selection and size
  - Headers/footers

- Guide the style of your paper, including...
  - Quotations
  - In-text citations
  - Voice
General Guidelines

- 1-inch margins on all sides
- Double-spaced
- 12 point font
- Times New Roman or a similar font
  - i.e., something legible and professional
  - Examples: Arial, Century Gothic, or Garamond
General Guidelines

- Page headers
  - Includes page numbers and author’s name
  - May be omitted from first page

- Only one space following ending punctuation of sentences

- Indent first sentence of paragraphs $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from margin – MLA recommends simply using the Tab key (versus spacing over manually)

- Use an active voice whenever possible
MLA papers don’t typically need cover pages — so unless your professor asks for one, it’s not necessary to create one.

MLA papers do need a heading in which you list your name, your professor’s name, the class, and the date — this is typically double-spaced.
Andrew Carnegie: The Father of Middle-Class America

For decades Americans couldn’t help but love the red-headed, fun-loving Little Orphan Annie. The image of the little girl moving so quickly from poverty to wealth provided hope for the poor in the 1930s, and her story continues to be a dream of what the future just might hold.

The rags-to-riches phenomenon is the heart of the American Dream. And few other people have embodied this phenomenon as much as Andrew Carnegie did in the late 1800s and early 1900s. His example and industry caused him to become the father of middle-class America.

Andrew Carnegie can be looked to as an ideal example of a poor immigrant making his way up to become leader of the capitalist world. Carnegie was born into a poor working-class
Guidelines: First Page

- After the heading, double space down and center the title of your paper.

- The title of your paper should not be in quotation marks, underlined, italicized, or in all capital letters.

- Titles within your title should have quotation marks or italics as needed.
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Professor Elaine Bassett

English 106

3 August 2009

Andrew Carnegie: The Father of Middle-Class America

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Guidelines: First Page

Examples of titles within titles:

- The Function of Time in Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse*
- Sexuality in Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily”
- Race and Race Relations in Baraka’s “Dutchman”
- “As kingfishers catch fire”: the Poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins
When you’re writing a research paper, you’re going to have to work other people’s research into your own, in order to:

- Demonstrate the validity of your point of view
- Inform your audience of what research has been done on the topic
- Show your audience how your point of view fits into what’s been done
Quotations/Paraphrasing

- There are two ways of incorporating information into your paper — quoting and paraphrasing.

- MLA has guidelines for how to use quotations and paraphrasing in your writing.

- It’s important to understand how these two methods differ.
Quotations

- Quotations are straight from the horse’s mouth – they are the actual words taken from the text, word for word, as they appear in the text itself.

- Quotations can be high impact – the words of an expert that support your argument carry a lot of weight.
Quotations & Quoting

- But including too many quotations is lazy; you’re letting the research do all of the work.

- Sometimes too many quotations looks like plagiarism – you’re using someone else’s ideas as your arguments, rather than as support.

- *You* are supposed to be doing the work; quotations are just tools with which to do the work.
Quotations & Quoting

- There are two ways to quote

- Way #1: direct quotations - include the author’s or authors’ names in the actual text of the sentence:

  Zimbardo notes that “children are totally insensitive to their parents’ shyness” (62).

Author’s name in the sentence
Quotations & Quoting

- Direction quotations do not allow for change – a direct quotation is, word for word, identical to the way it appears in the original text.

- The original text **MUST HAVE QUOTATION MARKS** around it.

  Zimbardo notes that “children are totally insensitive to their parents’ shyness” (62).

The quotation marks show where the author’s words begin and end, distinguishing them from YOUR writing.
Indirect Quotations

- Way #2: indirect quotations - **DO NOT** include the author’s or authors’ names in the sentence.

- But you still have to use quotation marks, and you can’t make changes to the text.

Some researchers note that "children are totally insensitive to their parents' shyness" (Zimbardo 62).
A second way you can incorporate information into your writing is to **paraphrase**.

**Paraphrasing** is the act of taking information from a text and either:

- **Summarizing it** – taking a whole paragraph’s worth of information and boiling it down to a few sentences, or
- **Rewording it** - demonstrating your understanding of the information by putting it into your own words, in such a way that is significantly different from the original text.
The paragraph you’re about to see is very long, too long to quote effectively.

One of your options is to summarize the paragraph in your own words, reducing and simplifying.

Remember, though, you’ll still have to do an in-text citation (more on that in a minute).

Summaries do not require quotation marks.
Children are totally insensitive to their parents' shyness; it is the rare child who labels a parent shy. This is understandable, since parents are in positions of control and authority in their homes and may not reveal their shy side to their children. Also, since shyness is viewed as undesirable by many children, it may be threatening to think of parents in these terms. At this young age, the parent is still idealized as all-knowing and all-powerful—not dumb, ugly, or weak.

Paraphrasing: Rewording

- If you aren’t concerned with the length of a section, or you feel you can’t boil the information down without losing something important, you have the option of putting the information in your own words.

- Make sure the info really is in your own words – if it’s too close to the original text, it could be considered plagiarism.
The result of paraphrasing a paragraph may produce a paragraph of equal length, and that’s okay.

What’s important is that the information is actually in your own words and that you give credit where credit is due.

Let’s take a look at an example of rewording paraphrasing, shall we?
Paraphrasing: Rewording

- We’ll start with the original text – look at it closely

- Then you’ll see a paraphrasing of the text – the ideas are retained (that’s a key element of paraphrasing), but notice how different the wording is

- The wording HAS to be significantly different, or it looks like plagiarism

- The more different the wording is, the more you demonstrate how well you understand the info and are able to relay it to the audience
Children are totally insensitive to their parents' shyness; it is the rare child who labels a parent shy [...]. This is understandable, since parents are in positions of control and authority in their homes and may not reveal their shy side to their children. Also, since shyness is viewed as undesirable by many children, it may be threatening to think of parents in these terms. At this young age, the parent is still idealized as all-knowing and all-powerful—not dumb, ugly, or weak.


**REWRITTEN/PARAPHRASE**

Children can be blind to their parents' shyness, and it is rare for a child to view a parent as shy. Because parents are authority figures in the home, their shyness may not be apparent, nor may they act bashfully in front of their children. Furthermore, shyness is often seen negatively by children, making it uncomfortable to think of a parent in such terms. At this age, the parent is still seen as all-knowing and all-powerful, not dumb, ugly, or weak.

A parent’s shyness is not often perceived by a child, and rarely would a child describe a parent as being shy. Because parents are authority figures in the home, that shyness may not manifest, nor may the parent behave bashfully in front of the child. Moreover, shyness is often valued negatively by children, so to think of a parent in this way can be unsettling to the child. The child idolizes the parent at this stage of development.

Quoting vs. Paraphrasing: When?

- Both of these methods of using resources in your writing have many benefits — so how do you decide when to use which?

- Remember: quoting is usually high impact — it’s good for emphasis, when you think taking the words out of the horse’s mouth is the best means of persuasion.

- Quoting is like a punch: your opponent CANNOT ignore it!
Quoting vs. Paraphrasing: When?

- Paraphrasing is better for condensing a lot of information into a more manageable amount (like we saw in the summary example).

- It’s also very useful when the information is very technical or the author’s style is very dry and inaccessible – you can make the info more easy to consume for your audience.

- You can also combine authors’ ideas that are similar into one passage through paraphrasing.

Mmmm... info smoothie
Let’s say you have two authors who say similar things on a topic.

**Zimbardo** writes:
Children are totally insensitive to their parents' shyness.

**Smith** writes:
Children are usually unaware when their parents are shy.
Paraphrasing: More on Combining Ideas

These two passages of information can be blended together (mmmm....info smoothie) to keep your information concise and to prevent unnecessary repetition. So, a paraphrase of their information blended together would look like this:

Some researchers note that children are often ignorant with regard to their parents’ shyness (Zimbardo 62; Smith 45).
Incorporating Info into Your Writing

- It’s **NOT recommended** that you just put quotations in your writing without some kind of preamble or introduction or explanation.

- A good rule of thumb is that every sentence in your writing should contain something you wrote, no matter what.

- Transitions are **important**, particularly between your writing and thoughts, and the quotations.
Incorporating Info into Your Writing

That Zimbardo quotation we’ve looked is a good example of an incorporated quotation, both in the direct and indirect style. Let’s look at them again.

Zimbardo notes that “children are totally insensitive to their parents’ shyness” (62).

Some researchers note that "children are totally insensitive to their parents' shyness" (Zimbardo 62).

Preamble/introduction/transition: it’s simple, but it works. Things flow better!
Incorporating Quotations into Your Writing

And it’s not necessary for every quotation to end the sentence – let’s look at the variants on the Zimbardo quotations again.

Zimbardo notes that “children are totally insensitive to their parents’ shyness” (62), though some authors disagree.

Some researchers note that "children are totally insensitive to their parents' shyness" (Zimbardo 62), but other authors disagree.
Incorporating Paraphrases into Your Writing

Since paraphrases contain your words plus in-text citations, the presence of preambles, introductions, and/or presentations is assumed.

Some researchers note that children are often ignorant with regard to their parents’ shyness (Zimbardo 62; Smith 45).

Some researchers note that children are often ignorant with regard to their parents’ shyness (Zimbardo 62; Smith 45), but there are exceptions.
When using an author’s name in a report or research paper, it is recommended that you use the author’s full name, with titles, the first time s/he appears in the text.

Dr. Phillip Zimbardo notes that children are often unaware of their parents’ shyness (62).

Subsequent references to the author utilize the author’s last name only.
Authority & Introduction: People

- By using the author’s full name with titles, you establish their authority and signal to the reader that this person has expertise.

- It’s recommended that you briefly describe why the reader should care about the author’s expertise — you can mention the author’s affiliation(s), accomplishments, and/or area of expertise — think of it as an introduction.
Dr. Phillip Zimbardo, a professor emeritus of psychology at Stanford University, has studied shyness for several years. Zimbardo has observed that children are often unaware of their parents’ shyness (62).
Dr. Katherine Ramsland, author of several books on crime and a forensic psychologist, has studied criminal behavior. Ramsland, writing on dissociative identity disorder (commonly called multiple personality disorder), has observed that “there is probably no greater divide in the professional world than that regarding the authenticity and diagnosis of this disorder” (“Multiple Personalities”).
Authority & Introduction: Things

- Details, facts, statistics — information in general — also need something to establish their authority — or, at least, their origin

- When incorporating information into your paper, the introduction functions both as a means of establishing authority (or origin) AND as a means of transition
Authority & Introduction: Examples

One research study focusing on student research habits found that students tended to use Google more than the Library’s resources when conducting research (Lowe).

While studying shyness, one researcher discovered that children are often “totally insensitive to their parents’ shyness” (Zimbardo 62).
One area where shyness may not have a significant impact in an adult’s life is in the family dynamic. Being in positions of authority, parents are not often perceived by their children as being bashful (Zimbardo).

Students often utilize counterproductive research habits. They admit to consulting Google rather than library resources (Lowe).
In-Text Citations

- When using someone else’s work in your own – whether you’re quoting or paraphrasing – you’ll need to give credit where credit is due, or document what isn’t your work.

- This is where in-text citations come in – you’ve seen a few already, but we’ll look at them more closely now.
In-Text Citations

- These are used to cite resources within the text.
- Every in-text citation should have a corresponding citation in the Works Cited section.
- If you quote something directly from a text, then the citation will include author’s or authors’ names and page number.
In-Text Citations, Continued

- If a resource doesn’t have an author, then you’ll use an abbreviated version of the resource’s title, in quotation marks (we’ll see an example shortly).

- If you don’t have page numbers, then don’t worry about them.

- In-text citations are also called parenthetical citations.
In-Text Citations, Continued

- If you paraphrase something, the in-text citation will only have to contain the author’s name, but a page number is okay, too.

- If you use the author’s name in the course of the sentence, that name will not appear in the in-text citation.
According to Jones, "Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" (199).
In-Text Citations, Continued

Direct quotation, author not named in sentence

According to some researchers,

"Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time" (Jones 199)

Please note: the period doesn’t come until AFTER the in-text citation. The sentence isn’t complete until the citation is complete.
In-Text Citations, Continued

Direct quotation, author unknown

According to one website, “MLA format follows the author-page method of in-text citation” (“MLA In-Text Citations”).

**The full title of this website is “MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics.”**
In-Text Citations, Continued

- Long quotations (more than four lines) should be set apart (that is, not within the text, but in a block quotation)

- Omit quotation marks

- Indent 1 inch (2 hits to the Tab key) from margin

- Maintain double spacing

- Same rules apply for in-text citation, EXCEPT that the quotation will end with its punctuation, then followed by the citation.
Long direct quotation

One study found the following:

Students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their first time citing sources. This difficulty could be attributed to the fact that many students failed to purchase a style manual or to ask their teacher for help. (Jones 199)
In-Text Citations, Continued

- Even if you’re paraphrasing something, you’ll still need to identify the original source

- In-text citations work for paraphrasing, too

- The in-text citations will include the author’s name and page numbers, if available; remember, if the author is unknown, use an abbreviated version of the title
According to Jones, APA style is a difficult citation format for first-time learners (199).

APA style is a difficult citation format for first-time learners (Jones199).

MLA uses an author-page format in in-text citations (“MLA In-Text Citations”).
The Works Cited page lists the resources you used in your paper – this is where you document those sources.

Remember: if you have an in-text citation, you will have a corresponding bibliographic citation in your references.

References are double-spaced, too.
On the Works Cited page: center the title “Works Cited” (without quotation marks) at the top of the page.

All lines following the first line of the citation will be indented a one half-inch from the margin (also known as a hanging indent).

Italicize titles of long works, like books or journal titles.

Put quotation marks around the titles of short works, like essays or articles.
Works Cited, Continued

- Author names are inverted; that is, last name first

- In resources with more than one author, all other authors' names are first name first, last name last

- If a source does not have an author, it will be alphabetized based on title
MLA requires that citations include the format in which the resource appears – the most common are print and web.

MLA no longer requires the inclusion of URLs for websites, but some professors might require that you include them.

Sometimes you won’t be able to provide all the elements that usually compose a citation; don’t worry, just give what you’ve got.


**Most of these examples were taken from the OWL at Purdue’s MLA website.**


** All of these examples were taken from the OWL at Purdue’s MLA website.**


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Works Cited: Websites


** All of these examples were taken from the OWL at Purdue’s MLA website.**
MLA Resources

- The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue: MLA
  http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/

- Son of Citation Machine: Citation Generator
  http://citationmachine.net/

- EasyBib: Free Automatic Bibliography & Citation Maker
  http://www.easybib.com/
Q & A Time
Thanks for your attendance!

Remember, if you need research help, all you have to do is ask the librarians. You can...

- Visit the Reference Desk, Library 1st floor
- Email us at reference@ulm.edu
- Call us at (318) 342-1071