

MLA 9 Style Guide
Columbia International University
Presented by the G. Allen Fleece Library
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MLA 9 Style Guide for Undergraduate Students

Introduction to MLA

MLA is one of the most common formatting styles for undergraduate students, specifically for those in non-scientific disciplines. The most current edition of MLA is MLA 9. At CIU, the following disciplines will typically use MLA in writing assignments:

- Bible
- Bible Teaching
- English
- Music
- Music Education
- Worship Arts & Music Ministry
- Youth Ministry, Family & Culture

However, students should always make sure to follow their instructor's instructions on what style to use for an assignment, regardless of what the above list says.

MLA Headings

Every paper written in MLA should have a heading in the upper left corner. The heading tells the instructor who the assignment belongs to and which assignment it is. The heading consists of **the student's first and last name, the instructor's name, the course code, and the date**. The heading should be double-spaced, and you should remove the space after the paragraph. Below on the left is an example of a correct MLA heading:

John Doe

Dr. Smith

ENG 1110

August 30th, 2025

John Doe

ENG 1110

Dr. Smith

Persuasive Essay

Although it is not reflected in the MLA 9 Style Guide, some instructors will also accept a heading that contains **the student's first and last name, the course code, the instructor's name, and the name of the assignment**. This is the heading that some students are most familiar with, and your instructor may be willing to accept this heading as an alternative to the one shown above. However, it is always best to follow the most recent MLA guidelines to avoid confusion and to make sure that you are meeting your instructor's expectations. Above on the right is an example of the alternative MLA heading. **Please note that this alternate heading should also be placed in the upper left corner of the page.**

MLA Titles

Every essay written in MLA should have a title. The title should be placed immediately below the MLA heading and centered on the page. **The title is your chance to capture your reader's attention and provides a hint about the contents of your essay**, so it should accurately reflect the contents of the paper that follows and should spark interest in the reader. In short, it is best to refrain from using the title of the assignment as the title for your paper, unless your instructor says otherwise.

In addition to being centered on the page, the title should also appear in normal text, **without being bolded, underlined, or in ALL CAPS**. The title also should not be placed in quotation marks. The title should be properly capitalized and punctuated, and should be in Times New Roman 12 pt font and double-spaced.

Formatting the Paper

Papers written in MLA should be in 12 pt Times New Roman font and double-spaced, unless the instructor requires different specifications. MLA papers should have 1-inch margins on all sides.

MLA papers should not have a title page unless specifically required by the instructor.

The body of your paper should be aligned to the left side of the page. Each new paragraph should be indented, which can be done by pressing the **Tab** key once.

MLA style requires page numbers. Your page number should appear in the header at the top of the page and should contain your last name and the current page number. **Page numbers should also be in Times New Roman 12-pt font**. To insert a page number in Microsoft Word, which is the recommended platform for writing for undergraduate students, go to the banner at the top of the screen and click on "Insert". Then click on "Page Number" and you will see a drop-down menu. Select "Top of Page" and then choose "Plain Number 3." This will insert a page number into the header and will automatically number any following pages. The final step is to insert your last name in the header before the page number and to make sure that the page number is aligned to the right-hand side of the page. The top of your first page should look like the example below:

Doe 1

John Doe

Dr. Smith

ENG 1110

August 30th, 2025

Quoting in MLA

Quoting sources is an important part of writing a paper, but you must do it correctly to avoid plagiarism. When directly quoting a source, which means that you are taking the words straight out of the source and putting them into your paper, **you must ALWAYS use quotation marks**.

- Ellipses (which are three periods together like this: ...) are used when you have omitted part of the direct quote to make it more concise. Place the ellipses where the omitted information appears. Example: “Ellipses are used...to make it more concise.”

It is important to keep all of the original spelling and punctuation of a direct quotation, even if your proofreading software flags it as incorrect. This is most common when you are using a source composed in British English, as there will be some spelling differences.

If you are **paraphrasing** a source (which means that you are not directly quoting but are referencing the author’s words without using the exact phrase), you do not use quotation marks. However, you must still cite the author, source, and page number in an in-text citation after you have finished talking about the paraphrased idea or information. Below is an example of a sentence with paraphrased information from a source:

Richards notes that butterfly migration patterns have slowly changed over time and suggests that this may be connected to changes in the migration patterns of other animals, specifically animals that prey on butterflies, like some birds (72).

Citations in MLA

In-text Citations

When using MLA, you must use in-text citations and provide a works cited page at the end of your paper. In-text citations always provide your reader with **the page number** where the cited information can be found in the referenced work and may also include the author’s name. A standard in-text citation looks like the example below:

“Here is some quoted information from my source” (Johnson 70).

If you have already identified the author in the sentence, you do not include the author’s name in the citation. Below is an example of a case in which you should omit the author’s name from the in-text citation:

As Matthew Johnson states in his article on this issue, “we must seek to understand both sides of the issue” (70).

In this example, because the author has already been established, the writer should not include the author's name in the in-text citation.

If you are citing multiple works by the same author, you must specify which work you are citing in your in-text citation. There are two ways to do this. First, you may reference the work in the sentence where you cite it, as shown below:

In *Prince Caspian*, Lewis's character Trufflehunter states that "I'm a badger, what's more, and we hold on" (173).

During his conversation with Maleldil in Lewis's *Perelandra*, Ransom is struck by the words, "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom" (125).

You may also specify which work you are citing in your in-text citation, as shown below:

Trufflehunter tells Peter that "I'm a badger, what's more, and we hold on" (*Prince Caspian* 173).

Maleldil tells him that "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom" (*Perelandra* 125).

If you do not name the work in the sentence with the quotation, you **must** include the title (or a recognizable abbreviation of the title) in the in-text citation so that your reader knows which work the quotation comes from.

Works Cited Page Citations

The citations that appear on a Works Cited page provide readers with all the information they need to find the source you have used. A full citation should include **the author's name, the title of the work, the name of the publisher, and the publication date**. Depending on the type of work you are citing, there may be other information included. Templates and examples for citations for different types of sources are shown on the following pages.

MLA Citation Examples

Physical book, single author:

- Author's last name, author's first name. *Title of book*. Publisher, date of publication.

- **Example:** Lewis, C. S. *Prince Caspian*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1951.

Physical book with no author listed:

- *Title of book*. Publisher, date of publication.

- **Example:** *The Orchard*. Book Publishing, 1988.

Physical book, two authors:

- 1st author's last name, 1st author's first name and 2nd author's first and last name. *Title of book*. Publisher, date of publication.

- **Example:** Smith, John and Mike Green. *How to be a Human*. Book Publishing, 2021.

Physical book, three or more authors:

- 1st author's last name, 1st author's first name, et al. *Title of book*. Publisher, date of publication.

Important note: "et al." is used in any citation where the work has **three or more** authors. Only the first author listed is cited, and all other authors are not included.

Two or more books by the same author:

- Cite the first book as normal (see "Physical book, single author"). Then cite the next work by replacing the author's name with two hyphens (--). Then cite the title, the publisher, and the publication date as normal.

- **Example:** Lewis, C. S. *Perelandra*. Scribner, 1972.

--. *That Hideous Strength*. Scribner, 1974.

Scripture:

- *The Holy Bible*. Version used. Publisher, date of publication.

- **Example:** *The Holy Bible*. English Standard Version. Crossway, 2001.

Text in a collected work (such as an essay in an anthology):

- Author's last name, author's first name. "Title of essay." *Title of collection*, edited by Editor's Name(s), Publisher, date of publication, page range of entry.

- **Example:** Jones, Anne. "Religion in Fiction." *Essays from Christian Writers*, edited by Mary Williams, HarperCollins, 2018, pp. 84-104.

Article in a journal:

- Author's last name, author's first name. "Title of article." *Title of journal*, volume, Issue, Year, pages.
- **Example:** Jones, Eleanor. "Medieval Literature in the Present Day." *The English Review*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2018, pp. 20-30.

Article in a dictionary:

- "Word looked up." *Title of the dictionary*. Edition. Date of publication.
- **Example:** "Feather." *Oxford English Dictionary*. 3rd. edition. 2003.

Book in a series:

- Author's last name, author's first name. *Title of book*, volume number, publisher, date of publication.
- **Example:** Smith, Greg. *Art and Literature*, vol. 3, Book Publishing, 1980.

Book with an edition statement:

- Author's last name, author's first name. *Title of book*. Edition number, publisher, date of publication.
- **Example:** Greene, May. *Introduction to English Literature*. 2nd ed., Book Publishing, 2008.

Translated work:

- Author's last name, author's first name. *Title of book*. Translated by translator's first and last name, publisher, date of publication.
- **Example:** Chaucer, Geoffrey. *The Canterbury Tales*. Translated by Nevill Coghill, Penguin, 1951.

Multi-volume work:

- Author's last name, author's first name. *Title of book*. Volume number, publisher, date of publication.
- **Example:** Simmons, Iris. *History of Space Exploration*. Vol. 2, InterVarsity Press, 2025.

Important note: When citing more than one volume in a multi-volume work, list how many volumes are in the entire work instead of the specific volume number. If the single volume you are citing has its own title, cite it as its own book without referring to any of the other volumes.

Dissertation or thesis:

- Author's last name, author's first name. *Title of work*. Date of publication. Document type (e.g. "PhD dissertation").

- **Example:** Johnson, Sarah. *Examination of Deconstructive Theory in 20th Century Literature*. 2024. PhD dissertation.

Important note: Dissertations and master's theses do not have to be published to be used as sources, and there is no citation difference between published and unpublished works.

Newspaper article:

- Author's last name, author's first name. "Title of article." *Newspaper name*, date of publication, page.

- **Example:** Brown, Jack. "Turtles No Longer Endangered." *New York Times*, 8 April 2024, p. A21.

Important note: When citing a newspaper that is not well-known, include the city and state in which the paper is published in brackets after the name of the newspaper, like this: *Post and Courier* [Charleston, SC].

Entire website:

- Author's last name, author's first name (or compiler name if available). *Name of site*. Version number (if available), name of sponsor or publisher, date of site's creation, DOI (preferred, otherwise use a URL or permalink. Date of access.

- **Example:** "Holistic Art Encyclopedia." *Art in Context*, Art in Context, 6 Oct. 2024, artincontext.org/.

A page of a website:

- Author's last name, author's first name (if known). "Title of specific article or page." Then cite the rest of the information following the instructions for citing an entire website. If the website name is the same as the publisher, only list it once.

- **Example:** du Plessis, Alicia. "'Mona Lisa' by Leonardo Da Vinci - Facts about the 'Mona Lisa.'" *Art in Context*, 1 Aug. 2023, artincontext.org/mona-lisa-by-leonardo-da-vinci/.

An image (including a photograph, sculpture, or painting):

- Artist's last name, artist's first name. *Title of work*. Date of creation. Institution and city where work is housed. *Name of the website*, website link. Date of access.

- **Example:** Da Vinci, Leonardo. *Mona Lisa*. 1503. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France. *Art in Context*, <https://artincontext.org/mona-lisa-by-leonardo-da-vinci>. Accessed August 18, 2025.

Important note: If the cited work is **only** available on the Internet, give the name of the artist (last name, first name) and the title of the work, then insert the citation for the website where the work can be found (see "Entire website").

Article in an online journal:

- Author's last name, author's first name. "Title of the article." *Journal name*, volume number, issue number, year of publication, URL. Date of access.

- **Example:** Jacobs, Martha. "Sacrificial Love in Secular Literature." *The English Review*, vol. 14, no. 2, 2010, www.englishreview.com/Sacrificial-love-in-secular-literature/.

e-Book:

- This is the same as a citation for a physical book, but you will insert "E-book" into the citation after the author and title.

- **Example:** Lewis, C. S. *Prince Caspian*. E-book, HarperCollins Publishers, 1951.

Database sources:

- In the CIU library databases, there will almost always be a button on the side of your screen that will provide you with a citation for the source if you click on it. This button should appear at the top of the page when you select a source and will look like a quotation mark, like this: ". Selecting this button will give you a menu where you can select "MLA" from the list of available citations, then simply copy it into your Works Cited page. Always double check that all the information in the generated citation is correct.

When formatting the Works Cited page, you should **continue to use the same font, font size, and line spacing as the rest of the paper**. Center the words “Works Cited” at the top of the page, then begin the list of works on the next line. The items on the Works Cited page should appear in **alphabetical order**. *At CIU, some instructors may ask you to list the Bible first, regardless of alphabetical order. When in doubt, always check with your instructor to confirm what their expectations are.*

To list the works alphabetically, **use the first word that appears in the citation**. This will typically be the author’s last name, but when there is a citation with no author listed, you will use **the first word in the title of the work** (which will be the first item listed in the citation) to determine where in the list to place the work. Below is an example of proper alphabetical order:

Carpenter, Humphrey. *J. R. R. Tolkien: A Biography*. Houghton Mifflin, 2000.

L’Engle, Madeleine. *A Wrinkle in Time*. Ariel Books, 1962.

Lewis, C. S. *Prince Caspian*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1951.

The Orchard. Book Publishing, 1988.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House in the Big Woods*. Harper & Brothers, 1932.

Each citation should be formatted with a **hanging indentation**. This is different from the indentations that you will use for the rest of the paper. While a normal indentation indents the first line and then leaves the remaining lines flush with the left side of the paper, a hanging indentation leaves the first line flush with the left side of the paper and indents all following lines. Below is an example of a hanging indentation:

West, Jacob. *The Butterfly Effect: A Hypothetical Study of Time Travel, Changing the Future, and Meddling in the Past*. Book Publishing, 2035.

A hanging indentation can be inserted into the text by highlighting the text you want to apply it to and right-clicking. Select “Paragraph” from the menu that appears. In the “Indentation” section on the next menu, click on the box underneath “Special” and select “Hanging.” This will apply a hanging indentation to the selected text.

Quick Resources

There are many online resources that can also help you with MLA. Some websites will have free citation generators that allow you to put in the information for the work you wish to cite and will generate the citation for you. When using citation generators, always make sure that **all** your information is correct, as the generator will not catch any incorrect information. Below are a few websites that can answer any more detailed questions you may have about MLA style and can help you properly cite your sources.

<https://www.scribbr.com/> (Free citation generator and MLA instruction videos)

<https://owl.purdue.edu/> (Free citation generator and MLA style guide)

<https://www.grammarly.com/> (Contact Kevin Flickner at kevin.flickner@ciu.edu to learn how to sign up for a **free** Grammarly Premium account!)

<https://www.mybib.com/> (free MLA citation generator)

Most of the information provided comes from <https://owl.purdue.edu/>

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