

Augusta University Writing Center

MLA Fast Facts

All information taken from the MLA Handbook, 8th edition (2016)

MLA style was developed to ease reading comprehension of writing in the humanities and some social sciences. The style is published by the Modern Language Association. Scholars and researchers in fields such as English, Theology, and Philosophy use MLA style. The Augusta University Writing Center offers many handouts on MLA style. This one provides a quick list of some basic conventions that are frequently overlooked by writers. Happy writing!

Does font matter?

MLA does not require a specific font, but it asks that you choose a standard font that is easy to read. Common choices are 11- or 12-point Times New Roman or Calibri.

Cover page?

MLA does not require a separate cover page for papers. See our formatting checklist for guidelines on your first page.

Headings?

MLA requires the use of a header that appears on every page of the paper. The header should include your last name and the page number in Arabic numerals in the top right corner. Within the body of the paper, MLA does not encourage or discourage the use of headings; consequently, there are no formal guidelines. If you choose to use headings or subheadings in your paper, be consistent with font choices and style.

Capitalization?

When writing titles of works, capitalize all words except articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, and the “to” in infinitives.

Italics or Quotation Marks?

Long works, such as books, journals, magazines, and entire websites are italicized. Short works or works contained in longer works such as book chapters, articles, web pages, and short stories or poems in a collection appear in quotation marks.

What do I cite?

Cite everything that is not common knowledge or your original idea. This includes summaries, paraphrases, direct quotations, visuals, and statistics.

Use quotation marks to denote direct quotes.

If you quote directly from a source, you must place the quoted material in quotation marks. If you fail to do so, MLA identifies this as plagiarism, even if you include the correct parenthetical citation after the material.

What do I do with long quotations?

If your quotation exceeds four typed lines of prose or three lines of poetry, format the material as a blocked quotation. This means that the quoted material will be set off from the rest of the text by one half-inch indentation.

How do I signal source material in my text?

When you use a source for the first time, include the author’s first and last name and credentials in a signal phrase within the sentence. Example: According to Diane Smith, an Assistant Professor of Psychology at the University of Chicago, stress correlates with early death in women.

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Last revised 10/2016