**MLA Style Guide Basics**

**What is MLA Style?**

The **M**odern **L**anguage **A**ssociation (MLA) developed a style guide for academic writing. Part of the style guide deals with standardized ways to document the writer’s source materials.

MLA provides guidelines for the creation of a bibliography (called a “Works Cited”

page) and the corresponding parenthetical (within the text) citation.

**Why is it Important that I Cite Sources?**

As a writer, it is your responsibility to give proper credit to your sources. It is

also very important that you give this credit in accordance with MLA style. If you fail to give proper credit to a source, you have committed plagiarism.

**Plagiarism—What is it? How can I avoid it?**

**What is plagiarism?**

If you have not given proper credit to your sources, you have committed plagiarism. Essentially, it is like you are lying to your reader. You have used someone else’s ideas without telling your reader where you took it from.

Whether you have intentionally tried to pass off someone else’s ideas as your own or, through careless research, you unintentionally “forgot” to cite a source, the charge is plagiarism.

**How can I avoid plagiarism?**

Basically, any idea or fact that you received from a source needs to be cited. Any idea or fact that is common knowledge does not need to be cited. For example, facts like the earth rotates around the sun or Abraham Lincoln was assassinated while in office are common knowledge and would not have to be cited.

**Works Cited Page**

**What is a “Works Cited” Page?**

A “Works Cited” page is the name that MLA gives to a bibliography. It is a listing

of all of the sources you cited in the body of your paper.

Here are a few things to keep in mind about the “Works Cited” page:

1. The “Works Cited” page is always going to be the last page of your essay or report. You should type the words “Works Cited” and center it on the page.

2. Each entry must be complete and accurate. To see examples of common sources in correct bibliographic format click here.

3. Each entry reads like one long sentence. What this means is that it does not matter where the second line begins in an entry; it begins on the second line only because you ran out of room on the first line.

4. The second and subsequent lines are always indented five spaces.

5. The sources are listed alphabetically by the first word or name of the entry. This first word or name should be what you use in your parenthetical citation.

**Example of a “Works Cited” page:**



**Parenthetical Citation**

**What is Parenthetical Citation?**

Parenthetical citation is when a writer directly puts into the text a note from where he or she got the information. Parenthetical or “in-text” citation allows your reader to know from what source each idea/fact came.

This is how it looks in the text of your paper:

**“In 2007, 37 percent of American adults sought medical information from the internet regarding a health problem they were experiencing before consulting a doctor” (Smith 38).**

In the example above, notice that the author’s name and the page number on which this fact was found are set off from the text within parenthesis. Note also that the punctuation of this parenthetical citation is also important. The reader would understand from this citation that on page 38 of Smith’s book, this fact is mentioned. Furthermore, since the words are contained within quotes, the above example illustrates that this is a **direct quote** from that page.

Here is an example of the same idea presented as an **indirect quote**:

**Instead of going to a doctor right away, a recent study found that 37 percent of**

**Americans are now turning to the internet for medical information (Smith 38).**

See the difference between direct and indirect quotes in the glossary section.

**Glossary**

**Bibliography**—a listing of sources that a student used to write his/her essay or report.

**Citation**—is the identification of a specific idea or quote taken from a source.

**Direct Quote**—is a quote in which the author uses words from a source exactly as they were written. The words are taken verbatim. A direct quote is indicated by putting the words in quotation marks (“ ”). A direct quote must be cited.

**Indirect Quote**—is a quote in which an author paraphrases, or puts into his/her own words, an idea from a source. An indirect quote must be cited.

**Works Cited**—is the name that MLA gives to a bibliography. It is the last page of an essay or report. It lists all of the sources the student has used in his/her writing.

**Examples of Common Forms of Sources for Citation**

\*\*NOTE\*\* The details are important in these citations--the order of the information, punctuation, underlining and quote marks all must be exact.

**Print Resources (Viewed in Print Form)**

**Book by One Authors**

Last Name, First Name. Title. Place of publication: Publisher, Copyright Date.

*Example*:

Jameson, George P. Ellis Island. New York: Icon Press, 2006.

**Book by Two Authors**

Last Name, First Name and First Name Last Name. Title. Place of publication: Publisher, Copyright Date.

*Example*:

Smith, Henry G. and Betty Harmon. Freedom Rides. Chicago: Broad

Shoulder Press, 2006.

**Encyclopedia** (NOTE: The author is usually listed at the end of the article. If an author is not listed, begin the entry with the title of the article.)

Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” Name of Encyclopedia. Edition Year.

*Example:*

Franz, Charlene. “Goat.” World Book. 2006 ed.

**A Work within an Anthology**

Last Name, First Name. “Title of work.” Title of Anthology. Editor’s First Name

Last Name. Place of Publication: Publisher, Copyright Date. Page numbers.

*Example:*

Stevens, Wallace. “Sunday Morning.” Modern American Poetry. Ed. Thomas J.

Hines. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2003. 20-22.

**Newspaper Article**

Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” Newspaper Name Date: page(s).

*Example:*

Blake, Terry. “Attack in Bagdad: Two Marines Dead.” The Plain Dealer 20 July

2006: A1.

**Magazine Article**

Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” Title of Magazine Date: page numbers.

*Example:*

Thomasson, Ronald. “Salt Mines of Lake Erie.” Cleveland Magazine 15 May 2004:

23-25.

**Non-Print Resources (Viewed Electronically)**

**Online Database—Encyclopedia**

“Title of Article.” Name of Encyclopedia. Year. Name of online source. Date

<URL (Persistent link)>.

*Example:*

“Whale Oil.” Encyclopedia Britannica. 2006. Encyclopedia Britannica Online. 23

August 2006 [<http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9076727](http://search.eb.com/eb/article-9076727)>.

**Online Database—Articles provided through Infohio.org Databases**

Last Name, First Name. “Title of Article.” Original Print Source Title. Date. Online source name. Date accessed <URL link>.

*Example:*

Freeman, Gregory A. “Code Alpha: The President is Coming!” American History.

October 2006. Academic Search Premier. 6 October 2006

[<http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail](http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail)?vid=7&hid=1&sid=13275eeb-239a-4ec6- a998-d2dda6dc9f66%40sessionmgr101>.

**Internet Website**

Last Name, First Name. Title of Website. Date last updated. Author (if given). Name of organization that sponsors the site. Date accessed <URL link>.

*Examples:*

 Flannery O’Connor Collect ion . 7 July 2006. Georgia College and State University.

31 August 2006[. <http://library.gcsu.edu/~sc/foc.html](http://library.gcsu.edu/~sc/foc.html)>.

Walker, Gary. “The Effects of Radiation.” Hiroshima Atom Bomb. 15 Mar. 2000. Los

Alamos Research Facility. 14 Oct. 2008. [<http://www.larf.org/hiro/radeffect.htm](http://www.larf.org/hiro/radeffect.htm)>

**TV / Radio Transcript**

“Title of TV / Radio episode or segment.” Title of Program. Broadcast date.

Transcript. Name of Database Used. Date accessed <URL link>.

*Example:*

“Special Edition: The War in Iraq Part II.” CNN Special Report. 5 April 2003.

Transcript. eLibrary. 27 March 2006. [<http://elibrary.bigchalk.co](http://elibrary.bigchalk.com)m>.

**Video Documentary**

Title of Film. Director’s First Name Last Name. Copyright Year. Medium.

Production Company Name. Edition Date.

*Example:*

Finding Harmony. Kent Williams. 2003. DVD. Zen Buddhist Lecture Series Video.

2003