

**A Guide to
Researching and
Writing MLA
Style Essays
And Avoiding
Plagiarism**

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Compiled by the Multi-Academic Center
Southeast Community College

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Writing Research Papers

Many courses at SCC require students to write research essays. These assignments ask students to research published information to help them not only expand their understanding and view of the topic, but also to provide evidence of critical thinking. The most important thing to remember is that a research paper is not a pasting together of other people's writing, but rather a compilation and discussion of a student's own ideas, supported by other sources. Reliable, published sources lend **credibility** to writing and are a great way to **support a writer's ideas**. However, it is important to remember that whenever you gather information from any source, you will need two things: a proper citation at the end of the sentence containing the quotation or paraphrase, and also a corresponding entry in your Works Cited page. See the section "Using In-text Citations" for more details and specific situations.

General Advice as You Begin

- **Start early.** Even though the final paper's due date may seem far away, the research, drafting, and revision process demands much time. Anticipate possible problems and setbacks by beginning early.
- **Be organized.** Keep track of everything—this will save you time and work later on in the project. Many students organize with large file folders to. Record the title of books, magazines, journals, authors, and page numbers in one place. On your personal computer, create a folder to bookmark Internet sources and a file to store any articles that you have downloaded. You may also want to photocopy articles and print Web sources. Keep track of where you found the sources that you reviewed. If you decide later that you want to take a second look at a source that, your notes or files will make it much easier to find the source.
- **Set personal deadlines.** Even if your instructor does not assign "benchmark" deadlines for research and drafts, that does not mean that you cannot set your own. Create deadlines on an academic calendar, spreading them out enough so that you can realistically meet the deadlines. Some students find it useful to post these dates on a note that is visible to them every day—a small note on a computer screen or a door.
- **Ask questions.** If you are confused about the assignment in any way or are unsure of your topic or thesis statement, ask your instructor. Meet with your instructor during his or her posted office hours, or schedule an appointment, to discuss your project.

- **Create a weekly writing schedule.** It is useful to schedule a time to work in the library or at home. Build your project into your weekly schedule. If you have a half-hour between classes or before work, research online or work on the Works Cited page, or submit your paper to Smarthinking.
- **Visit the Writing Center throughout the writing process.** If you live in or near Lincoln, visit the Writing Center as often as you can with revised drafts. You can either visit the Center in person or upload your file to Smarthinking.com, an on-line tutoring service available to SCC students free of charge. Smarthinking is particularly helpful if you do not live in Lincoln or if you are an online student. The Writing Center is open Monday through Friday, and it is located in the lower section of the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the 8800 'O' St. SCC campus. Call the Writing Center at (402) 437-2627 for current hours, to ask a brief writing question, or to make an appointment. You may walk in or schedule an appointment. **Tutoring is now available by appointment at ESQ. See our web page for more information.** All services are free to current SCC students. Please bring a current SCC student ID. Tutors help students at all stages of the writing process—from choosing a topic or research question to polishing a final draft, whether in person or on Smarthinking.com.

To submit your essay on Smarthinking.com for an electronic tutorial:

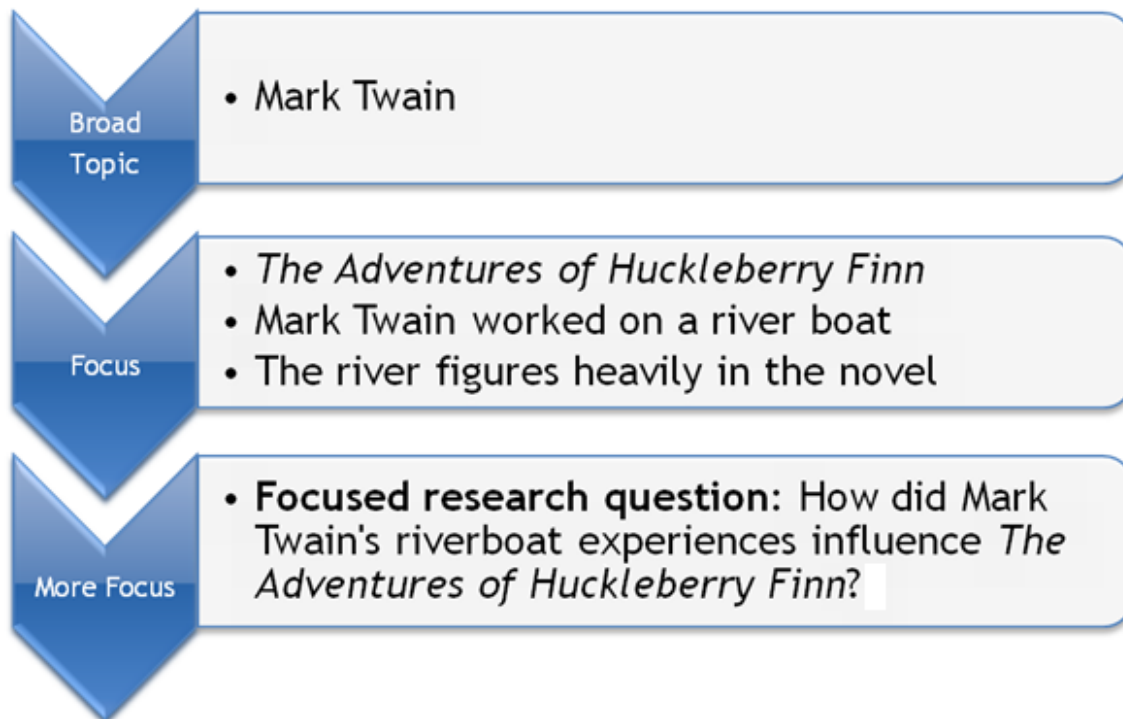
- Save your file in Rich Text Format (RTF), remove any graphics or illustrations, and log onto www.smarthinking.com (Note: the address has only one "t").
- **Username:** Type SCC and hyphen + your first name initial + last name initial + your SCC id number. Use lower case.
 - Example: Roger Brown student id number 353553. Username: SCC-rb353553
- **Password:** southeast
- Tutors will read your work (usually within 48 hours) and return the draft with a report. Feel free to call or drop by the Writing Center if you have questions about Smarthinking.com or your report from Smarthinking.
- For log-in problems, students, not their teachers, should call 402-437-2627. The staff at the Writing Center can help students with most log-in problems, but will need to talk directly to the student.
- Whether you see a tutor in the center or use Smarthinking, visit or submit your essay at least five days before it is due to allow you time to use what you learned from your

tutor and revise your paper. Note that Smarthinking can take up to 48 hours for a response to your essay.

Formulating the Research Question

Beginning the research stage can be a daunting experience. Be sure to discuss any questions you may have about your topic with your instructor early in the process. He or she may have valuable suggestions about possible sources or databases that maybe useful (which may save you time, too!). Also, your instructor may give you feedback about your topic's **focus**. If you are assigned a seven-page research essay on Mark Twain, for example, you will need a focused research question to guide your research. In this case, the topic of "Mark Twain" is too broad unless you are writing a book about his life. Make sure that your topic's focus falls in line with the assigned page-length. Count on the general rule that the shorter the essay length, the more focused your question should be.

Focusing your research question will also help you narrow your research. If the topic were the role of Mark Twain's experience navigating the Mississippi River and the way it may have influenced his writing of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, then the project becomes much more grounded, and you can immediately construct a list of useful sources that would narrow the project from a broad, general search of thousands of references to a much smaller list.



Gathering Research

Once you have a focused research question, it's time to begin researching. There are a number of places to start:

- Internet searches (see discussion of academic Internet sources)
- Library databases
- Traditional sources: books/magazines/newspapers

Give yourself enough time to visit the library in search of information on your topic. While there are many reliable sources that you can access electronically, libraries still contain endless materials that are not available through a general Internet search. SCC students have borrowing privileges at the SCC Library (LRC). In addition, with your SCC ID or a Nebraska driver's license, you have privileges at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Love Library (<http://iris.unl.edu>). Also, check your city library for borrowing policies. Talk to the reference librarians about your paper and ask for suggestions. SCC's library has excellent reference librarians available to answer questions about your research. Be sure to follow the advice mentioned earlier about organizing your research.

Evaluating Sources

When reviewing the possible sources for your paper, consider **reliability and acceptability**. Just because something was published doesn't make it a reliable, truthful, or up-to-date source. *Anyone* can publish, so use critical thinking when evaluating and selecting any type of source, whether online or in print. If you are writing about a medical issue, for example, a book published in 1962 is probably less credible than one published this month. If a source is published by Harvard University Press, it is more likely to have been reviewed by credible leaders in the field than a book published on an individual's homepage.

Reviewing Sources: Frequently Asked Questions

What types of sources are the best to use?

Scholarly journals published by universities, research institutions, and professional organizations tend to be more credible than popular magazines (Ormondroyd). Journals list the sources used in their articles, which you may want to find and read for your own research. In addition, books published by universities or well-known presses are usually credible because they are more likely to be carefully scrutinized by a professional review committee prior to publication.

What do I need to know about the author?

Sometimes the author may be an organization, such as the American Heart Association. Many times, the author is an individual or group of individuals. To evaluate the author's reliability, read the author's credentials, such as degrees, professional memberships or associations, and other publications, occupation, or research experience (Ormondroyd).

What's so important about the date of publication?

The information on many topics, such as medicine or technology, changes rapidly. For comprehensive, credible research, avoid using outdated sources (Ormondroyd). Ask your instructor for guidelines to publication dates regarding your topic.

What type of sources should I avoid?

Beware of writing that contains logic errors, propaganda, and unsupported opinions. Look for comprehensive, well-researched, objective writing. Ask yourself if the facts are verifiable and based on sufficient evidence. Carefully review any ideas that radically vary from other sources on the same topic (Ormondroyd).

What about blogs, Wikipedia, Twitter, etc.?

Many high-profile blogs are becoming more accepted as valid sources. When citing a blog entry, it is critical to know the author and his or her credentials and then evaluate the quality of the source. If the source is valid, make sure you build this credibility into the set up for your discussion of this writer. For instance:

Many bloggers such as _____, who is a law professor writing the professional blog, _____, have suggested that the law should be repealed. "Quote what this blogger said here," said _____.

Most entries in Wikipedia can be edited by anyone, so again pay close attention to who you are quoting and his/her credentials. On the other hand, many of the entries list sources that you might find useful and reliable.

More educational and professional organizations are publishing on sites such as Twitter. Search the web for "Top 100 Edu Tweeters" to read about what is available.

Carefully review the section here on "Evaluating Sources," and apply these principles to all of your online research.



Again, when in doubt, ask your instructor if blogs, Wiki's, or Twitter are an acceptable forms of support in your specific writing assignment.

Are Web pages and online library sources the same thing?

No. Libraries subscribe to services that provide previously published articles online. These online databases, such as First Search and EBSCO, provide electronic versions of scholarly journals and articles. Web search results from Google and other search engines should be scrutinized much more closely than library print articles or online database articles. Unless your instructor asks you to do so, you should never rely solely on general Webpage sources, and in most cases these types of sources should be avoided. However, Google now offers a feature called Google Scholar, which offers academic articles, books, law briefs, etc.

Is the Web page I'm using credible?

Proceed with caution. A page is credible if it is associated with a known, reliable organization, such as a national association or university (look for .edu, .gov, or .org at the end of the Web address). To find out, look at the URL (Internet address) for a link to a homepage. However, be wary of classroom pages. While these may be associated with a university, the essays are often written by other students who are just beginning to learn about their topics. Avoid using these, but take advantage of their Works Cited lists, which may include or even link you to valuable sources that you can use.

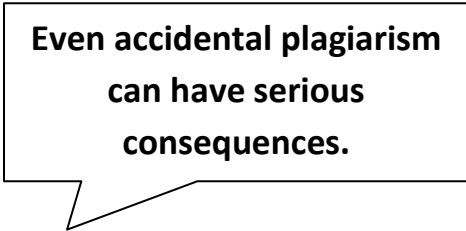
Avoiding Plagiarism

What is Plagiarism?

Plagiarism is taking personal credit for someone else's ideas or work. The *MLA Handbook* defines plagiarism as *intellectual fraud*, which is "using another person's ideas, information, or expressions without acknowledging that person's work" (2.1). It further states: "Passing off another person's ideas, information, or expressions as your own to get a better grade or gain some other advantage constitutes fraud" (2.1). Search the Internet for Simon Fraser's "Plagiarism Pretest." You will be surprised by many of the answers.

Types of Plagiarism

Plagiarism comes in many forms. Sometimes it's deliberate, and sometimes it's accidental. Sometimes students don't take good notes about their sources, or they forget to give credit to a citation. Many plagiarism-related mistakes occur because students are unaware of the rules or misunderstand the terminology associated with writing and plagiarism.



**Even accidental plagiarism
can have serious
consequences.**

Most simply, if you hear or read something and put the words or ideas in your paper, you **must cite it**. Sometimes students will deliberately retype a published article or copy an article from the Internet and pass it off as their own work. Others do the same, but copy and paste several sources together and call it their own. These are examples of plagiarism, and in either case, the student could fail the class or be dismissed from the college. (Students should be familiar with SCC's policy on plagiarism.) It's important to remember that just as technology has made it easier for students to buy or copy papers from the Internet, technology has made it equally simple for instructors to detect plagiarism. Most instructors are skilled at identifying plagiarism and locating the original source. If you are tempted to plagiarize because you are unable to handle your workload, don't. **Talk to your instructor and let her know that you want to do a**

good job on your paper and discuss any possible arrangements, such as turning in the essay late for a point deduction, or even extending the deadline (this is entirely up to your instructor's discretion).

Southeast Community College Policy on Plagiarism and Academic

Dishonesty

The SCC pamphlet on Academic Integrity (available from the Dean of Student Services) states, "Cheating, plagiarizing, or fabricating research are particularly reprehensible in a community dedicated to the advancement and pursuit of knowledge." It goes on to provide some examples of *academic dishonesty*:

- *Cheating*: using or attempting to use unauthorized materials for one's own academic benefit.
- *Plagiarism*: intentionally [or unintentionally] presenting as one's own work the ideas, words, or information of another without citing the reference.
- *Fabrication/Falsification*: inventing or knowingly altering information.
- *Facilitating Academic Misconduct*: assisting another individual in committing actions considered academically dishonest. (*Academic Integrity*)

"Violation of this policy will be reported to Student Services and may result in the following sanctions:"

- a grade of "U" (unsatisfactory) for the exam, paper, or course.
- disciplinary warning or probations notice.
- Suspension.
- expulsion. (*Academic Integrity*)

Also note that reusing a paper which you wrote yourself in another class is considered academic dishonesty. Be sure to discuss any questions about this with your instructor.

A Note on Plagiarism and the Internet

Students can find sites that aid in cheating and provide downloadable essays on the Internet. If you search for "free essays," you will receive thousands of pages that offer pre-written essays on almost any subject imaginable. However, copying whole essays or pasting together passages of essays is plagiarism. **Clearly, if this guide tells you how cheating can be done, then educators are well aware that some students make use of these sites.** It's very easy to do, and some students tend to do it when they are feeling stressed about getting all of their work done

or feel concerned about grades. Chances are, students who plagiarize will get caught, and this will only heighten the anxiety about passing the course. SCC's faculty is very serious about plagiarism, so students should familiarize themselves with SCC's policy on plagiarism. Bottom line: Don't do it.

To enable students to check for plagiarism, SCC subscribes to **Turnitin.com**, which helps detect some types of plagiarism errors in student work. To use Turnitin.com, ask your instructor for an access code. Your instructor may also require you to use Turnitin.com for your assignments and/or check your papers him/herself. However, you will gain a great deal from reviewing your papers for plagiarism before you turn them in. If you need help, you can always visit the Writing Center.

Tools to Avoid Plagiarism

The first step to avoiding plagiarism is familiarizing yourself with some of the basic terms associated with writing and plagiarism. Learning to properly use direct quotes, paraphrasing, summarizing, parenthetical citations, and the Works Cited page provides the best tools for ultimately avoiding plagiarism.

- **Direct Quotes:** A direct quote is a word-for-word replication of something someone has written or said. Direct quotes are indicated by quotation marks. When using a direct quote, be sure to copy every word exactly as it was said or written. After each direct quote, use a **parenthetical citation**. See "Using In-Text Citations."
- **Paraphrasing and Summarizing:** The difference between paraphrasing and summarizing is subtle, and the words are often used interchangeably. **Paraphrasing** entails taking something that someone else said or wrote and putting it into your own words. The Online Writing Lab (OWL) at Purdue University explains paraphrasing as "putting a passage from source material into your own words. . . . Paraphrased material is usually shorter than the original passage, taking a somewhat broader segment of the source and condensing it slightly" ("Quoting"). Paraphrasing provides an excellent way to restate your source's ideas in a style and language that fits your writing style and intended audience. **Summarizing**, on the other hand, concentrates only on the main points of a source. OWL explains summarizing as "putting the main idea(s) into your own words, including only the main point(s)" ("Quoting"). The definitions of

paraphrasing and summarizing may seem to have little difference, but you must approach both in the same way: if you didn't originally think of the idea, no matter how much you rephrased it, **cite it!**



It is also important to note that changing one or two words of a sentence is not sufficient enough to count as “putting it into your own words.”

Writers must significantly alter the construction of the sentence when summarizing and paraphrasing.

- **Parenthetical Citation:** A parenthetical citation is the information in parentheses found at the end of a sentence where outside sources were used. The citation tells the reader about the source that was used. It includes information about the author and what page(s) the information can be found on. There are different ways to cite different sources, so rely on this guide and the *MLA Handbook* for proper procedures.
- **Works Cited:** The Works Cited page is an alphabetical listing of all the sources used (cited) in a paper. MLA Style has detailed rules regarding how various types of entries are recorded and what type of information is required. Spend plenty of time with this guide and the *MLA Handbook* to learn how to create the Works Cited page.

Introduction to MLA

The Southeast Community College Writing Center has compiled this guide to provide a general, easy-to-use reference for what is required in an MLA style essay. The most inclusive source for MLA style questions is the current edition of the *MLA Handbook for Writing of Research Papers*, seventh edition, but this guide is a useful starting point for students completing academic writing that requires the use of MLA style. The SCC Writing Center also provides shorter hand-outs for various aspects of using sources and a Power Point presentation demonstrating MLA. Please stop by the center or check our web page, which is located on the student links page at my.southeast.edu.

Although MLA style is widely known and used on a scholarly level, other formatting styles exist. It is important to realize that MLA style is not *the* style for college and academic writing, but that there are other styles used for various other college departments and courses:

- **MLA** style is often associated with English and other Humanities classes.
- Social Science courses require the use of the American Psychological Association's **APA** style.
- History may require the **Chicago Manual of Style**.
- Your instructor may give you specific instructions on how to cite your sources.

Whatever method your instructor assigns, it is important to be as careful as possible to be accurate and detailed in applying the style to your academic papers. As you will see with MLA style, the placement of periods, commas, and colons all count.

Using In-text Citations

Framing Quotes and Paraphrases

You can incorporate outside information into your papers through several different methods. In this section, you will learn how to use **direct quotes** and **paraphrasing** to integrate useful information into your writing and how to correctly cite the information you use.

Direct Quote

A word-for-word replication of something someone has written or said, indicated by quotation marks.

According to Senator Tom Smith of Nebraska, “The Farm Bill is critical to farmers and should be passed” (CNN).

Paraphrase

Taking something that someone else said or wrote and putting it into your own words.

Nebraska State Senator Tom Smith says that the Farm Bill is necessary and he would like to see Congress pass it (CNN).

The following examples demonstrate many ways to show your reader that the information in your writing comes from an outside source:

Signal phrase (See MLA 6.3 and/or *The Everyday Writer sec. 48*):

- If you introduce your quote with a signal phrase, it alerts your reader that it is no longer you talking, but a source. For example:

**According to Jane Smith,
Jane Smith argues,**

- Your signal phrase can also include information about the author:

Jane Smith, professor of English at UNL, explains,

- If your source does not contain the name of the author, use the title of the article instead (do **not** use the name of the journal, newspaper, Website, URL, etc.). Afterward, you can refer to the writer as “the author” as long as it is clear to your readers which source you mean:

**According to “No Time for Play,”
The author argues,**

One source found that,

- When using a signal phrase, place the page number where the material can be found in parentheses at the end of the sentence. (See *MLA* 6.3).

According to Jane Smith, English is an immersive field of study (64).

As explained by Jones, “Cats are better than dogs” (103).

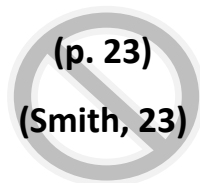
End Tag:

- While the examples above (called “framing”) are the clearest ways to introduce a quote, sometimes the signal phrase is difficult to work into the wording of your writing. In such a case, you can cite the source without a signal phrase by placing the author’s last name and the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence:

English is a very immersive field of study (Smith 64).

The study found that “cats are better than dogs” (Jones 103).

NOTE: There is no period after the last word of a sentence with a parenthetical citation (unless it is a quote over three lines long and blocked). The period always finishes the sentence. Also, note that *MLA* style does not use a comma after the author or “p.” for page numbers.



Tips for Paraphrasing and Balancing Research

- **Use paraphrasing** whenever you can. Your writing will be clearer if you paraphrase your sources instead of forcing another’s writing style to fit into your style.
- **Never write** an entire paragraph containing **only your source’s ideas**. You must always interpret your reference’s ideas and explain how they support your thesis.
- Always **begin and end a paragraph with your own ideas**; otherwise, you lose your voice and credibility, and you will not have a transition between paragraph ideas.
- Always make **your own ideas the majority of your essay**. Think of quotes and paraphrases as extra information that helps build your own ideas.
- See the following table for words you can use for signal phrases. Remember to only use a signal phrase that fits with the context of your essay; for example, do not write “Smith argues” if Smith is not arguing a point.

Sample Signal Phrases:

according to	finds that	says
advises	illustrates	shows
argues that	instructs	suggests
as explained by	observes	states that
as reported by	points out	warns
believes	presents	writes
demonstrates that	recommends	
discovered that	relates that	
emphasizes	reports that	
explains	reveals that	

Quoting and Paraphrasing example:

The following paragraph comes from an article titled “Shenandoah National Park: A Land Reform,” written by T. Edward Nickens and published on pages 64-66 of the June 1999 issues of *Backpacker*. This particular passage occurs on page 64:

And happily for hikers, most of the park’s visitors are content with a meager glimpse, one that comes from behind a windshield or from a scenic outlook. The 105 mile Skyline Drive scenic byway runs along the crest of the Blue Ridge through Shenandoah and draws heavy traffic in spring and fall. Most of these visitors head for the closest picnic table, if they bother to leave their cars, or drive the posted speed limit and see the park in a mere three hours.

The following examples are incorrect. See if you can figure out why.

- Hikers are lucky that much of the park’s visitors are happy with a quick look, one from inside of the car or a short look a few feet from the car on a scenic overlook. The 105 mile road follows the ridge of the Blue Ridge to Shenandoah, which attracts many visitors in spring and fall. The majority of the visitors make a bee-line for the nearest picnic table or never get out of their cars at all. They keep to the speed limit and can see the park in just three hours.

[Why it’s wrong: Notice that the writer follows the original pattern of the writing, changing a word here or there. Either put it all in your own words or quote it word for word and add quotation marks. Also, the passage must end with a citation].

- Hikers are happy that “most of the park’s visitors are content with a meager glimpse,” coming from inside of the car or a quick look a few feet from the car on a scenic overlook.

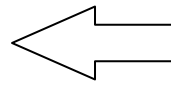
[Why it’s wrong: needs a citation].

- According to T. Edward Nickens, hikers are lucky that much of the park’s visitors are happy with a quick look, one from the inside of the car or a quick look a few feet from the car on a scenic overlook.

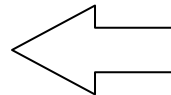
[Why it’s wrong: While the writer mentions the name of the source, the paraphrase is too close to the original phrasing, and it still needs a citation].

Here is an example of how to integrate summary and direct quotes into your essay:

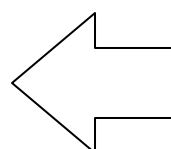
Many people today are missing sights seen by hikers, backpackers, and bicyclists who are attracted to scenes that can only be viewed if they leave the roads. According to T. Edward Nickens, visitors to Shenandoah State Park limit their view of the park to what can be seen from a car (640). These folks miss the incredible flora and fauna found beyond their view deep in the woods where nature avoids the sounds of our industrialized society. Nickens explains that, “Most of these visitors head for the closest picnic table, if they bother to leave their cars, or drive the posted speed limit and see the park in three hours” (64). Like Nickens’ example of the Shenandoah State Park, we can find dozens of similar scenes in national parks across America where people limit their view of nature to that seen in the park’s information centers or by listening to a CD while driving the designated route. Perhaps if more people stepped out of the car and off the concrete, more people would be concerned with the devastation happening to the dwindling acres of wilderness scattered throughout this country.



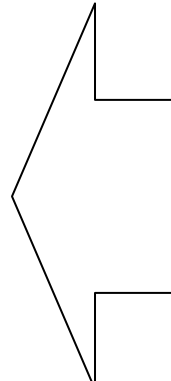
Notice that the paragraph starts out with the student’s own ideas.



Here the introductory phrase is followed by a paraphrase and then the citation.



Here is a direct quotation, again using the framing device, but this time we know from the quotation marks that these are the author’s exact words.



Here the writer compares what Nickens said with his/her own observations. This makes a nice transition into the final sentence. Not only does the student avoid simply summarizing an article about hiking, but he/she is using sources about hiking to set up a point about the devastated wilderness. That is, **the source material helps the author discuss important points about his/her topic**—it is not merely left as a summary of Nickens’ article.

Formatting the MLA Essay

Whether you are writing a research paper or a personal essay, if your instructor requires MLA style, then you will be expected to format according to the rules found in the *MLA Handbook*. The following section summarizes the formatting rules. See the Appendix to this guide for a sample essay, which illustrates MLA style.

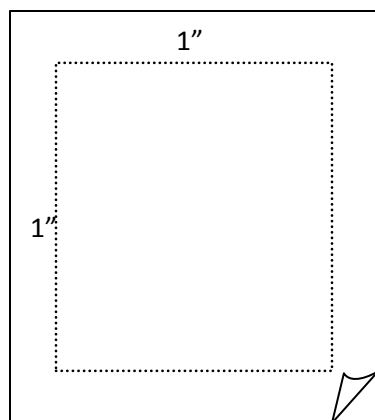
Parentheses containing “MLA” and a section number follow some of the directions listed below and correspond to the *MLA Handbook*, Seventh Edition. Please see these sections for further examples and more detailed directions.

Font and Paper

- Use a standard, easy-to-read 11- or 12-point font such as Calabia, Times New Roman, Arial or Courier. Use the same font throughout the entire paper (MLA 4.2).
- Use only white 8 ½” x 11” paper of good quality (MLA 4.6).
- Use only one side of the paper (MLA 4.6).
- Instructors who accept handwritten work require neatness, legibility, dark blue or black ink, and the use of only one side of the paper.
- Always keep both a printed copy and an electronic copy of your paper (MLA 4.0).

Margins

- Leave one-inch margins at the top, bottom and both sides of the paper (you may need to reset the default margins in your word-processor) (MLA 4.2).
- Align all text to the left. Do not justify the right margins (MLA 4.2).
- Indent the first word of each new paragraph by ½ inch from the left margin (MLA 4.1).



Spacing

- Papers must be double-spaced, including quotations, headings, and the Works Cited page. **Single spacing is not used anywhere in an MLA essay** (MLA 4.2).
- Do not add additional spacing between your heading and your title, your title and your first line of text, or between paragraphs (MLA 4.3). NOTE: If you are using Word 2007, you will need to change settings so that the spacing between lines and paragraphs is double spaced, not 1.5 spaced.

Heading and Title

- In MLA, you do not need a title page.
- Instead of a title page, begin one inch from the top of the first page on the left side

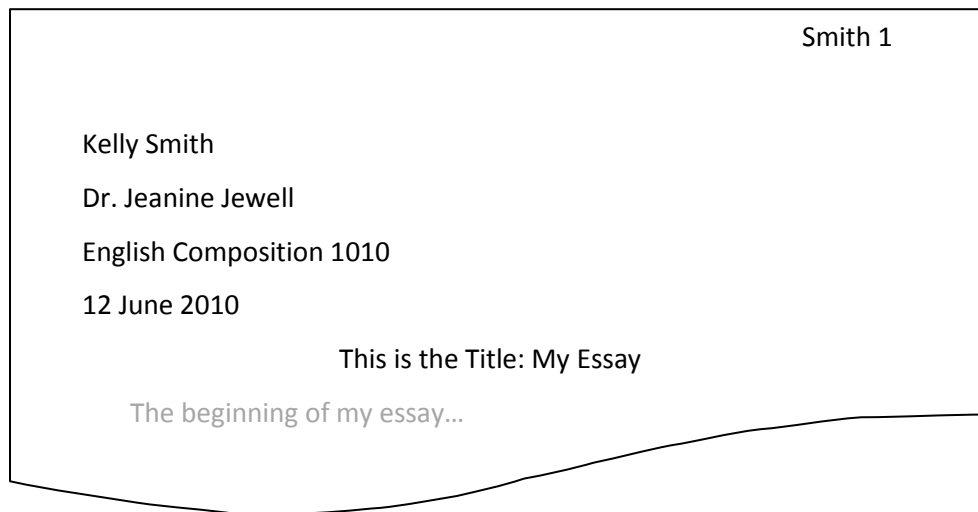
Your name

Your instructor's name

The course

Day, month, year (see MLA 4.3).

For example:



- Do not put your essay title in quotation marks, boldface, italicize, put it in all capital letters, or a different font size (MLA 4.3).
- Do not put a period at the end of the title (MLA 4.3).

- In your title, capitalize the first word, the last word, and all “principal” words (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and subordinating conjunctions). Do not capitalize articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, or the “to” in infinitives when they fall in the middle of a title (MLA 4.3).
- Follow the rules of capitalization and italicize only the titles of books, magazines, films—anything you would normally italicize according to MLA style. For example: Class Issues in Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre*. **Note that that the 7th Ed. discontinues the use of underlining and specifies italics.** (MLA 4.4).

Headers and Page Numbers

- In the upper right corner enter your last name and number all pages consecutively (MLA 4.4).
- Do not use a “p.” before the page number. Do not add a period, a hyphen or any other mark or symbol (MLA 4.4).



See the “Using Microsoft Word 2007” section for detailed instructions on how to set up the format of your paper.

MLA Citations

Overview

MLA citations consist of two parts: the in-text citations and the Works Cited page. Together, in-text citations and the Works Cited page lists the books, journals, interviews, films, and other sources that you directly quote and cite in your text.

In-text citations (also known as parenthetical citations) are the citations found within your writing that alert readers that an outside source has been used. In the example below, the in-text citation (Shelley 114) tells readers that the previous quote was written by Shelly and appears on page 114 of the work written by Shelly and listed on the Works Cited page.

Example #1

The Creature taught himself to be more than just a creature: "While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters" (Shelley 114).

The **Works Cited page** is the last page of a paper and lists all the sources for each in-text citation. The sources listed in the Works Cited page provide much more information that readers can use to find the source themselves. Listed below is an example of the Works Cited entry that corresponds to the previous in-text citation:

Example #2

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein*. New York: Penguin, 1994. Print.

There are guidelines and tips to using both in-text citations and the Works Cited page. For more information, continue reading "Using In-text Citations," "Writing the Works Cited Page," and "How to Create Works Cited Entries."

Why Should I Use Citations?

There are three notable reasons why citations must be used in paper writing. The first reason has to do with *intellectual property*. People who think, research, and write for a living are proud of the work they do, and when they do something original, they consider it intellectual property, and so does copyright law. For someone to use their ideas, words, or research without giving

them credit is equal to theft, both ethically and legally. If you don't give proper credit to referenced sources, you are guilty of plagiarism.

The second reason for using citations has to do with readers, who often become interested in references they find in their reading. Upon reading your essay, they may want to know more about a particular source you used. Therefore, citing your sources is not only the fair and honest thing to do (in respect to the original authors), but it is also a courtesy to your readers. **When readers come across something in your writing that they want to know more about, they can use your in-text citation to direct them to the corresponding entry on your Works Cited page.** From there, they will have all the information they need to gain access to the original source.

The third reason for using citations involves your own credibility, making yours a well researched essay, worth reading. Citing credible sources shows that you have researched your topic and are in your own right somewhat of an expert.

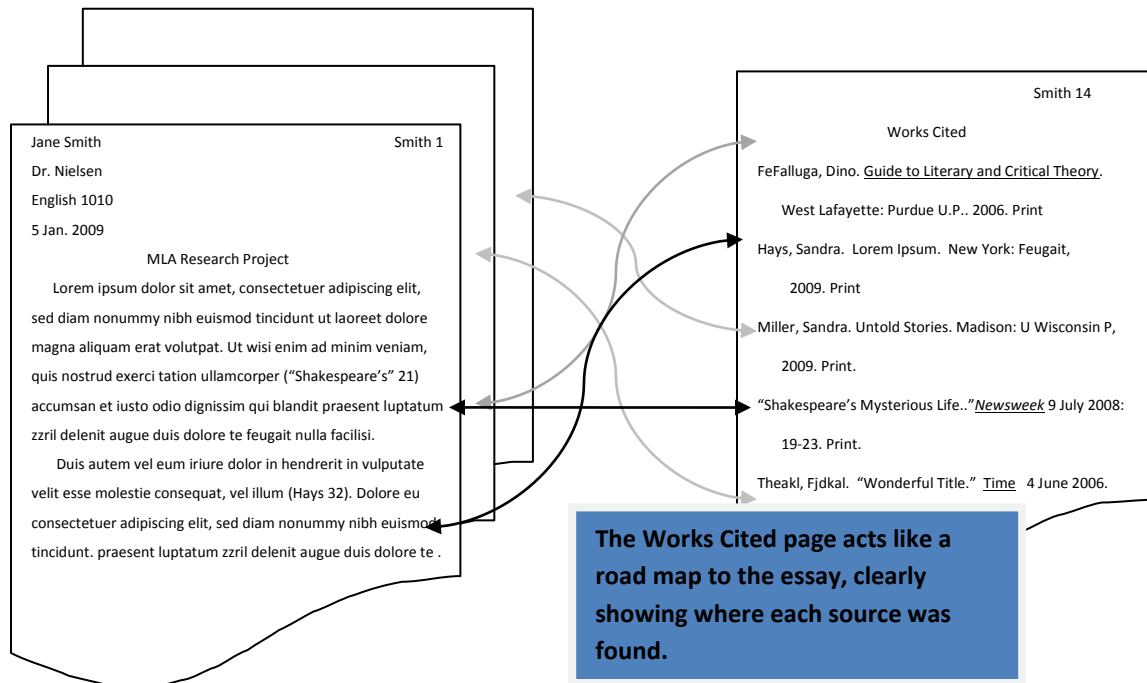
Writing the Works Cited Page

In-text citations can't, by themselves, tell your readers all the information they may want to know. That's where the Works Cited page becomes useful. Every source that you mention within your essay must be recorded on your Works Cited page, even if you paraphrased it. This guide offers plenty of information about the Works Cited page, but you may also find it useful to review section 5 of the *MLA Handbook* or section 48 of *The Everyday Writer*.

For readers to use the Works Cited page, the entries must match the source used and cited in your essay. For example:

According to T. Edward Nickens, visitors to Shenandoah State Park limit their view of the park to what can be seen from a car (640).

If a reader were to look up this source on the Works Cited page, then he/she would look down the list of sources (which is alphabetized), and find "Nickens." Many Web pages do not provide an author, so use the title in the in-text citation to match the first words of its entry in the Works Cited page. One of the goals of the MLA style is to make it easy for readers to find information quickly and efficiently.



Works Cited: Frequently Asked Questions

In what order should my sources appear?

All sources on the Works Cited page should be listed alphabetically. Use the author's last name or the first word of a source to determine which appears first, second, third, and so on. For example, if the author of one source is "Smith," then the source should appear alphabetically by "S." If your source has no author but a title, then use the first letter of the title to determine where it should appear. See the Shakespeare example on the previous page.

Is my Works Cited page a new document?

No. Your Works Cited page is a new page, but not a new document. To create a new page for your Works Cited, go to "Insert" and select "Break" and then "Page Break" to begin your Works Cited on a new page.

How do I title my Works Cited page?

At the top of the page you are using for your Works Cited, center your text and type the words Works Cited in the same font type and size as the rest of your paper. Do not bold, underline, or place in quotation marks.

How do I create a hanging indent?

See page 35: "Using Microsoft Word 2007 to Format MLA Essays."

Is my Works Cited page supposed to be double-spaced?

Yes, double-space the entire page. Do not use extra spaces between the heading and the first entry or between entries.

Do I number the sources on my Works Cited page?

No. List the sources alphabetically.

Organizing Each Source

Each type of source requires slightly different information. For example, books are recorded differently than online journals, and interviews are noted differently than films. Now that you have an idea of how to format the Works Cited page, you can move onto what's included in each entry and where specific information such as the publisher is placed. Since MLA format is very particular about structuring citations, things can seem complicated. Don't be afraid to consult this guide, the *MLA Handbook*, *The Everyday Writer*, your instructor, or the Writing Center for help. Page 33 contains a sample Works Cited page, which shows how your entries would look all together.

How to Create Works Cited Entries

A few important notes:

- The Works Cited page should be a new page in the document, with page numbers continuing from your main essay.
- Center the words **Works Cited** at the top, do not call it a “bibliography.”
- Use the same font as used in your essay. Do not bold “Works Cited.”
- The entire page should be **double-spaced** with no extra lines between entries.
- When writing the Works Cited page, list all entries in **alphabetical order**.
- Note the **hanging indent** in MLA style: That is, the second (+) lines of your entry are “pushed in” ½ inch. This makes it easier for the reader to see the first piece of information in the list. Formatting a hanging indent also makes your editing easier later.
- **In the Seventh edition of *The MLA*, a major change occurs regarding the listing of Web based sources. (See *MLA* 5.6.1). Do not include a URL unless it may be likely that your reader cannot find your source doing a simple web search. When including the URL, place it after the date of access. If an address does not fit on one line, break it up at the double or single forward slashes.**

Please Note: The words “Book,” “Interview,” “Pamphlet,” etc, do not appear as a heading on the actual Works Cited page; they are simply listed here to help you identify which type of documentation to use. MLA does require you to indicate the medium at the end of each entry. See below.

Books:

One Author, Book (See *MLA* 5.5.2):

Last Name, First Name. *Title and Subtitle of Book: Italicized*. Where the book was published: The Publishing Company, the date of publication. **Medium of publication, such as, Print, Web, Television, Radio, CD, Performance.**

Note: The inclusion of media is new in the *MLA* 7th ed.

Note: *MLA* now states that there is no longer a choice in underlining or italics.

No underlining is used for titles. (See *MLA* 3.6.2)

Herrera, Hayden. *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. New York:
Harper, 1983. Print.

Two Authors:

Same style as above, except add “and [second name].”

Note: only reverse the first and last name of the first author.

Mangelsdorf, Kate, and Evelyn Posey. *Choices: A Basic Writing Guide with Readings*. New York: Bedford, 2003. Print.

Three Authors:

Flachmann, Kim, Jane Maher, and Elizabeth Campbell. *Mosaics: Focusing on Essays*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998. Print.

More than Three Authors:

Johnson, Nancy, et al. *All About Essays*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. Print

Cite the first author’s name followed by the phrase “et al,” meaning “and others” in Latin followed by a period. Note the abbreviation used above for a university press.

Article, Essay, or Chapter in an Anthology or Book with Editor (MLA 5.5.6):



Make sure that you list the author of the “part” of the book that you are using, and not the editor’s name. Type “Ed.” for “editor” and always list the page numbers from which the source came.

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of story, poem, article, or essay." *Anthology Title*.

Edition (if there is one). Ed. Name of Editor (First, Last). Publisher Place: Publisher

Name, Date. Page #-page#. Medium.

Note that in the example, the hundred is dropped from the page numbers. 278 become

s78.

Allison, Dorothy. "Gun Crazy." *The Norton Reader*. 10th ed. Ed. Linda Peterson, John C. Brereton and Joan E. Hartman. New York: Norton, 2001. 275-78. Print.

Interviews (MLA 5.7.7):

Interviews may be published, or you might conduct one yourself. For interviews that you conduct, indicate the type of interview after the name of the person interviewed. For published interviews, you will add the title of the interview and the interviewer (if known), other required elements for the type of source (such as magazines), and the medium such as Radio or CD.

Lindely, Richard. Telephone Interview. 12 May 2008.

Otwell, Steven. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 2007.

Smith, Michael. Interview by Ted Koppel. *Nightline*. ABC.

WABC, New York. 12 Jan. 2001. Television.

Tracy, Barbara. Interview. *New York Times* 26 Feb. 2009,

late ed.: B12. Print.

Pamphlets (5.5.19):



MLA indicates to cite a pamphlet like you would a book. Citing a pamphlet like a book can be difficult because much of the information cannot be found. In this example, the place of publication is unknown, so "n.p." is used to indicate the unknown place. Only cite page

numbers in a pamphlet if they are published in the source. Follow the general outline for a book, building in as much information as you can fill in. Such publications will often have no author.

Domestic Mistreatment of the Elderly: Towards Prevention. n.p.:
American Association of Retired Persons, 1987. Print

Print Periodicals: (MLA 5.4)



Note that the title of a work inside a journal or magazine is put into quotation marks, while the name of the journal/magazine is italicized.

Author's last name, First name. "Title." *Name of Journal/Magazine* Volume number. Issue number (year in parentheses if using volume and issue) OR use date if volume and issue are not indicated: page numbers. Medium.

Ficaro, Barbara. "Canterbury's First Dean." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18.3 (1987): 343-46. Print.
Donnelly, Sally B. "Education: Teachers Are Lagging Behind in Logging On." *Time* 27 Sept. 1999: 26. Print.

Online Periodicals (MLA 5.6):

Scholarly Journal: Add medium (web) and date of access. Web addresses are no longer included.

Author's last name, First name. "Title." Name of Journal or Magazine Date published.

Page range only if printed on the screen, otherwise use n. pag. Medium (Web.)

Date of access. **Web addresses are no longer used.**

Koblitz, Neal. "The Case Against Computers in K – 13 Math Education (Kindergarten through Calculus)." *The Math Intelligencer* Spring 2006. n. pag. Web. 19 Feb. 2010.

Periodical (Full Text) Accessed through Library Database (See MLA 5.6.4)

Author's last name, First name. "Article Title." *Name of Journal/Magazine* Volume number, issue number (date in parentheses): page numbers. *Title of database*. Medium of publication (Web). Date of access.

Tucker, Miriam. "Varicella: Rates are Dropping, But it Still Can Kill."

Pediatric News 39.5 (2005): 12-14. *Health Reference Center*.

Gale. Web. 5 June 2008.

Two (or more) Works by the Same Author



Many times you will use more than one work by the same author. To do this, only cite the author's full name the first time, and alphabetize by the title of the work or whatever is in the second position. Use three hyphens followed by a period in place of the author's name in each entry following the first to indicate that you are using the same author.

Allison, Dorothy. "Gun Crazy." *The Norton Reader*. 10th ed. Ed. Linda

Peterson, John C. Brereton and Joan E. Hartman. New York:

Norton, 2001. 275-78. Print.

---. "Every Book is a Lesbian Book." *Salon*. 10 June 1999. n. pag. Web.

5 June 2008.

Professional Website: (see *MLA 5.6.2*)

For works that are nonperiodical (not published daily, weekly, monthly, etc.) and only available on the Web, include the following:

- Author, compiler, director, corporate author, or whoever the page gives credit at the creator/writer. (Note that you might not find this, and you will simply enter the title first).
- Title of the work, italicized if it stands alone. Put it in quotation marks if it is part of a large overall site.
- Title of overall web site, if different from item 2.
- Version or edition, if found.
- Publisher or sponsor of site. If not found use n.p.
- Date of publication. If not found, use n.d.
- Medium (Web).
- Date of your access.

"Advocacy." *ADA*. 2005. American Dental Association. 14 Sep. 2005
Web. 18 Nov. 2008.

Grant, Lindsey. "The Wrimo Report." *National Novel Writing Month*.
The Office of Letters and Light. 12 Jan. 2010. Web. 18 Jan.
2010.

NAIC Online. 29 Sept. 2003. National Association of Investors.

Lecture or Speech: (See *MLA 5.7.11*)

Speaker's Last name, First name. "Title of Speech." Meeting and sponsoring organization.

Location, City and State. Date. Descriptive label, such as Address, Lecture, Keynote speech,

Reading.

Hathaway, Kris. "Federal Health Care Reform." American Association of
Dental Consultants. San Diego. 5 May 2010. Featured Speech.


Film or Video Recording (See *MLA* 5.7.3)

Title of film or video. Dir. Name of Director. Optional to include names of major actors in film here not in the beginning unless citing the contribution of a that director or actor, rather than the film itself.. Distribution Company, Year.

Medium (Film or DVD).

Smoke Signals. Dir. Chris Eyre. Perf. Adam Beach and Evan Adams.

Miramax, 1998. DVD.

 **Note:** *The following page is an example of a Works Cited Page and contains all the entries described above as they would appear on the Works Cited page:*

Works Cited

- "Advocacy." ADA. 2005. American Dental Association. 14 Sep. 2005. Web. 18 Nov. 2008.
- Allison, Dorothy. "Gun Crazy." *The Norton Reader*. 10th ed. Ed. Linda Peterson, John C. Brereton and Joan E. Hartman. New York: Norton, 2001. 275-78. Print.
- . "Every Book is a Lesbian Book." *Salon*. 10 June 1999. n. pag. Web. 5 June, 2008.
- Domestic Mistreatment of the Elderly: Towards Prevention*. n.p.: American Association of Retired Persons, 1987. Print.
- Donnelly, Sally B. "Education: Teachers Are Lagging Behind in Logging On." *Time* 27 Sept. 1999: 26. Print.
- Ficaro, Barbara. "Canterbury's First Dean." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 18.3 (1987): 343-46. Print.
- Flachmann, Kim, Jane Maher, and Elizabeth Campbell, eds. *Mosaics: Focusing on Essays*. Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 1998. Print.
- Grant, Lindsey. "The Wrimo Report." *National Novel Writing Month*. The Office of Letters and Light. 12 Jan. 2010. Web. 18 Jan. 2010.
- Hathaway, Kris. "Federal Health Care Reform." American Association of Dental Consultants. San Diego. 5 May 2010. Featured Speech.
- Herrera, Hayden. *Frida: A Biography of Frida Kahlo*. New York: Harper, 1983. Print.
- Johnson, Nancy, et al. *All About Essays*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. Print.
- Koblitz, Neal. "The Case Against Computers in K – 13 Math Education (Kindergarten through Calculus)." *The Math Intelligencer* Spring 2006. n. pag. Web. 19 Feb. 2010.
- Lindely, Richard. Telephone Interview. 12 May 2000.
- Mangelsdorf, Kate, and Evelyn Posey. *Choices: A Basic Writing Guide with Readings*. New York: Bedford, 2003. Print.
- NAIC Online*. 29 Sept. 2003. National Association of Investors Corporation. Web. 23 Aug. 2008.
- Otwell, Steven. Personal Interview. 11 Nov. 1999.

Smith, Michael. Interview by Ted Koppel. *Nightline*. ABC. WABC, New York. 12 Jan. 2001.

Television.

Smoke Signals. Dir. Chris Eyre. Perf. Adam Beach and Evan Adams.

Miramax, 1998. DVD.

Tracy, Barbara. Interview. *New York Times* 26 Feb. 2009, late ed.: B12. Print.

Tucker, Miriam. "Varicella: Rates are Dropping, But it Still Can Kill." *Pediatric News* 39.5 (2005):
12-14. *Health Reference Center. Gale*. Web. 5 June 2008.

Using Microsoft Word 2007

to Format MLA Essays

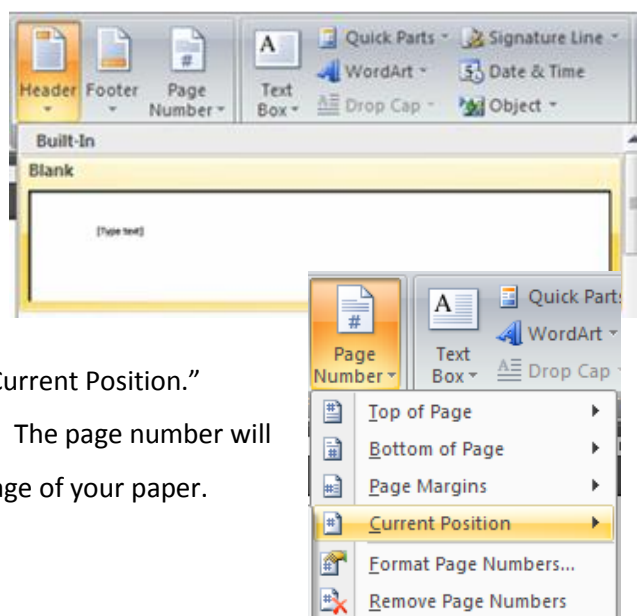
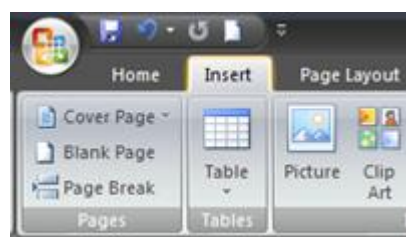
Learning to use a new word processing program can be stressful. Word 2007 has a new “ribbon” system that lays out all the tools you’ll need under categorized tabs, but all the rearranged icons in this new system can be intimidating. With a little practice, however, and the use of this step-by-step guide, you will be able to use Microsoft Word 2007 to format your MLA essay. For those still using Word 2003, handouts are available on the Writing Center web page and in the Writing Center.

Two notes before you get started:

- The toolbar at the top of the screen is now called the **Ribbon**. The **Ribbon** contains each categorized **tab** and all the tool icons.
- To save, print, or open a new document, click on the multi-colored **Office Button** found in the upper left-hand corner of the screen.

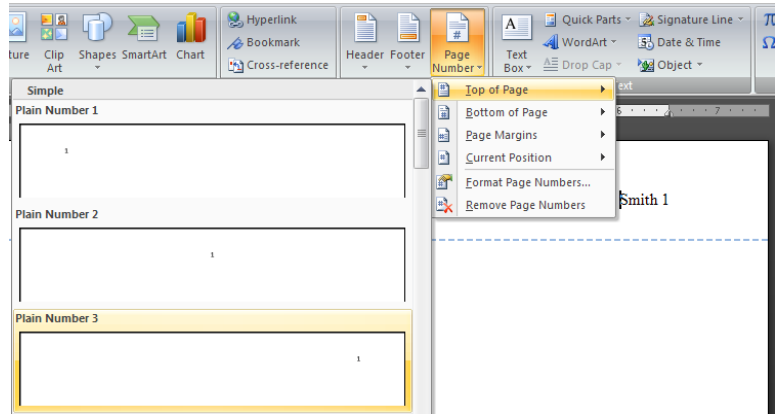
Creating a Header – Method # 1

1. On the ribbon, click the **Insert** tab.
2. Click **Header** in the “Header & Footer” group and select the first option in the list, “Blank.”
3. The header will appear at the top of the page. Type your last name in the area that says “Type Text.” Be sure that the font size and type matches the rest of your essay.
4. Right-align the text (see “Aligning Text” below).
5. To insert the page number, click the **Insert** tab. Click **Page Number**, then “Current Position.” Select the first option, “Plain Number.” The page number will appear after your last name on each page of your paper.



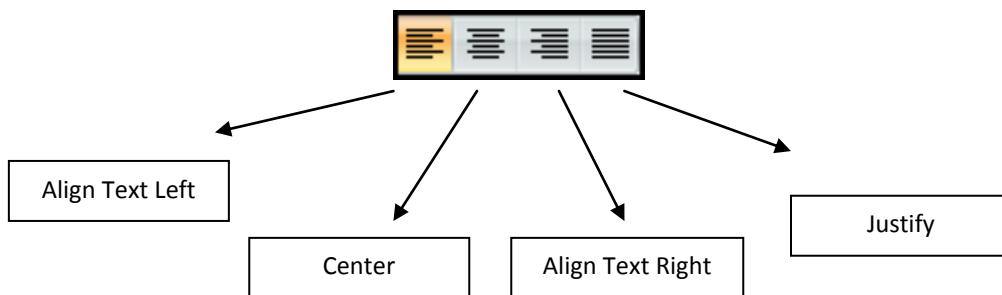
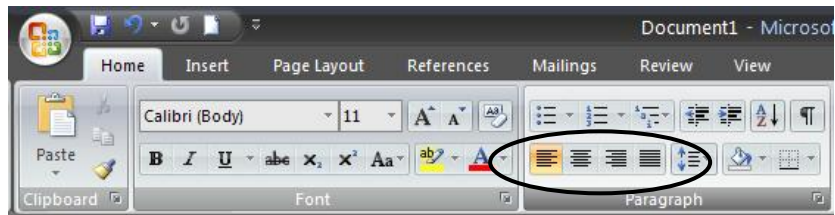
Creating a Header – Method # 2

1. Click on the **Insert** tab.
2. Click **Page Number**.
3. Select **Top of Page**, then click the 3rd option, “Plain Number 3.”
4. Type your last name before the page number.



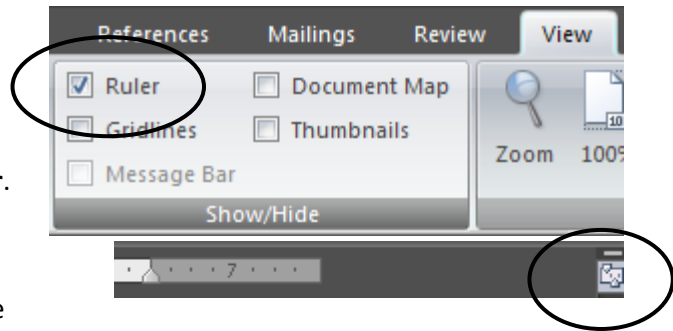
Aligning Text

1. Click on the **Home** tab.
2. Look in the “Paragraph” group for four alignment symbols.
3. Use the guide below to move text as desired.



How to View the Ruler

1. Click on the **View** tab.
2. In the “Show/Hide” group, make sure that there is a check mark next to **Ruler**.
3. The small icon on the far right of the ruler can also be used to show and hide the ruler.



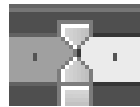
Using the Ruler – What Each Icon Means

Using the ruler to create paragraph indents and hanging indents, rather than using the TAB key, will save you time and frustration when organizing paragraphs in your essay and indentations in your Works Cited page. Review the following information about the **Ruler**, then follow the directions to create indents. Use the guide below to help identify the actions of each icon on the ruler.

First Line Indent – click to drag just this marker by itself.

Hanging Indent – shows where text wraps; click to drag just this marker by itself.

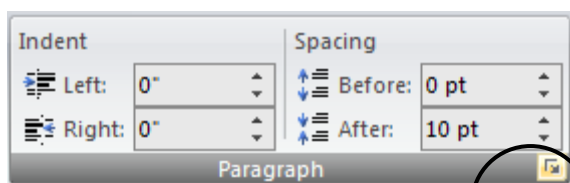
Left Indent – click to drag all three markers at the same time.



Creating a Paragraph indent or Hanging Indent – Method # 1

You can, of course, just use tab; however, using the formatting tools saves time in the long run.

1. Before typing your Works Cited, go to the ruler, drag the **Hanging Indent** button to the right to start a hanging indent.
2. For MLA, indent paragraphs and hanging indents by ½ inch.



Creating a Paragraph indent or Hanging Indent – Method # 2

1. Before typing your Works Cited, click on the **Page Layout** tab.
2. Under the “Paragraph” group, click the little arrow in the lower, right corner to display the Paragraph Dialogue Box.
3. Under the “Indentation” section, click the box under the “Special” category and choose **First Line or Hanging**.
4. Choose “OK” when finished.

Changing the Default Line Spacing

When you open Word 2007, you will notice that your page will have certain default settings that do not match MLA standards. Some defaults (such as line spacing) can be confusing. Follow the directions below before you start writing to eliminate the extra spaces created by the default spacing:

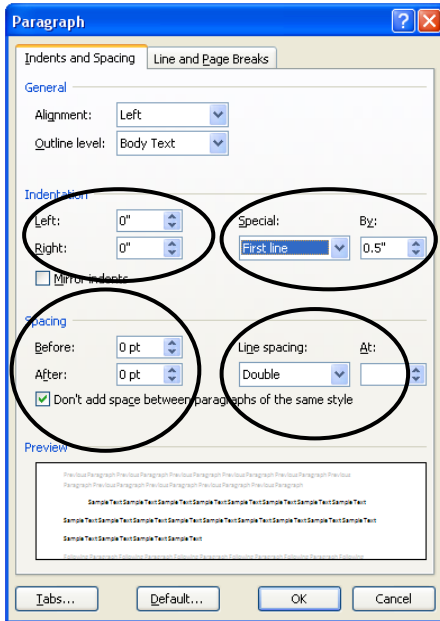
Step # 1

Click on the **Page Layout** tab.

Under the “Paragraph” group, find “Spacing.”

Use the arrows in the box labeled “After” to scroll down to “0 pt.”

Step # 2

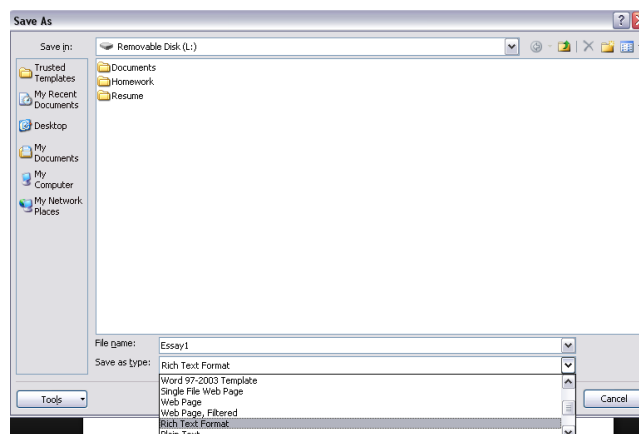
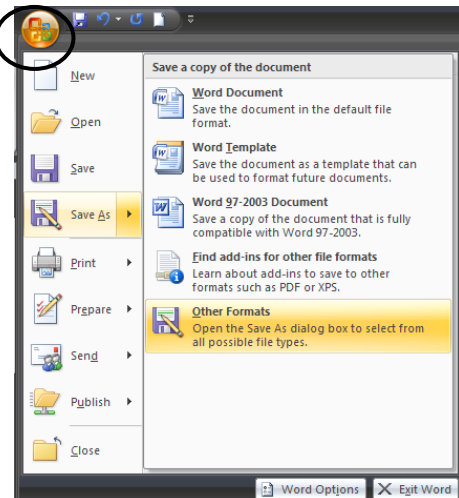


1. Click on the **Page Layout** tab.
2. Under the “Paragraph” group, click the little arrow in the lower right corner to display the Paragraph Dialogue Box.
3. Under the “Spacing” section, click the box under the “Line Spacing” category and choose **double**.
4. Click OK

Saving Your Essay as an .RTF File

RTF stands for Rich Text Format. RTF is a universal text format that will enable you the ability to open your essay on any computer with any word processing program. It is also important to note that saving as RTF ensures that others (such as your instructor or Smarthinking tutors) will be able to access your essay, too. When saved correctly, your essay will have an .RTF extension; for example: essay1.rtf. Follow the directions below to save your essay as an RTF:

1. Click on the **Office Button**, found in the upper left-hand corner of the screen.
2. Click on **Save As**, a new box will open, then choose “Other Formats.”
3. Choose where on the computer you want to save your file, then type in the name you want to give your file.
4. Click the bottom box, **Save as Type** and choose **Rich Text Format** from the list.
5. Click OK to finish.



Changes to *The MLA 7th Edition*

The seventh edition contains some of the most dramatic changes to occur in MLA in years. The exciting part is that these changes make writing in MLA style much easier. The following is a list of changes that you will notice throughout this document, *The Everyday Writer*, and, of course, *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Seventh Edition*.

- All sources will list the type of medium, making it easier for readers to identify the type of source.
- The URL is no longer included in Web sources. URLs change too frequently and are hard to manage in a Works Cited page. Instead, the information given in the entry will make it easy for a reader to find the source using a web search.
- Additional guidelines are listed for online sources.
- Writers will now use italics rather than choosing between italics and underlining.
- One space after a period is now the standard. However, *MLA* says using two is still acceptable.

Search the Internet for “Frequently asked Questions about the *MLA Handbook*” to find frequently asked questions for updates or corrections made to the edition since publication.

Acknowledgements

Academic Integrity. Lincoln: Southeast Community College, 2006. Print.

"Frequently Asked Questions About *The MLA Handbook*." 2008. Modern Language Association.
Web. 20 Jan. 2010.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writing of Research Papers*. Seventh Ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. 4th Ed. 2009 MLA Update. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2009. Print.

Ormondroyd, Joan. "Critically Analyzing Information Sources." 2009. Olin and Uris Library.
Cornell University. Web. 20 Jan. 2010.

Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft. *Frankenstein*. New York: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1974. Print.

Tracy, Barbara. *Guide to Writing MLA Style Essays and Avoiding Plagiarism*. 3rd ed. Lincoln, NE: Southeast Community College, 2005. Print.

Credits:

SCC Lincoln Writing Center, Eds.

Barbara Tracy, Writing Center Coordinator

The SCC English Department and Carolee Ritter, Department Chair