MLA “QUICK GUIDE”

Introduction to Documentation Guidelines

Purpose: The Modern Language Association (MLA) has created documentation guidelines for writing source-based work in the Humanities (typically English, Theatre, Art).

Paper Formatting:
- Double-spaced throughout
- Page numbering: Author’s last name and page number appear at the top right corner of each page.
  Example: Smith 1

In-Text Citations:
- MLA uses parenthetical in-text citations in an Author-Page Number format, with no “p” or comma before the page number. Example: Some feminists write extensively about “inclusiveness in research methodology” (Kirsch 22).

  --If the author’s name is included in sentence in which the citation appears, only the page number is included in parentheses. Example: Feminist author Gisa Kirsch writes extensively about “inclusiveness in research methodology” (22).

  --For works without authors, a partial form of the title of the work is included in the parentheses. Example: The guidelines for teachers and administration are extensive in the new legislation (“No Child Left Behind” 251).

- Punctuation follows the parenthetical citation (see exception for Long Quotes, below).

- All in-text citations MUST appear on the Works Cited page. The author’s last name or the first words of the partial title used in the in-text citation MUST correspond to the author’s last name or first words on the Works Cited and Bibliography page entries for that work.

Long Quotes: Quotations of four lines or longer are “blocked”: indent the quote two tabs (or 10 spaces) on the left side for the entire quote, and make the right side even with the right margin. Final punctuation comes after the last word of the sentence, not after the parenthetical citation, and no quotation marks are used.

Paraphrasing vs. Quoting: Both paraphrasing and quoting require that page numbers be included in the in-text citation.
End of Text Citations
- In-text citations refer directly to a list of Works Cited included at the end of the text, arranged alphabetically. Only works that are directly cited in-text are included in this section.

- Works Cited entries are arranged by author’s last name, then first name, separated by a comma. Example: Kirsch, Gisa

- If a work has no specific authors, alphabetize by title of the work. Example: “No Child Left Behind.”

- The words “Works Cited” should be centered at the top of a separate page; do not use underlining, italics, bold face, or quotation marks.

- All lines after the first line of an entry on the Works Cited page should be indented five spaces from the left margin (one tab space). The first line is flush with the left margin. This is known as a “hanging indent.”

Citation formula for Works Cited page:
The diagram below shows the different parts of an entry on the Works Cited page, using the example of a book in printed form.

1) Author of work
2) Title of work.
3) Publication Information—city, publisher and year of publication


4) Medium of Publication

Author of work: Last name, first name.

1) Title of work:Italicized for book titles.
2) Publication information: City of publication, followed by publisher’s name and year of publication. Note punctuation after city of publication, and between publisher and year.
3) Medium of publication: either “Print” or Web.”

See ASU’s complete MLA Handout, or consult an MLA manual, for specific examples of how to cite various types of sources on the Works Cited page.