# MLA Style Quick Guide

General Paper Guidelines

- Paper formatting basics:
    - 12pt. Times New Roman font
    - 1 in. margins on all sides
    - Double line spacing
    - Last name and page number – upper right-hand corner (ex. Spiese 1)
- First page formatting:
    - Your name, instructor's name, course, and date should be in the upper left-hand corner (double-spaced).

    - Hit enter, center your cursor, and type the title of the paper (not bolded). MLA does not require a title page.
    - After the title, hit enter, tab over, and begin the first line of your paper.
    - The first line of each paragraph should be indented.
    - There should only be one space after the punctuation mark between sentences as well as in the elements of a citation.
- Works cited page formatting:
    - List of sources is titled Works Cited.
    - Works Cited list should start on a separate page at the end of the paper.
    - Sources should be in alphabetical order by author's last name. **Use the source title if there is no author**.

    - Use a hanging indent for your citations. The first line should begin at the margin. Any lines after that should indented by ½ in. Click on paragraph at the top of the Word document. Under the special drop-down, choose hanging.
- Additional paper writing tips:
    - Generally, you should avoid using I in an academic paper. In cases where you think using I might be necessary to prove a point, consider using "I would argue" instead of "I feel" or "In my opinion."
    - If you refer to titles of works within the body of your paper, you should italicize longer works like novels as well as titles of works that contain other works such as anthologies. Shorter works such as short stories and poems should be placed in quotations.
    - **Regardless of what you see in this guide, always follow the guidelines provided by your instructor.**
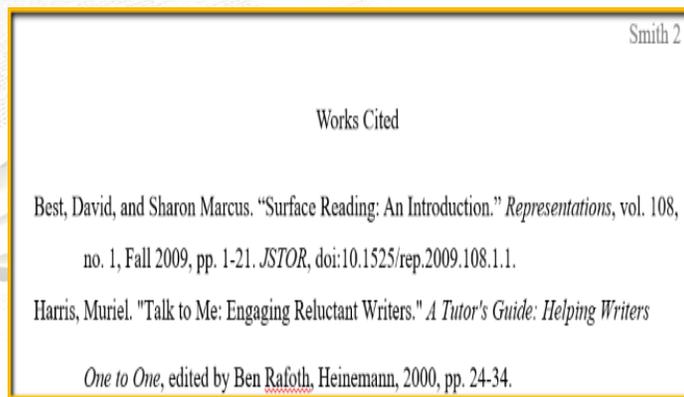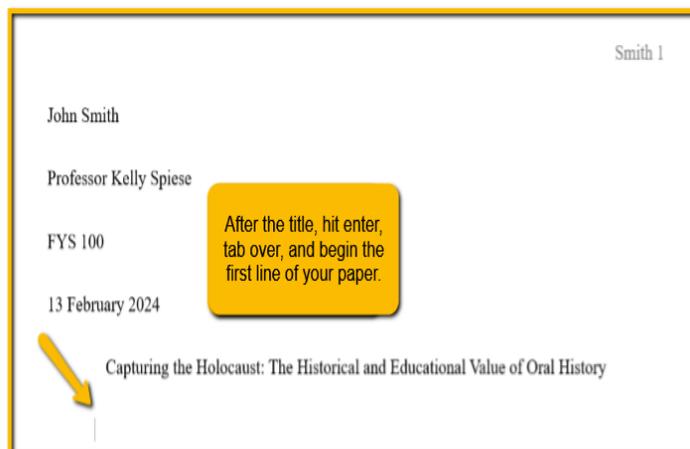
Important Information about Integrating and Citing Sources

- An in-text citation using the author's last name and page numbers should be included for any text you paraphrase or directly quote from outside sources.
- In-text citations are generally placed in parentheses at the end of a sentence. **There is no comma between the author and the page number, and the period goes after the parentheses** (ex. Wordsworth 263).
- An in-text citation for two authors would look like (Spiese and Goldman 17). Three or more authors would look like (Spiese et al. 13).
- If the author is a group or organization (American Library Association), use that name.
- If there is no author, use the work's title.
- If you can't find a page number, use a location (paragraph or line number) or if that's not possible, use (American Library Association, n. pag).
- While signal phrases are not required, it is a good idea to use them in your paper as much as possible. A signal phrase lets the reader know that the information is coming from an outside source. It helps the reader to differentiate between your own words and the words of other authors. (ex. Rhoda G. Lewin argues, … (7). If you include the author's last name in a signal phrase, you do not need to include it in the parenthetical citation.
- Every in-text citation should have a full citation on the Works Cited page.
- The concept of a container is an important part of MLA style. Containers are works that hold other works. Some sources have one container (post on Facebook or short story in an anthology). Some sources have two containers (article in a scholarly journal housed in the JSTOR database). All containers of a source should be included in the full citation.
- Do not simply cut and paste the citations you get from the "cite help" button in the library databases or from citation generators like Grammarly or Citation Machine into your paper. You'll want to carefully proofread them for errors before copying and pasting them into your paper.
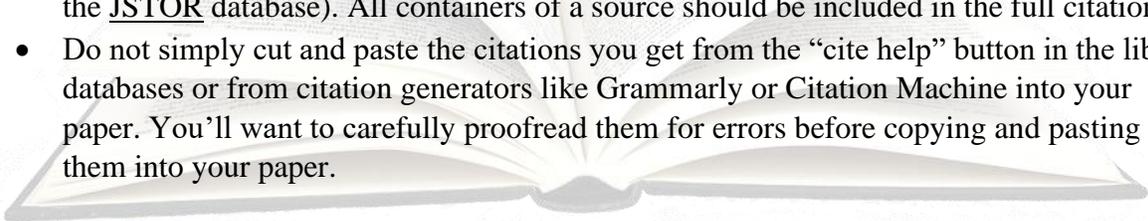
Examples of Most Commonly Cited Sources

Book:
Henley, Patricia. *The Hummingbird House*. MacMurray, 1999.

eBook:
Silva, Paul J. *How to Write a Lot: A Practical Guide to Productive Academic Writing*. E-book,

American Psychological Association, 2007.

Work in an Anthology or Chapter in a Book:
Harris, Muriel. "Talk to Me: Engaging Reluctant Writers." *A Tutor's Guide: Helping Writers*

One to One, edited by Ben Rafoth, Heinemann, 2000, pp. 24-34.

Journal Article from a Library Database:

Best, David, and Sharon Marcus. "Surface Reading: An Introduction." *Representations*, vol. 108,

no. 1, Fall 2009, pp. 1-21. *JSTOR*, doi:10.1525/rep.2009.108.1.1.

Page on a website:

Hollmichel, Stephanie. "The Reading Brain: Differences between Digital and Print." *So Many Books*, 25 Apr. 2013, somanybooksblog.com/2013/04/25/the-reading-brain-differences-between-digital-and-print/. Accessed 14 March 2024. (While an access date is not required, it is good idea to include it in website citations).

More information about MLA style, including a practice citation template, additional example citations, and sample essays can be found at https://style.mla.org/.

Where to Get Help

There is some overlap with the services provided by the Academic Success Center and the Library. If you would like to focus on one particular area of the research and writing process, here are some good rules of thumb to consider:

Academic Success Center – If you need help refining your thesis statement, organizing your paper, developing transitions between paragraphs, integrating information from outside sources into your paper, or addressing grammar and mechanics, you should consider making an appointment with a writing tutor.

Library – If you need help finding a few more sources to back up your ideas, formatting your paper, generating citations in your Works Cited page, or structuring your in-text citations, you should consider meeting with your personal librarian.

We encourage you to use both resources, and for best results, come early and often!