



# W. L. Adams Center for Writing

## FORMATTING A PAPER IN MLA STYLE

**MLA Style** refers to a system of documentation often used in literature, languages, and humanities disciplines for writing a research paper. **MLA** stands for **Modern Language Association**, a global academic professional organization that has published the conventions and rules of this system in the *MLA Handbook*, 9<sup>th</sup> edition.

### IN-TEXT/PARENTHETICAL CITATIONS

MLA Style uses **in-text citations** in the body of a paper; each corresponds to an alphabetized list of works cited at the end of the paper. Use a citation and include page numbers whenever you quote, paraphrase, or summarize from a source. If you use multiple sources from the same author, include titles to distinguish between sources. Notice that the end punctuation is positioned at the end of the sentence, not at the end of the quotation:

The narrator remembers, "While Henry was not around we talked about what was going to happen to him" (Erdrich 415).

The narrator remembers, "While Henry was not around we talked about what was going to happen to him" (Erdrich, "Red Convertible," 415).

### GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Choose a conventional 12-point font such as Times New Roman, in which italics are easily distinguished.
- Use standard 1-inch margins all around the page.
- Indent each new paragraph 5 spaces.
- Number the pages consecutively by creating a header in the upper right corner with your surname and the page number.
- Space only once after the end punctuation of a sentence.

### FORMATTING THE TITLE AND FIRST PAGE

- The first page of your paper serves also as title page.
- Double-space again and type the title, centered.
- Double-space once more to begin typing your text.

Marisol Montoya  
 Professor Damon Wyche  
 English 20103/Reading as a Writer  
 3 May 2021  
 Herman Melville's Whaling Folklore

### FORMATTING DIRECT QUOTATIONS

- Quotations from poetry, song, fiction, and non-fiction are often used as supporting evidence for claims made in critical analyses.
- Quotations may be words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs.
- Integrate quotations into your prose by using signal phrases that provide context or attribution.
- Include a parenthetical note to cite all quotations, paraphrase, and summary of a source.

Her letters home, suggests one Southern Literature critic, indicate how Flannery O'Connor "clung to the provincialism she satirized" (Miller xv).

- For three lines or fewer of poetry or song, format a quote as you would in prose, except use slash marks to indicate line breaks. Cite as usual.
- A poetry excerpt exceeding 3 lines should be block-quoted, replicating the original formatting. Omit quotation marks and cite at the end.

## BLOCK QUOTATIONS

If a quotation exceeds four lines in length, format it as a block quotation by indenting the entire passage 5 spaces. Use a signal phrase to introduce the quotation. Omit the quotation marks and cite as usual but place the punctuation at the end of the passage but before the citation.

Jane Smiley's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *A Thousand Acres* begins grounded in the geography of white American childhood:

From that bump, the earth was unquestionably flat, the sky unquestionably domed, and it seemed to me when I was a child in school, learning about Columbus, that in spite of what my teacher said, ancient cultures might have been onto something. No globe or map fully convinced me that Zebulon County was not the center of the universe. (Smiley 3)

## WORKS CITED PAGE FORMAT

author                      title                      container                      contributor                      version

### Works Cited

Erdrich, Louise. "The Red Convertible." *Fiction: A Pocket Anthology*, Ed. R.S. Gwynn, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Pearson Longman, 2009, pp. 411-20.

Sergi, Jennifer. "Storytelling: Tradition and Preservation in Louise Erdrich's *Tracks*." *World Literature Today*, vol. 66, no. 2, 1992, pp. 279-82.

- Position the Works Cited page at the end of the paper.
- Continue the pagination of the paper through the Works Cited page.
- Use the title "Works Cited" in the title position at the top of the page, centered.
- Alphabetize by authors' last names. If no author is given, the title determines the alphabetical order.
- Double-space the works cited list and use a hanging indent of ½ inch, about 5 spaces.
- Include reference books, encyclopedias, and dictionaries in the Works Cited list.
- Include sources for illustrations, tables, graphs and figures in the Works Cited list.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY FORMAT

- An annotated bibliography differs from a Works Cited list in that it includes a short description or summary of each source, in addition to the usual reference citation.
- Avoid repeating publication details already included in the reference citation.
- Summarize briefly the source's main ideas and relevance to your research topic.

Erdrich, Louise. "The Red Convertible." *Fiction: A Pocket Anthology*, Ed. R.S. Gwynn, 6<sup>th</sup> ed., Pearson Longman, 2009, pp. 411-20.

This story's narrator is Native American, the brother of a veteran newly returned from the Vietnam War. He exhibits many classic symptoms of PTSD, which were not widely understood at the time. These symptoms, as Erdrich portrays them, lend themselves to a comparison with symptoms listed in the DSM-V.



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