

MLA Documentation

The What, Why, and How of Documentation in Academic Work

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Who and What is the MLA

- # Modern Language Association
- # Professional organization
- # The Modern Language Association is an association of scholars and educators established in 1883. For over a hundred years, its goal has been to foster and maintain an accepted standard of scholarship in languages and literature.

What Does the MLA Do?

- # Annual Meetings
- # Conferences
- # Professional Textbooks
- # *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 7th ed. (2009)
- # Sets Documentation Methods and Standards
- # Academic Disciplines

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MLA Documentation Vs. MLA Format

- # What is the difference between MLA documentation and MLA format?
 - The documentation system prescribes or tells us how to give credit to authors of outside sources.
 - The documentation format prescribes how the manuscript should look (heading margins, spacing, pagination, and titles)

5 Common Documentatin Systems

- # MLA = Modern Language Association
 - humanities
- # APA = American Psychological Association
 - social and natural sciences
- # CMS = Chicago Manual Style
 - humanities and social sciences
- # CBE = Council of Biological Editors
 - "hard" sciences
- # CEC = Civil Engineering Citation Guide
 - "hard" sciences

Why Document Sources?

- # Support for our claims
- # To criticize or evaluate
- # Authoritative evidence
- # Lends credibility to our ideas (ethos)
- # Professionalism
- # Avoid plagiarism

Documentation Standards

- # Why are documentation standards important?
 - Uniformity
 - Consistency and predictability
 - Allows readers to understand the work of others
 - No standards in documentation creates chaos

The 3-Part MLA Documentation System

1. Citation
2. In-text parenthetical notation
3. Works Cited Page

The 3-Part MLA Documentation System

Citations—reference to any outside source (**all borrowed ideas *must* be credited**)

‡**Direct quotation**—using the author’s exact language (*verbatim*); these ideas are **visually designated by using quotation marks**

Jon Krakauer “...is a good reporter because we come as close as we probably ever can to another person’s heart and soul” (Rodriguez 12).

‡**Paraphrase**—someone’s ideas expressed in your own language, grammar; goal: **simplify or “translate”** complex ideas to suit audience needs

Jon Krakauer’s style of reporting captures the essence of the person he is researching better than that of most journalists (Rodriguez 12).

‡**Summary**—someone’s ideas expressed in your own language, grammar; goal: **condense** a text into just its main ideas or points

The 3-Part MLA Documentation System

The in-text parenthetical notation
(aka: parenthetical note); (aka: p-note)

This element contains a brief description of the author and page where the citation source can be found.

Examples:

- (Faulkner 92) – standard print source
- (Chan, par. 12) or (Woodward, scr. 3) – non-print source
- ("Reclaiming Green America" 8) – no author or author mentioned in essay text
- (Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 117)
- (Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* 56) – author w/ multiple entries on Works Cited page
- (qtd. in Franklin 88) – indirect or nested citation

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The 3-Part MLA Documentation System

The Works Cited Page

Format:

- 1" margins
- centered title
- double spacing
- hanging paragraphs

Rules for Assembling Sources:

- Arrange alphabetically by author's last name
- Give full bibliographic information
- No numbering or categorization of sources

The 3-Part MLA Documentation System

The Works Cited Page

- Works are arranged alphabetically by author's last name
- Give full bibliographic information
- For books, copy bibliographic information from the title and copyright pages
- For periodicals copy relevant information and volume, issue, and date

Exercises

- # Sample books
- # Sample periodicals