Documentation Guide

for students and faculty

MLA

This is a condensed guide to the mechanics of research writing, based on guidelines determined by the Modern Language Association. For more thorough and detailed instruction, refer to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed.*

All materials are available at the FLCC library and The Write Place
Preface

This style sheet, which has been funded by a grant from the Write Place, FLCC’s writing center, represents a collaborative effort by the Write Place, FLCC’s English Department, and the librarians from the Charles J. Meder Library. It is important to note that these guidelines are intended to serve as a classroom tool that beginning college writers can use independently when referring to another author’s ideas, facts, and words. This handout provides an introduction to the MLA’s style of documenting sources. A more comprehensive guide can be found in college handbooks such as The Open Handbook, The Scott Foresman Handbook for Writers, or The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition). The MLA style of documentation is primarily used in the Humanities. Many disciplines have their own documentation system, but the MLA style is widely used on this campus.

Formatting Your Paper

- Your paper should be typed on a computer and printed on standard, white 8.5x11-inch paper.
- Your entire paper should be double-spaced. It is best to use a legible and traditional font such as Times New Roman (12 point).
- Unless otherwise instructed, leave only one space after periods and other punctuation marks.
- The margins of your document should be one inch on all sides. The first line of each paragraph should be indented one half-inch (five spaces or press tab once) from the left margin.
- A header that identifies your last name and numbers all pages consecutively is standard. This header should be one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Unless specifically requested, you do not need a separate title page.
- In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor’s name, the course number and section, and the date. Please remember that everything in your paper is double-spaced.
- Center your title and do not underline it or put quotation marks around it. Write the title in Title Case, not in all capital letters.

Evaluating Sources for Credibility
At the beginning of the 21st century, information is readily available through the World Wide Web. One of the greatest challenges for students who are writing research papers is evaluating the credibility of a source. Even today, traditional sources of research are still the most reliable: books, periodicals, and scholarly journals.

The primary problem with Internet sources is that they are self-published, and often the credentials of the person who is publishing the information are not credible. Therefore, be discerning when using the Internet for research papers, and please verify with your instructor that it is all right to do so.

According to *The MLA Handbook* (7th ed.), Section 1.6, use the following guidelines for evaluation sources:

**Authority**: The author and his or her credentials for writing and publishing this work should be clearly identified. The type of publication you consult also matters. For example, an article from a mainstream magazine, such as *Time*, is more reputable than one from a tabloid such as *The Star*.

**Accuracy**: A scholarly article, book, or Web publication should have sources that can be verified, such as those found on a Works Cited list. A reputable author of a Web publication will include hypertext links to other sources.

**Currency**: All publication dates should be clearly listed, so that the reader can determine how old the information is. This is easily discernable on a hard copy of any source. While many people assume that information found on the Internet is up-to-date, this is not always so.

**Citing Titles of Texts: Italicics or Quotation Marks?**

In general, works that are published independently are italicized. These include: a book, a newspaper, a CD or a television show or series.

Quotation marks are used to indicate that a title of a work is within a larger work: for example, a chapter in a book, an article in a newspaper, a song on a compact disc, or an episode of a television series.

The rules governing the punctuation of titles are strict, and there is no room for deviation or creativity. Copy titles **exactly** as they appear on title pages. Capitalize the first word, the last word, and all principal words of a title. Do not capitalize the following: articles (*a, an, the*), prepositions (*in, of, to*), and coordinating conjunctions or “fanboys” (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*). For a complete guide to title of works in the research paper consult *The MLA Handbook* (7th ed.), section 3.6.

Sacred writings appear without underlining or quotation marks: Bible, Koran.
**Quotations**

The inclusion of quotations in your paper should be selective. It is important that quotations not be used to comprise your paper but rather to add clarity, emphasis, or authority.

If a quotation is four or fewer lines of your paper, then incorporate it within the body of the paper.

   Concerning the devastation of the beach following Hurricane Dora, Myers writes, “Dilapidated and unsafe buildings, overtime, were torn down and removed” (7).

**Block Quotations**

If a quotation is more than four lines of text, it is usually introduced with a colon, separated from the text by indenting ten spaces from the left margin (tab twice), and quotation marks are not used. The right margin remains the same.

   After the devastation of Hurricane Dora, American Beach was plagued with problems and desperately needed revitalization:

     Although the problem did not go away, the beach community began to make improvements. Beach cleanups began to take place. Some dilapidated and unsafe buildings, overtime, were torn down and removed, Other structures, in later years, due to absentee property owners and neglect, eventually, became eyesores in the community.

     (Myers 7).

Note: notice with the longer quotation, the period follows the end of the quotation. It does not follow after the in-text citation (Myers 7). Also, since Myers has not been mentioned in the text, her last name and page number must d included in the in-text citations.

When using quotations, it is imperative that you be accurate. The use of quotations is treated much more thoroughly in *The MLA Handbook* (7th ed.), section 3.7.

**Ellipses**

Ellipses indicate that a word, phrase, sentence, or more from the original source has been deleted from the quotation. Ellipses within a sentence are indicated with three spaced periods, with a space before the first period and a space after the last period
Here is an original passage from a writer whose last name is Rudnik:

Marilyn’s media-drenched image as a tragic dumb blond has become an American archetype, along with the Marlboro Man and the Harley-straddling wild one. Yet biographical trauma, even when packed with celebrities, cannot account for Marilyn’s enduring stature as a goddess and postage stamp.

If you quote a word or phrase, it is obvious that something has been left out. In these instances, ellipses are not necessary.

While Anna Nicole Smith endeavored to be like her idol in every way, it is doubtful she will ever have “Marilyn’s enduring stature as a goddess and postage stamp” (Rudnick).

Here is the same quotation with ellipses:

Rudnick laments the loss of classic sex symbols when he writes Monroe’s “Media-drenched image as a tragic dumb blond has become an American archetype, along with the Marlboro Man and the Harley-straddling wild one. Yet biographical trauma…cannot account for Marilyn’s enduring stature as a goddess and postage stamp.”

There are many ways that ellipses can be used in a paper and some are quite complicated. For a full discussion of how to use ellipses, please consult The MLA Handbook (7th ed.), section 3.7.5

In-Text Citations

Any time you use another person’s ideas, words, or facts, you must include a parenthetical reference (also referred to as a parenthetical reference or in-text citation) that directly corresponds with an entry on the Works Cited list. This information in the in-text citation must coincide with a specific entry in your Works Cited list. This is so readers can easily identify the complete text from which the passage originated. If available, the in-text citation should include the author’s last name and the page number. For in-depth information the in-text citations see The MLA Handbook (7th ed.), section 6.

Nature Conservationists bemoan the fact that American Beach, an historically African American Beach, is “being discovered and developed” (Myers 57).
If the writer’s name appears in the same sentence as the quotation, then only the page number the quotation is taken from should be cited parenthetically.

    Annette Myers, writer, teacher, and historian, is saddened by the fact that American Beach, an historically African American Beach, is “being discovered and developed” (57).

The in-text citations “(Myers 57)” or “(57)” as cited above indicate that the quoted material came from page 57 of a work by Myers. This is done so that the full source of the quoted material can be found in the alphabetized entries on the Works Cited page that follows the last page of your paper.


**Exceptions**

Works from on-line database subscription services differ slightly from traditional sources only in regard to pagination. If an article from the on-line service does not have fixed page numbers (and only a very few do), then you do not include a page number in the in-text citation or the Works Cited entry, the author’s last name(s) is sufficient for the parenthetical citation.

If the author’s last name is not provided in a source, then an abbreviated form of the title is used in the in-text citation: for example, the title of the book The Shrinking Sands of an African-American Beach would be abbreviated as follows in the in-text citation (Shrinking Sands 57).

**Works Cited List**

Entries on the Works Cited list, paced after the research paper, should be double spaced and alphabetized, with no extra spaces between any lines. Indent on the second and every subsequent line for each entry.

Here is the basic format for typical entries, with components labeled, including any necessary italics and quotations. For other examples, see the attached Works Cited list. An even more extensive selection can be found in *The MLA Handbook* (7th ed.).

**A book with one author:**

Author’s last name, first name. Title of Work, City, State: Publisher, Year of publication.

    Medium of publication.

**Or, a typical online source:**

Author’s last name, first name, “Title of Work, Article, or Chapter.” Sponsor or Publisher. Date
of publication or last update [day month year]. Medium of publication. Access date [day month year]. <URL> [optional, according to assignment instructions.]

**What about Missing Information?**

If, for example, there is not author given, skip to the next item: the title. For missing components of online sources, follow these guidelines:

- If there is **no sponsor or publisher name**, use “n.p.” (for “no publisher”).
- If there is **no date of publication or update**, use “n.d.” (for “no date”)
- Entries for articles from online journals or databases require page numbers. If there is **no page number available**, use “n. pag.”

**Medium of Publication**

Every entry identifies the medium of publication for the work being cited, such as Print, Web, CD, Performance, Film, PDF file, and so on. See the attached MLA Works Cited List for examples.

**Punctuation**

Be sure to remember that a period follows each individual item—author, title, publisher—in each entry. Punctuation is placed inside quotation marks. The Modern Language Association currently asks for a single space after each item. Remember, also, that a period goes at the very end of the entry as well.

**Other Helpful Guides to MLA Documentation**

Listed below are just a few of the excellent Internet web sites that are available to help you with the intricacies of MLA Documentation:

- Purdue University’s OWL MLA Format: Giving Credit to Sources [http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/)
- Dr. Mary Ellen Guffey’s MLA Style: Electronic Formats [http://www.library.miami.edu/research/userguides/citing_sources.html](http://www.library.miami.edu/research/userguides/citing_sources.html)
Mythical Journey: The Myth of the Phoenix in Eudora Welty’s “A Worn Path”

According to literary critic Robert Phillips, Jr., “[Eudora Welty] did not begin with myth and fantasy and make them native to Mississippi; rather, she found that fantasy and myth are expressions of things she found ‘around [her] in life’” (57). In Welty’s short fiction, reality and myth operate as an inextricable pair that serves one another. Specifically, in “A Worn Path,” she delineates the protagonist’s character as a direct representation of the mythological bird, the Phoenix. The story first was published in *Atlantic Monthly* in February of 1941 and later was included in her collection *The Wide Net*; this tale of death and rebirth also won the O. Henry prize for short fiction (“Winners”). Examining the physical similarities between the protagonist and the mythical bird reveals a calculated step that Welty takes in aligning her protagonist with the legendary bird. Also, the emotional nature of Phoenix Jackson’s character parallels the nature of the Phoenix. Finally, the setting and the title point to a cyclical theme of death and rebirth. Clearly, Phoenix Jackson represents a modern incarnation of the mythical Phoenix.

One of the similarities between the protagonist and the mythical bird is her appearance. The initial description of Phoenix reveals that there is “an old Negro woman with her head tied in a red rag . . . moving a little from side to side in her steps” (Welty 165). This depiction not only describes the way that birds waddle from side to side; it
also shows one of the principal colors associated with the mythical Phoenix – the color red. According to the website entitled *mythicalrealm.com*, the bird was a “fabulous mythical bird . . . with brilliant scarlet and gold plumage” (Dawn). She also references other physical similarities between her protagonist and the legendary bird:

> Her skin had a pattern all its own of numberless branching wrinkles and as though a whole little tree stood in the middle of her forehead, but a golden color ran underneath, and the two knobs of her cheeks were illuminated by a yellow burning under the dark. . . . Under the red rag her hair came down on her neck in the frailest of ringlets, still black, with an odor like copper. 

(Welty 165)

She uses the simile of a tree, a bird’s perch, to describe the wrinkles in her forehead, and this quote also alludes to the element of fire, another association with the Phoenix.

However, her physical appearance is only one aspect that positions her as the symbolic equivalent of the Phoenix.

Her actions also mirror the emotional nature of the mythical Phoenix. The Phoenix is known for its ability to help others. Just as the protagonist makes a journey for her grandson, the Phoenix lived to help others. According to a popular website concerning the role of the Phoenix in the Harry Potter series, “Phoenix tears have a healing property . . . [and] the song of the Phoenix gives strength and hope to the ones it sings for” (Morris). After Phoenix Jackson momentarily forgets the mission of her trip, she finally exclaims, “My grandson. It was my memory had left me. There I sat and forgot why I made my long trip” (Welty 170). Obviously, Phoenix Jackson lives for her grandson, but other things point to the cyclical nature of her mission.
In addition to her physical similarities and actions, the setting and the title indicate a sense of the cyclical nature of her journey, much like the reincarnation of the Phoenix. With the initial setting described as a pine forest and the subsequent setting in an oak forest, readers may surmise some symbolic meaning in the setting and its similarity to the maturation of human beings. Welty writes that Phoenix has gone “Up through the pines . . . [and] down through the oaks” (166). Pine forests resemble the early growth of a young person. The trees grow quickly, have soft wood, and they retain their needles throughout the year. Similarly, young people grow quickly, have soft, pliable bones, and they retain all of their hair. Conversely, oak trees mature more slowly, consist of hard, brittle wood, and they lose their leaves in the winter, much like aging people who lose their hair. Also, the title, “A Worn Path,” indicates the repetitive cycle indicative of the myth of the Phoenix and Phoenix’s journey.

Obviously, Eudora Welty infuses the myth of the Phoenix into her story. Through the physical similarities of the mythical bird and the protagonist, the emotional nature of both, and the significance of the setting and title, readers easily can identify Phoenix Jackson as a symbolic representative of the mythical bird, the Phoenix.
Works Cited


MLA Works Cited List Examples

Book with Single Author:


**In-text citation:** (Gore 32)

Book with Two Authors:


**In-text citation:** (Michaels and Balling 107)

Book with Editor as Author:


**In-text citation:** (Galley 125)

An Anonymous Book:


**In-text citation:** (*Environmental Resource Handbook* 252)

Citing Common Literature such as the Bible or Shakespeare:


**In-text citation:** (*The New Jerusalem Bible*, Deut. 22.23-24)


**In-text citation:** (IV.i.181-185)
**Article from a Reference Book (unsigned and signed):**


**In-text citation:** (“Greenhouse” 277)


**In-text citation:** (Schneider 382)

**Article in a Literary Criticism Set:**


**In-text citation:** (Knott 39)

**Work in an Anthology or Literature Textbook:**


**In-text citation:** (Hansberry 828)


**In-text citation:** (Hobby 358)


**In-text citation:** (Jacobus 156)

**In-text citation:** (Lear 1155)

Magazine Article:


**In-text citation:** (Allen 43)


**In-text citation:** (Begley 49)

Newspaper Article (unsigned and signed):


**In-text citation:** (“College” A4)


**In-text citation:** (Landler A7)
Article from a Scholarly Journal:


In-text citation: (Miller-Rushing, Primack, Primack, and Mukunda 1668)

Article from an Online Database:


In-text citation: (Mora and Maya 340)

Website:


In-text citation: (“Climate Change”)

A Film or Movie:


In-text citation: (Othello)

These are the MOST COMMON examples cited. For a complete list of examples please consult MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed. (REF LB 2369 .G53 2009). Feel free to ask for help at the Library’s Reference/Information Desk (585-394-3500 x7432) or at the Write Place (585-394-3500 x7601).