MLA Format for Research Papers: Sample Paper

The Modern Language Association (MLA) regularly publishes rules for writing papers and citing sources. For general formatting rules, such as for font, margin size and line spacing, visit the Formatting a Research Paper portion of the *MLA Style Center* Web site. For information about documenting sources you can also refer to the print and e-book versions of the *MLA Handbook* or another reputable source, such as Purdue University’s *OWL* Web site.

The *MLA Handbook* describes the components of documenting sources, such as how to cite sources in text (54-58). In-text citations are important because they attribute specific information in your paper (e.g. a direct quote) to the appropriate source and direct readers to the correct citation in the works cited list at the end of the paper. One common method is to put the author’s last name and page numbers in parenthesis at the end of the borrowed information, like this: “[M]osquitoes have been called the ‘most dangerous animal’ on Earth” (Greenblatt 603).

Alternatively, an author’s name can be part of the sentence: Gifford explains how “[a]ging, at least in part, is rooted in our appetites” (64).

There are numerous variations of in-text citations. For example, when a source has one or two authors, include all of their last names: (Eberts and Gisler 82). But for three or more authors you use the first author’s last name followed by et al.: (Plag et al. 50). In cases where there isn’t an author, then the title – or a shorted version of the title – would take the place of the author’s last name (*MLA Handbook* 56). Refer to the *MLA Handbook* or Purdue’s *OWL* Web site for more information about formatting your paper and citing sources.
Works Cited


*The Purdue OWL*. Purdue U Writing Lab, 2016,

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/.

Works Cited

- List citations in alphabetical order.
- Indent second and subsequent lines of a citation.