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Professor Williams

English 1302

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Title: Centered But Not in Bold or Underlined

This sample paper gives general guidelines for a research paper in MLA (8th edition) format. One-inch margins are used on all sides, which is the default setting on Microsoft Word. While the title is centered, the body of the essay is left aligned (not justified), also known as a ragged right margin. The paper should be double-spaced throughout, with no extra space between sections or paragraphs. Microsoft Word usually has a default setting that puts in a small amount of extra vertical space any time the Enter key is pressed. To remove this setting, go to Line and Paragraph Spacing, choose Line Spacing Options and under Spacing change the After entry to zero. This paper uses Times New Roman 12 point font, as recommended by MLA.

Set a header at the top right of the page that will repeat on successive pages; it will include your last name and a page number. To do so, right-click near the top of the page so the header box appears. Choose Edit, and then click on Page Number near the top left of the toolbox. Choose Top of Page and then Plain Number 3. When the number appears, type your last name and a space before the number. The header text will default to be a different font and size from the rest of the paper, so be sure to change it to Times New Roman 12 point font. The name block goes in the regular text area at the upper left of the first page, as shown above. Type your full name, followed by the professor's name, the course name, and the date, which is formatted without any punctuation. No extra spaces appear above or below the title.

MLA format requires students to acknowledge sources by giving brief citations in the text that correspond to an alphabetical list at the end of the paper called a works-cited page. The in-text citation identifies which information was taken from each source. Whether the information is quoted, paraphrased or summarized, it still requires a citation. Failing to do properly cite a source constitutes plagiarism, which may result in penalties according to college rules even if it happens unintentionally. In-text citations, enclosed in parentheses after the cited information, generally consist of the author(s)' last name(s), and the page number of the page from which the information was taken, if available (Howells 224). Notice that no punctuation appears between the elements within the citation; simply place a single space between the last name and page number. If no author is given, the first one to three words of the source's title, in quotation marks, would go in that spot, like this ("MLA In-Text"). That source is an online article so no page number was available. The period for the sentence will be placed after the final parenthesis of the citation. *All* of the sources cited in the text will also have an entry on the works-cited page, and *every* source listed on the works-cited page should be cited at least once within the text.

A quotation can be introduced with a signal phrase that identifies some aspect of the source. If you use a complete sentence to introduce a quotation, use a colon, as demonstrated in the following sentence. Elizabeth Howells explains why quotations are sometimes needed: "In some cases, summary and paraphrase don't give enough of the flavor of the text" (300). Or you could work the quotation into your sentence, as in the following example. Howells adds that a writer may need to quote from a story when "a character has said something better than the writer ever could in a paraphrase" (300). The quotation marks are used to indicate that the words enclosed within them are exactly as they appeared in the original. If you omit any words to

shorten the length of a quote, use an ellipsis to indicate the omission, as in the following quote: “To adequately frame a quotation, you need to insert it into. . . a ‘quotation sandwich,’ with the statement introducing it serving as the top slice of bread and the explanation following it serving as the bottom slice” (Graff et al. 46). When omitting part of a quotation, ensure that the shortened version still conveys the same general meaning as the original. Notice that the quotation marks enclose only the authors’ exact words, with the period after the parentheses. The authors’ names are included in the parentheses because they were not mentioned in the sentence introducing the quotation. If they had been, as in the block quotation below, the name should not be repeated in the parentheses.

A quotation longer than four typed lines is presented in a block format, which means it is indented a full inch from the margin but not enclosed in quotation marks. In this case only, the period goes *before* the parenthetical citation. You should use a complete sentence to introduce the quotation, followed by a colon. In *They Say, I Say*, authors Gerald Graff, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russell Durst discuss the amount of explanation that should accompany a quotation:

[N]ot all quotations require the same amount of explanatory framing, and there are no hard-and-fast rules for knowing how much explanation any quotation needs. As a general rule, the most explanatory framing is needed for quotations that may be hard for readers to process: quotations that are long and complex, that are filled with details or jargon, or that contain hidden complexities. (49)

Because block quotations contain lengthier excerpts of text, they should be followed by ample analysis and explanation. No quote speaks for itself. It is your job as the writer to engage in a lively conversation with your sources, which you do by responding to them on the page. Your commentary on quoted material also helps you retain control over the voice of your paper. It is

bad form to end a paragraph with a block quotation; when you end a paragraph with any kind of quote, long or short, you are letting one of your sources have the final word.

The parenthetical citations that accompany quotes and paraphrases correspond with entries on a works-cited page at the end of the document, which provides publication information about each source. The works-cited page should begin on a separate page with the same margins and header as the rest of the document. All print on this page will be double spaced with no extra spaces between entries. Citations are alphabetized by the first word of each entry, which is usually the author's last name but may be the title of the work if no author is credited. Titles of books, journals, films and longer works are italicized, as in *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Titles of shorter works—such as articles, poems and songs—should be in quotation marks; for example, the song title, “Somewhere Over the Rainbow,” should appear in quotation marks, while the film in which it was performed should be in italics: *The Wizard of Oz*. Use a hanging indent for works-cited entries, which means the first line of each entry is at the left margin, but all subsequent lines of the entry are indented one half inch. To set a hanging indent in Word, under “Paragraph,” choose “Indents and Spacing.” Under “Indentation Special, choose “Hanging.” The entries will be automatically indented appropriately, and when Enter is pressed at the end of the entry, the cursor will go back to the left margin for the next entry.

The attached sample works-cited page contains the correctly formatted entries for the citations in this paper. These examples are just a few types of commonly used sources; for other types, you should consult a more complete guide or the *MLA Handbook*. Be aware that you are responsible for the accuracy of your works-cited entries. Online citation generators can be helpful but often include errors, particularly for web sources. Even the citation tools on databases routinely make mistakes, so you should always verify the content of your citations before you

submit your assignment. Be sure to keep accurate records as you research so that you can easily access the sources you used in order to check the information against your citations. Web sources can often be tricky: look carefully for author's names, which may appear in a number of different locations on the page, and search for publication or posting dates. Access dates should only be used when a publication or posting date is not available. Sponsors of a site can often be found by looking under the "About Us" tab. If the sponsor's name is the same as the title of the website, it does not need to be repeated in the citation.

Works Cited

Birkenstein, Gerald, Cathy Birkenstein, and Russell Durst. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that*

Matter in Academic Writing. 2nd ed., W. W. Norton, 2011.

Howells, Elizabeth. *Literature: Reading to Write*. Pearson, 2011.

“MLA In-Text Citations: The Basics.” *Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)*, Purdue U, 2018,

owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/.