

# *Oxford Central School*

## *MLA Style Sheet*

### *Modern Language Association*

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Below are the requirements for research papers at Oxford Central School. The MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation style was chosen because most colleges use this form, and other styles can be easily applied once the MLA format is mastered. Students are expected to follow this format when writing their research papers.

#### **GENERAL FORM**

1. Use 8.5" by 11" white unlined paper with the following common margin settings:

- Top 1 inch
- Bottom 1 inch
- Left 1 inch
- Right 1 inch

(You may have to reset margins under "File, Page Setup.")

2. Print on one side of the paper.

3. Use Times New Roman font in 12 point and align the paper to the left.

4. Indent the first word of a paragraph one-half inch (or five spaces) from the left margin.

5. Double-space throughout a research paper, including quotations, outlines and the list of works cited.

6. Use a title page.

- From the top of the page move down 15 **single** spaces.
- Type the following information centered and double-spaced in the same format as the rest of the paper.

Title  
Your name  
Teacher's Name  
Name of Course  
Date

- Do not underline or use quotation marks in your own title. Your title should reflect your thesis in 10 or less words.

7. Number all pages in the upper right-hand corner. (Use "Insert, Page Numbers.")

8. Do not use abbreviations; in formal papers avoid contractions.

9. Use spell and grammar check on all work. Careless spelling and mechanical errors will be marked down severely.

10. Staple your final paper in the following order: title page, outline, written essay with citations, works cited page, and blank page.

## THESIS STATEMENT

**Definition:** a single sentence that formulates both the paper's topic and point of view. It is the answer to a central question or problem that has been raised.

A thesis statement should not be obvious or vague. It must be controversial and arguable. Someone should be able to establish a reasonable argument contradicting your own.

### Steps to forming a thesis:

1. Review the facts and quotations of research. Think about what you might prove with all this information.
2. Ask questions. These questions arise from issues relevant to the topic. Issues are a breeding ground for your thesis. Questions may develop by considering alternate possibilities, recommendations for a problem, or relationships related to your topic.
3. Develop a clear opinion from the issues that can be proven with research. Write your thesis in a declarative sentence.
4. Be sure the thesis is not too broad, narrow or self-evident. Thesis statements should be meaningful, reflective and investigative.
5. Try out different possibilities until you find the statement which best fits your purpose. Do not hesitate to revise your thesis as you take notes, write your paper and alter your focus.

### Sample student theses:

In Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe educates readers on the British destruction of African culture through the character of Okonkwo.

John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* represent two novels in which the thematic agendas are based upon the main characters' exhausting pursuit of the American dream.

The grossly unregulated destruction of the world's rainforests has endangered many species and is debilitating the world's global climate.

## INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

The introductory paragraph gives the focus of your paper. In it you should do the following:

1. Give background material and content. Start with the more general subject of your topic and lead quickly to the theme of your paper. Assume the reader is educated and give relevant information that guides the reader to your issue.
2. Define a motive or purpose for writing. The motive is not the argument itself but is the reason your argument should be interesting to your reader. It may take into account what other critics have written, common perceptions, or historical context.
3. State your thesis. Typically, the thesis statement is at the end of your introductory paragraph.

By the end of your introductory paragraph, the reader should know what the paper is about, what you are trying to prove, and what your paper will cover. If you are writing about a work of literature, be sure that your introduction contains the title and author. (Book titles are italicized; poem, short story, and song titles are placed within quotation marks.)

### Sample introduction:

Throughout history, European societies have invaded primitive cultures. In the 1890's, Nigeria was occupied by British colonialism, and tribal cultures were changed forever. Christian missionaries permeated the Igbo tribe and many others with "superior" European religion and education. Many believed these forced changes had devastating effects on African culture and protested the actions through writing. In Things Fall Apart, Chinua Achebe educates readers on the British destruction of African culture through the character of Okonkwo.

## OUTLINE

An outline helps the writer organize his or her information to begin writing, and the final outline provides the reader with an efficient overview of the major divisions and key points of the paper.

### Developing an outline:

1. Review research and note relationships between information.
2. Categorize information into general subtopics. These subtopics are the arguments you make in support of your thesis. Each subtopic is one argument. Begin with just three or four general headings and add details later.
3. Bring related information together under the general headings. Arrange the subtopics into logical connections. As you reread the information, you will see new connections and the organization will present itself.
4. Critically review subtopics and information and delete everything that is irrelevant to the thesis statement.
5. Gather more research in areas that need more support.
6. Order the subjects under each heading so that they connect logically.
7. Revise; revise; revise.

### Outline rules:

1. Use a topic outline, which uses only short phrases throughout. Do not use sentences.
2. Begin each entry with a capital letter, but omit end punctuation.
3. Follow the conventions of parallel form. Logic requires that there be a *II* to complement a *I*, a *B* to complement an *A*, and so forth.

4. Label the descending parts of an outline in the following order:

I.  
A.  
1.  
a.  
(1)  
(a)  
(b)  
(2)  
b.  
2.  
B.  
II.

5. Type your final outline with the title centered at the top. Double space the entries and place the final outline between the title page and first page of text.

### Sample outline:

Achebe's Message through Okonkwo

#### I. Introduction

- A. Nigerian occupation
- B. Negative effects
- C. Achebe's message

#### II. Okonkwo's battle

- A. Experiences from colonialism
- B. Internal battle to keep traditions
- C. Okonkwo's suicide

#### III. Missionaries' effects

- A. Religion
- B. Education
  1. Justified by "superior" race
  2. Contradicted oral expression

#### IV. Okonkwo as a tool

- A. Represents African plight
- B. Equals failure to compete with British

#### V. Conclusion

- A. Okonkwo's death like death of Nigerian culture
- B. Message to educate about loss

## PLAGIARISM

**Definition:** using another person's ideas, information, or expressions as your own.

### Forms of plagiarism:

1. Copying or paraphrasing a person's words.
2. Using invented words.
3. Paraphrasing an argument or presenting a line of thinking.

(See pp. 70-73 in the *MLA Handbook* for more explanation.)

### When to cite your sources:

1. If you did not know the information before you started research.
2. If the fact or idea is only in one or two sources.
3. If you use the exact words of an author, or someone else's ideas.
4. If you have any doubt that you may be committing plagiarism.

## IN-TEXT CITATION (PARENTHETICAL DOCUMENTATION)

MLA in-text citations provide the author's last name and a page reference. The information can be placed in a signal phrase or parentheses at the end of the sentence.

### Signal phrase sample:

Tannen has argued this point (178-85).

OR

### Parenthetical reference sample:

This point has already been argued (Tannen 178-85).

**DIRECT QUOTES** are treated similarly with the exception that the words taken from a work are in quotation marks.

### Signal phrase sample:

It may be true, as Robertson maintains, that "in the appreciation of medieval art the attitude of the observer is of primary importance..." (136).

OR

### Parenthetical reference sample:

It may be true that "in the appreciation of medieval art the attitude of the observer is of primary importance..." (Robertson 136).

## WORKS WITH TWO OR THREE AUTHORS

List all authors and page reference.

(Rabkin, Greenberg, and Orlander vii).

## WORKS WITH FOUR OR MORE AUTHORS

List the first author's last name followed by *et al.* and page reference.

(Lauter et al. 2425-33).

## WORKS WITH UNKNOWN AUTHOR or LISTED BY TITLE

Use the full title or an abbreviated form before the page number. Be sure the reference is identifiable according to the first part of the entry on the works cited page. Be sure to punctuate the title correctly with quotes or underlining.

("Mandarin" 347).

## LITERARY OR RELIGIOUS WORKS

In citing classic verse plays and poems, omit page numbers and cite by division (act, scene, book, verse) with periods between the various numbers. Abbreviate the title of the work or book.

(Ham. 1.5.35-37).

(Rev. 21.3).

## READABILITY

- Keep parenthetical references brief but clear and accurate. Identify only what is necessary; the works cited page will contain the specifics necessary for further identification. In-text citation allows the reader to connect the information to a source on the reference page.
- Place the parenthetical reference where a pause would naturally occur (preferably at the end of a sentence).
- The parenthetical reference appears before the end punctuation.

## WORKS CITED PAGE

The list of works cited appears at the end of a paper, but you need to gather and draft this section in advance so that you can complete parenthetical references as you write.

### GENERAL RULES

- Center “Works Cited” an inch from the top of a clean page. Continue page numbering.
- Double-space between the title and entry and continue this spacing throughout the list.
- Begin each entry on the left margin and use a one-half inch hanging indentation for subsequent lines. You may have to return from the previous line in order to indent.
- Reverse the author’s name giving the last name first.
- If an article does not have an author, begin with the title of the article. (See *Anthology*)
- Alphabetize entries according to the first part of the entry (author or title). Ignore any initial *The, A., or An*; use the first important word of a title.
- Use the author or editor’s name given on the title page. Do not abbreviate unless the name is abbreviated on the title page. Omit titles, affiliations or degrees.
- Capitalize titles using traditional capitalization rules.
- Pay attention to punctuation and underlining; follow models closely.

NOTE: The following examples are not double-spaced in order to save space and conserve paper. Double-space citation entries in your paper.

## TEXTS

### BOOK

Author’s last name, First name. Title of Book. Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication.

Fukuyama, Francis. Our Posthuman Future: Consequences of the Biotechnology Revolution. New York: Farrar, 2002.

### BOOK WITH TWO OR MORE AUTHORS

Give the authors’ names in the same order as on the title page. Reverse only the name of the first author.

Marquart, James W., Sheldon Ekland Olson, and Jonathan R. Sorensen. The Rope, the Chair, and the Needle: Capital Punishment in Texas, 1923-1990. Austin: U of Texas, 1994.

### BOOK WITH THREE OR MORE AUTHORS

If a book has more than three authors, you may name only the first and add *et al.* (“and others”).

Gilman, Sander, et al. Hysteria beyond Freud. Berkeley: U of California, 1993.

### WORK IN AN ANTHOLOGY

Author of essay. “Title of Essay.” Title of Anthology. Ed. Editor’s Name. Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication. Page numbers.

Franco, Veronica. “To the Painter Jacopo Tintoretto.” Poems and Selected Letters. Ed. and trans. Ann Rosalind Jones and Margaret F. Rosenthal. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1998. 35-37.

### NO AUTHOR OF A WORK IN ANTHOLOGY

“A Witchcraft Story.” The Hopi Way: Tales from a Vanishing Culture. Comp. Mando Sevillano. Flagstaff: Northland, 1986. 33-42.

### PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED WORKS IN ANTHOLOGY

Franklin, Benjamin. “Emigration to America.” 1782. The Faber Book of America. Ed. Christopher Ricks and William L. Vance. Boston: Faber, 1992. 24-26.

### ENCYCLOPEDIA ARTICLE

Author of article. “Title of Article.” Title of Encyclopedia. Edition. Date of publication.

Mohanty, Jitendra M. “Indian Philosophy.” The New Encyclopedia Britannica: Macropaedia. 15<sup>th</sup> ed. 1987.

### TRANSLATION

Author’s name. Title of Book. Trans. Name of translator. Place of publication: Publisher, Date of publication.

Murasaki, Shikibu. The Tale of Genji. Trans. Edward G. Seidensticker. New York: Knopf, 1976.

### PAMPHLET

Treat a pamphlet as you would a book.

Renoir Lithographs. New York: Trip Builder, 2000.

## **PERIODICALS**

### **ARTICLE IN A SCHOLARLY JOURNAL**

Author's name. "Title of Article." Title of Journal  
Volume number (Year of publication): Inclusive  
page numbers.

Mann, Susan. "Myths of Asian Womanhood."  
Journal of Asian Studies 59 (2000): 835-62.

### **MAGAZINE ARTICLE**

Give complete dates- day, month, year- of weekly  
and bi-weekly magazines. Abbreviate all months  
except May, June, and July.

Author's name. "Title of Article." Title of Magazine  
Date Month Year: Inclusive page numbers.

Weintraub, Arlene, and Laura Cohen. "A Thousand-  
Year Plan for Nuclear Waste." Business Week 6  
Aug. 2002: 94-96.

### **NEWSPAPER ARTICLE**

Give the name in the masthead but omit any  
introductory article- *The, A, An*. If it is a city  
publication, include the city in square brackets. If an  
edition is given, add a comma after the date and name  
it (e.g., *natl. ed., late ed.*).

Jeromack, Paul. "This Once, a David of the Art  
World Does Goliath a Favor." New York  
Times 13 July 2002, late ed.: B7+.

Alaton, Salem. "So, Did They Live Happily Ever  
After?" Globe and Mail [Toronto] 27 Dec.  
1997: D1+.

## **MISCELLANEOUS CITATIONS**

### **VIDEOTAPE OR DVD**

Title of Film. Director and Performers. Original  
release date. Medium. Name of distributor,  
Year of release.

It's a Wonderful Life. Dir. Frank Capra. Perf. James  
Stewart, Donna Reed, Lionel Barrymore, and  
Thomas Mitchell. 1946. DVD. Republic, 2001.

### **INTERVIEW BY RESEARCHER**

Pei, I. M. Personal interview. 22 July 1993.

## **ELECTRONIC SOURCES**

### **WEB SITES**

Electronic media are not as fixed and stable as their  
counterparts. Thus, give as much information as  
possible using the below format. At a minimum, give  
the title of the web page, date of access, and an  
accurate URL address. Refer to pp. 207-215 for more  
details.

Author's name. "Title of the document." Periodical  
Title Date of periodical: page numbers. Title  
of Web site. Date of electronic publication  
or last update. Name of sponsoring  
organization. Most recent date of access  
<URL>.

Zeki, Semir. "Artistic Creativity and the Brain."  
Science 6 July 2001: 51-52. Science  
Magazine. 2002. Amer. Assn. For the  
Advancement of Science. 24 Sept. 2002  
<[http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/  
full/293/5527/51](http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/293/5527/51)>.

Web addresses can be long. Return at a punctuation  
mark.

### **ARTICLES IN ONLINE PERIODICALS**

These articles should be cited in the same way as  
print periodicals, but should include the date of  
access and URL.

Levy, Steven. "Great Minds, Great Ideas."  
Newsweek 27 May 2002. 20 May 2002  
<<http://www.msnbc.com/news/754336.asp>>.

For periodicals accessed through Proquest on the  
KRHS web site, include the name of the database  
(underlined), the name of the library system, date of  
access, and the URL of the homepage.

Levy, Steven. "Great Minds, Great Ideas."  
Newsweek 27 May 2002: 47-49. Proquest.  
Kittatinny Regional High School Lib., Newton,  
NJ. 10 Sept. 2004 <<http://www.krhs.net>>.

