Writing a Research Paper in MLA Style

Cindy Sherman. Untitled Film Still #13. 1978.

The Basics

This pamphlet provides basic guidelines for formatting a paper using MLA (Modern Language Association) documentation procedures. The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed., by Joseph Gibaldi is the standard for humanities papers and should be consulted for more detailed instructions.

The following are examples for how you should list common materials:

Book
Author(s). Title. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

Coldstream, Nicola. Medieval Architecture. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002.

Magazine Article
Author(s). "Title of Article." Title of Magazine. Date of Publication: Page number(s).

Ratcliff, Carter. "Painting's Constitution." Art in America. May 1990: 209-215 & 263.

Magazine Article found on Electronic Database
Author. "Title of Article." Title of Magazine that article originated in. Original date of publication: Page number(s). Name of online magazine database that you found the article in. Date of access <address of database>.

Foster, Hal. "Obscene, Abject, Traumatic." October. Autumn, 1996: 106 – 124. July 5, 2008 <http:www.jstor.org>.

Multivolume Work
Author. Title. Edition (if not the first). Volume (if your paper only cites one). Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Total number of volumes.

Janson, H.W. and Anthony F. Janson. History of Art. 6th ed. Vol. 1. North Carolina: Prentice Hall and Harry N. Abrams, 2001. 2 vols.

Encyclopedia or Dictionary
"Title of the Article." Encyclopedia or Dictionary Title. Edition. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication.

"Art." Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language. 5th ed. Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, 1971.

Online Sources
Author(s) if given. Name of Website. Date of Posting or Last Revision. Date of Access. <electronic address>.

Johnson, Denise. The Slide Projector. 2005. October 3, 2005. <http:www.theslideprojector.com/art5/art5lecturepresentations/art5lecture7.html>.

Lecture or public address
Speaker's Name. "Title of Lecture" (if any). Organization Sponsoring Lecture, Location. Date.

Johnson, Denise. "Art 1 Lecture 15: Anti Form." Chaffey College. July 3, 2008.

Interview
Name of the person interviewed. Name of the interviewer. Program that the interview appeared on. Name of the channel that the program appears on, Place that it is recorded. Date of interview.

Breslin, Jimmy. Interview with Neal Conan. Talk of the Nation. National Public Radio. KPCC, Pasadena. 26 March 2002.

Film, Video or Television Broadcast
Title. Director. Lead actors. Format (DVD, tv series). Name of Distributor, year of release.

The Agony and the Ecstacy. Dir. Carol Reed. Perf. Charlton Heston and Rex Harrison. Videocassette. Twentieth Century Fox, 1965.

Work of art
Artist's Name. Title of Work. Work's Date. Institution and city work can be found in. Date of access. <electronic address> (if work was viewed online).

Da Vinci, Leonardo. Mona Lisa. 1543. Museé du Louvre, Paris. 29 Apr. 2003. <http://www.pbs.org/treasuresoftheworld/a_nav/mona_nav/main_monafrm.html>.

Paper Format

- Use 8 ½" X 11" white paper
- Type only on one side of the paper
- Double-space throughout the paper, including the Works Cited page
- Do not usual unusual fonts or large font sizes to increase the number of pages in your paper
- Use 1" margins on all sides
- Number the pages of your paper in the upper right-hand corner, ½" from the top of the page. Type your last name before each page number.
- Indent the first word of every paragraph ½" from the left margin
- For quotes longer than three lines, indent the quote and single-space it
- Don't forget to save your paper before you submit it to your instructor!

Parts of Your Paper

The sections of your paper should appear in this sequence:

1. **Title Page**. List the title of your paper, your name, the name of the class you're writing the paper for, the name of the instructor, and the date on separate, centered lines. If you do not use a Title Page, in the upper left-hand corner of the first page of your paper, list your name, the name of the class, your instructor's name and the date. Center the title of your paper directly over the body of your text.

2. **Body of the Paper**. The text of your paper.

3. **Appendices**. Material such as tables, pictures, graphs, and charts should be placed in appendices that follow the body of your paper. Each appendix should appear on a separate page with the label centered at the top of the page. Label appendices with capital letters (i.e. Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.).

4. **Citations**. Sources quoted (or cited) in the body of your paper should be listed in the citations section. The words "Works Cited" should be centered at the top of the page and sources should be listed in alphabetical order by the author's last name. See **Listing Works Cited** in this pamphlet for further instructions.

5. **Bibliography**. Unless your instructor requests otherwise, you should only document the sources that you have actually cited in the body of your text. If you choose to include a list of the works you read while researching your topic, but did not necessarily cite in the body of your text, do so in a Bibliography that follows the Works Cited section. The word "Bibliography" should be centered at the top of your page, and sources should be listed alphabetically by the author's last name. Use the same format for listing your works cited to list titles in your Bibliography.

Citing Your Sources

You will need to give credit to the sources of any information, ideas or sentences that you quote or that are not entirely your own. Instead of using footnotes, sources should be cited with a short parenthetical note within the body of your paper and with a full bibliographic entry on your works cited page.

If you are directly quoting information from a source, use quotation marks around the exact phrase or sentence, as in the example under the heading **One Author**. You may also refer to the author in the body of your text and then list the page number in the parenthetical citation.

Always remember to credit your sources for the facts and ideas you've obtained, even if you aren't directly quoting them, as in the following example under the heading **No Author Listed**. Any information you write about that is not public information (i.e. a birth date) or wouldn't be generally known by your reader should be accompanied by a citation.

The information required in a citation note depends on the kind of source you are citing. The following are examples for how you should cite common materials:

One Author

"The idea of a medieval age sandwiched between ancient and modern times was invented in the Renaissance" (Coldstream 219-220).

Two or More Authors

"At this time in the development of art, it seems that there are no rules left to break" (Preble, Preble, and Frank 473).

No Author Listed

Michelangelo's talents were recognized early on by the Medici family (History of Art 61).

Encyclopedia or dictionary

Unless an encyclopedia or dictionary has an author, refer to it in your parenthetical citation under the word or phrase you consulted, rather than the title of the work.

The term art is difficult to define ("Art").

Online Sources

When possible, cite the author of a website. If an author's name isn't available, cite the corporation or organization that owns the site.

The "contrast between light and dark" in a painting is referred to as chiaroscuro. (Johnson).

Listing Works Cited

List the publication information for the sources you have cited in a "Works Cited" section at the end of your paper. Sources should be listed in alphabetical order, by the author's last name. If an author is not credited, list the work by its title.

In general, each entry should have three parts: the author's name, the title of the work, and the publication information. Use a period, followed by one space between the parts of each entry.

Do not number each entry, but double-space the entire list. (To save space, this pamphlet uses single spaces within entries). Indent all lines after the first line, in entries that are longer than one line.