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**SAMPLE MLA PAPER**

ENG 310

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Dancing Socks: An MLA Sample Paper

This sample paper lays out some guidelines for papers in Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Most academic papers are written in third person (*one, it, research, he, she, etc.*), but for this sample, I am writing in first- and second-person point of view (*I, we, our, you, etc.*). Notice that all of my paper is double-spaced, aligned left, and is in a standard font (Times New Roman, 12-point font). Avoid colloquialism (writing informally as if talking).

According to *The MLA Style Center* on its “Formatting a Research Paper” page, MLA papers do not use cover (title) pages. Page numbers are inserted into the header, flush right, and your last name serves as the page header, one space to the left of the page number. The title is centered, double-spaced, not bold, not underlined, and there is no extra spacing between the title and the text in the first paragraph. Do not capitalize articles (a, an, the) in the title unless they begin the title or come after a colon. Note that there are no extra spaces between paragraphs. Only include one space after a punctuation mark (pars. 1-8).

Indent quoted material that runs longer than four lines. The indentation indicates that it is a quote, so no quotation marks are required. Per the *MLA Handbook*,

When you copy an English title or subtitle, capitalize the first word, the last word, and all principal words, including those that follow hyphens. . . . Most titles should be italicized or enclosed in quotation marks. In general, italicize the titles of sources that are self-contained and independent (e.g., books) and the titles of containers (e.g., anthologies); use quotation marks for the titles of sources that are

contained in larger works (e.g., short stories). (67-68)

Note the period is placed *before* the opening parenthesis for indented quotes but *after* the closing parenthesis for quotes not indented. The direct quote is indented one inch from the left margin since it runs over four lines. If a quote appears within the indented quote, use double quotation marks (MLA 87). The text after the quote is not indented unless it begins a new paragraph.

Use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes. Dr. Julia Poullada's PowerPoint presentation stresses how "Sock materials vary, and especially durable, according to O'Brien, 'are socks made with 100% cotton'" (slide 4). Some sources, such as PowerPoints, Web sites, and brochures, do not have page numbers. Web sites, for example, can be cited by indicating the paragraph the text comes from (Dancing Socks, par. 2). *The Purdue Owl*, an online reference site created by the Purdue University Writing Center, states that in "MLA style, the *w* in *Web* is capitalized, and *Web site* or *Web sites* are written as two words" (par. 8). If it were more than one paragraph, abbreviate it *pars.* (MLA 56; *The Purdue Owl* pars. 15-16). Use semicolons to separate more than one source in the same parenthetical citation. If you paraphrase ideas from several pages of a source, include the different pages in the citation (Troyka 614, 622-23, 701).

If a paper involves infrequent use of numbers, "you may spell out numbers written in a word or two and represent other numbers by numerals" (MLA 92). For example, spell out *fifty-one* but use numerals for *151*. Tewes and Wright, numerologists, advise not to use commas for numbers over three digits (2588-89). Their 2008 article, "MLA is Fun," published in the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, was the topic on the "Grammar" episode of Public Television's *Today Ideas*. If the authors' names are included in the sentence with the paraphrase or quote, put the page number in parentheses. If the authors are not evident, include the names in the parentheses, along with page numbers (Tewes and Wright A4; Jackson, Poullada, and Ames 2: 3-4; R. Taoz;

Brynziack et al. slide 1). Taoz includes a first-name initial (before the last name) only because this sample paper cites two authors with the last name Taoz.

When I quote Mary Celeste's poem that I actually read about in somebody else's book, it is called an indirect quote and is formatted this way (qtd. in Cushing 14). Cushing's book, article, or other material is the source listed in the Works Cited section. The *MLA Handbook* says when there are three or more authors, only write the first author's last name followed by *et al.*—both in the paper and in the references (22). Brynziack, et al. suggest that if there is no author, identify the source as you think will make sense to the reader (slide 4). Organization names work (American Red Socks 224), or names of items associated with them (MLA brochure par. 4). If you are citing a work with no author listed, shorten the title (MLA 55-56). For example, an article entitled "How to Knit the Perfect Sock," could be shortened ("How to Knit" 144-45). The entire title would be written out in Works Cited, alphabetically under *h*.

According to Clara Stinchfield II, if you reference information obtained through personal communication (such as an interview, email, telephone call, letter, electronic discussion board, blog, or memo), include it in the body of the text and on the reference page (telephone interview, 3 Mar. 1991). In Works Cited, "When a source is untitled, provide a generic description of it, neither italicized nor enclosed in quotation marks, in place of a title. Capitalize the first word of the description and any proper nouns after it. . . . The description may include the title of another work to which the one being documented is connected" (MLA 28-29). Spell out months in text but not in the Works Cited section. Abbreviate months in Works Cited to the first three letters, except May, June, and July, (not abbreviated) and September (abbreviated to the first four letters) (Natalie Gehan "About MLA," discussion board, June 7 2008).

If an entire paragraph is summing up some ideas appearing in several places of one

source, you may put the in-text citation information at the end of the paragraph. For example, if all three of the sentences in this paragraph were taken from the book *MLA is My Friend* by Marsha DeMellow, the in-text citation guide might look like this (DeMellow, 5, 8, 218). If the information were from a Web site put up by the same author, it might look like this (DeMellow, pars. 2, 4, and 44). See DeMellow in the Works Cited section for how to format more than one entry by the same author. Subsequent entries for the same author replace the name with three hyphens and a period.

In general, your MLA citations on Works Cited should all follow the same format: author, title of source (e.g., article in a journal), title of container (e.g., the name of a journal or a book title), additional contributors (e.g., editor), version (e.g., edition), number (e.g., volume), publisher, publication date, and location (MLA 20). Use vol. when referring to volumes or issues, and use no. when referring to the number (39-40). You do not need to include the city of publication when referencing a book (51). If there is no date listed, do not use n.d., but omit the information instead (2.6.1).

For example, if you are following the standard MLA citation format and citing from a database, include the following information in Works Cited:

- Author (e.g., Duvall, Francis)
- Title (e.g., “The Bermuda Sock Triangle”)
- Container (e.g., *Psychology Tomorrow*)
- Contributors (none in this case)
- Version (vol. 6)
- Edition (no. 2)
- Publisher (none in this case)

- Date (2007)
- Location (pp. 33-34. *Ebsco*, doi:10.1000/00000)
- Optional: Access date (15 Mar. 2008)
- Duvall, Francis. "The Bermuda Sock Triangle." *Psychology Tomorrow*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2007, pp. 33-34. *Ebsco*, doi:10.1000/00000. Accessed 15 Mar. 2008.

In-text, include the author or article title shortcut and the page or paragraph number (s) (MLA 54-56). If there is no author, use the title in your in-text citations. For example, some Web sites do not have an author, in which case you would cite the name of the article or page (*Dancing Socks*, par. 14). Include the DOI or URL in Works Cited. It is optional to include the access date, but it is helpful to include for sources that may change over time (MLA 48, 110, 53).

Insert a page break at the end of your paper to ensure that the Works Cited section begins at the top of a new page. *Work Cited* (if there is just one entry) or *Works Cited* (more than one) is centered, not in quotation marks, and not bold, underlined, or italicized (MLA 111-112). The list of entries is alphabetized (115). See the examples on the following pages for guidance on how to format your Works Cited section.

## Works Cited

Brynziack, et al. "Innovative Communication." Innovation Convention, 17 July 2008, Concordia

University, St. Paul. PowerPoint. **name of the PowerPoint is in quotation marks**

Cushing, Margaret. *Poetry in a Sock Drawer*. Sorrento Press, 1994. **book**

"Dancing Socks." *Dance Stories*, 1 Jan. 2009, [www.dance\\_stories.com/socks\\_animals/](http://www.dance_stories.com/socks_animals/)

dancingsocks. Accessed 11 Jan. 2010. **Web page with no author/Note: URL is broken**

**with soft return (shift plus enter)/1 Jan. 2009 is copyright date and 11 Jan. 2010 is**

**access date**

DeMellow, Marsha A. *Socks*. Socks Yesterday, 6 Sept. 2007, [www.socksyesterday.sock.com](http://www.socksyesterday.sock.com).

Accessed 1 Jan. 2010. **entire Web site**

---. *MLA is My Friend*. 2nd ed. Yale UP, 1996. **book with edition/three hyphens indicates same**

**author as above/UP is the abbreviation of University Press**

---. "Sock Styles and MLA?" *Socks Today*, vol. 4, no. 1, Sept. 2007, pp. 33-34. Accessed 1 Apr.

1999. **journal article/Note: 4.1 stands for volume 4 issue 1 and the :33-34 represents**

**pages 33-44/Note: Sept. 2007 is the publication date and 1 Apr. 1999 is the access date**

*Donating Socks*. American Red Socks, 2000. **corporate author**

Duvall, Francis. "The Bermuda Sock Triangle." *Psychology Tomorrow*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2007, pp. 33-

34. *Ebsco*, doi:10.1000/00000. Accessed 15 Mar. 2008. **article retrieved via database**

FitzPatty, Kierton. "Sock Poetry." *Yay Socks*, 14 Jul. 2006, [www.yaysocks.com/Eire/sockpoems](http://www.yaysocks.com/Eire/sockpoems).

Accessed 1 May 2010. **web page with author**

Freeman, Florence, and Sofia McKendree. *The English Language*. Ed. Zoe Mirabelle West. 6 vols.

Hawthorn Press, 1985-94. **edited book with two authors**

Gehan, Natalie. "Re: Email to the Author." Received by Charlotte Lewis, 7 June 2008. **personal**

**communication**

“How to Knit a Perfect Sock.” *Dancing Yarn*. 17 July 2001: D1+. **newspaper article no author**

Jackson, Non, Frances Poullada, and August Ames. *Semantics of Socks*. Long, 1959. **book**

“Let Grammar Dance!” *Opinion Tomorrow*. Natl. Public Radio, KQRF, St. Croix, 4 June 2006.

**radio program**

*The MLA Style Center*. The Modern Language Association of America, 2016, style.mla.org.

Accessed 27 Sept. 2016. **entire Web site**

The Modern Dancers. *Dance with Grammar*. **brochure or pamphlet, note there is a corporate**

**author (The Modern Dancers) in this citation/Also note that the source has no date, and**

**so nothing is included as a placeholder, including n.d.**

The Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook*. 8th ed. MLA, 2016. **book with**

**edition**

Poullada, Jay. “How to Tie-dye Socks.” Minneapolis Art Crawl. 3 Aug. 2009. PowerPoint.

**PowerPoint**

Pritz, Charlie. *Socks in Spring*. 1999, watercolor, Interplay Arts, Cincinnati. **artwork**

*The Purdue OWL*. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008, owl.english.

purdue.edu/owl. Accessed 3 Mar. 2009. **entire Web site**

“Socks Dance Forever.” National Sock Hop, vol. 33, no. 5, July 2002, pp. 9-12. **magazine, no author**

Stinchfield, Clara II. Personal interview. 3 Mar. 1991. **unpublished interview**

Taoz, Min. *Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Meeting of Sock Lovers, Session on Dryers*. 12-15 Feb.,

2003, Concordia University, St. Paul. **meeting**

Tewes, Zoe F., and Isaac Wright. “MLA is Fun.” *St. Paul Pioneer Press* [St. Paul, MN], 5 Dec. 1995, p.

A4. **newspaper, include the city in [brackets] after the title if the paper is local or not well-**

**known**

Troyka, Lynn Quitman, and Douglas Hesse. *Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers*. 8th ed. Prentice

Hall, 2007. **book with two authors**