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<div align="center">Sample MLA Paper 9th ed.</div>

For many students, college is the first time they are introduced to what is known as "MLA format." This writing style was developed by the *Modern Language Association* in 1883 as a credible standard of formatting for academic writing and research. MLA format is typically used across the humanities disciplines, such as languages and literatures, cultural studies, and more. In contrast, other disciplines might follow an alternative formatting style, such as American Psychological Association (APA) or Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). However, many general education and college-level courses will require MLA format as a universal standard. It is important to check the expectations set by the professor, to ensure that you are following the correct formatting style for all assignments. Through the examples of in-text citations and the accompanying Works Cited page included in this sample paper, students will be able to correctly replicate characteristics of MLA format in their writing assignments.

First, from the style of the font to the size of the margins, it is important to notice the way this paper is formatted. MLA format uses Times New Roman style font in size twelve, with double-spaced lines, and one-inch margins. On the top, left-hand side of the first page, students include a four-lined heading and a title in the center. Additionally, each page will have its own header along the top, right-hand side, which includes the student's last name and page number. For each line of text, the spacebar should only be pressed once; there is no additional spacing between headings or body paragraphs in MLA format. For further resources on MLA

specifications, please visit the "Writing Resources and Handouts" webpage on the *Allan Hancock College Writing Center* website or check out the *Purdue Online Writing Lab.* While MLA format might seem difficult at first, students will find that the process becomes easier with practice. In addition to how the paper looks, another important aspect of MLA format is how research is cited through in-text citations and the accompanying Works Cited page.

In-text citations in the form of a direct quote is one common example for how research is cited within an MLA formatted paper. Students must correctly document information that has been borrowed from another source; otherwise, one might be accused of plagiarism. According to the *MLA Handbook*, "plagiarism" is defined as, "...presenting another person's ideas, words, or entire work as your own," which is viewed by most academic institutions as an unethical and punishable offense (96). Therefore, the most efficient way to avoid plagiarism and maintain academic integrity is to correctly document sources in your writing.

This paper may be used as a model for how to correctly format in-text citations according to MLA standards. Notice how the source in the paragraph above is accompanied by a "tag," or introductory phrase, such as, "According to..." Also, take note of how the title of the source is in *italics* style font. Titles are formatted differently depending on the body of the source. For instance, the song title "Uptown Funk" is in quotes, but the song's album *Uptown Special* is in italics (Mars et al.); the textbook chapter "Formatting Your Research Project" is also in quotes, but the textbook's title, *MLA Handbook,* is in italics. If a student is citing a work written by a particular author, the in-text citation will usually include the author's last name, as well as the location (usually the page number) in parenthesis. The parenthetical is located at the end of the sentence or at the end of the cited information, as shown above.

Imagine a student is writing an essay about the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. The student may cite the following direct quote like so: Victor finally realizes his creation's struggles when he tells the reader, "I was moved" (Shelley 145). As shown, a direct quote will usually be included within the context of the sentence. Other times, when a direct quote is lengthier, like a passage of prose (four lines or more), MLA requires it to be cited as a separately indented section, known as a "block quote." For example:

> I was moved. I shuddered when I thought of the possible consequences of my consent; but I felt there was some justice in his argument. His tale, and the feelings he now expressed, proved him to be a creature of fine sensations; and did I not as his maker owe him all the portion of happiness that it was my power to bestow? (Shelley 145)

It is important to understand that the same information can be cited in multiple ways, but a correct citation will always give credit to the source. For instance, the above representations of an in-text citation for the same direct quote are both correct. In fact, the above quote can even be cited another way, by naming the author within the sentence, like so: Shelley depicts Victor's eye-opening realization by telling the reader, "I was moved" (145). Some, but not all professors, might also ask for students to cite the exact paragraph. In this case, the paragraph numbers will be cited within the same parenthesis, like so: (Shelley 145, par. 3) or (Shelley 145, pars. 3-5). Students who are unsure of a particular citation can check with AHC Writing Center staff or a peer tutor to ensure that sources are correctly documented. Additional MLA resources can be found on the Writing Center's website or the *Purdue Online Writing Lab*.

In today's modern world, many of the sources that students reference are found online. As a reminder, all sourced media should be represented with both in-text citations and on the Works Cited page, including: websites, databases, social media posts, podcasts, blogs, videos,

and e-books. Online periodicals such as *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal,* as well as platforms such as *Instagram* or *YouTube* should always be in italics style font. Whereas, the titles of the articles, videos, or social media posts would be represented in "quotations". If the author is provided by the source, then you must mention the author's name within the sentence or in parentheses at the end of the sentence. Sometimes, a webpage or website has no author, in this case, you will want to provide the title of the article or website. The availability of information online is endless, and it can be easy to find many sources on a given topic; however, it is important to be mindful of the quality of sources used in academic writing.

While certain online sources may be acceptable to reference within a given context, students should always strive to use credible and reputable sources in their academic writing. Researchers mention, "Although the internet contains many exceptional websites whose content has been accurately curated, many websites do not contain credible information and/or may have been authored by people who are not experts in a given area" (Roberts et al.). For instance, an article on the topic of "healthy eating" would be more reputable coming from a source like the *American Heart Association* than a source like *BuzzFeed.* Because of this, most professors will require that students incorporate scholarly sources that are peer-reviewed, which are often found on academic databases. Commonly used databases for scholarly articles are *EBSCOhost, JSTOR, SIRS,* or *CQ Researcher.* The Library at Allan Hancock College offers an incredible array of databases for scholarly journals and articles. To find scholarly peer-reviewed sources for your paper, visit the Library reference desk in person or online.

Although a direct quote is the most frequented method for citing a source in-text, other common ways to cite can be through paraphrasing or summarizing information. Similar to a direct quote, any borrowed information that has been paraphrased or summarized will still need

to be credited to the appropriate source. The *MLA Handbook* asserts that paraphrasing or summarizing is an alternative way to document sourced information, but unlike a direct quote, the ideas have been summarized or rewritten into the author's own words (97-99). The previous sentence, for instance, could have included a direct quotation from the *MLA Handbook;* instead, the sourced information was paraphrased to match the flow and tone of the paragraph. Note that this documentation style still includes an in-text citation by providing the title of the source, as well as the page number in parenthesis. In this particular example, the source is a handbook with no author, so only the known or provided information has been included in the in-text citation.

In conclusion, MLA format is a style that students often use to write college-level essays and assignments. This sample paper models how to correctly format and cite sources within an MLA style essay. This sample paper also includes what MLA refers to as a "Works Cited" (see next page), which must accompany the end of any essay that references sourced information. The Works Cited page has additional formatting requirements, according to the source type. In general, sources on the Works Cited page are listed in alphabetical order and separated by what is known as a "hanging indent." Resources for assisting with MLA format and source documentation can be found on the "Writing Handouts and Resources" webpage on the *Allan Hancock College Writing Center* website or through the *Purdue Online Writing Lab.* Remember, all AHC students are eligible to receive free writing support through the Academic Resource Center. Please ask Writing Center or Tutorial Center staff if you need help getting started.

Works Cited

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