

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Department of English Style Sheet

Based on MLA Handbook for

Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations

This “Style Sheet” is designed to help undergraduates prepare essays and written exercises. It focuses primarily on the mechanical or technical questions that often confuse students when they quote from literary texts, acknowledge debts to outside sources, and revise their drafts for final submission. A list of important reference works is provided in the final section.

1. Presentation of essays. All essays must be printed on standard-sized white paper (8 1/2 x 11 inches). Avoid paper that will not take corrections in ink. Paper should be numbered in the upper right corner, or at the top center. All papers should be securely fastened, but not folded. Avoid plastic covers, which too often prove to be as cumbersome as they are protective.

Students may find that producing a final draft becomes much easier when using a word processing software. Word processors, however, create new kinds of problems. Be sure to learn your software program thoroughly and well before you need to turn in written work.

Most computer mistakes arise from lack of mastery of software. Be sure to allow adequate time to prepare your manuscript and to print it. Problems with your computer do not constitute an acceptable excuse for late or error-ridden papers. Please avoid elaborate fonts.

2. Margins. Allow a margin of approximately 1 1/2 inches at the top, bottom, and sides of each page.

3. Cover sheet. Your first page should be preceded by a cover sheet that indicates the title and the author of the paper (centered) and the course number, instructor, and date (in the lower right hand corner). See the sample cover sheet on the last page of this pamphlet. You need not repeat the title on the first page of your essay.

4. Corrections and insertions. If you cannot make corrections neatly in the line, type or write them in ink above the line in question. If your corrections are lengthy, rewrite or re-print the page.

5. Proofreading. Each essay should be carefully proofread. A corrected typescript is preferable to one filled with errors. Errors are not your computer’s fault, but your own. If you use a spelling program, you must be particularly careful in proofreading since the program will not catch mistakes that form a word in its dictionary. This kind of error is particularly distracting to the reader. The other common word processing error is failure to erase a discarded phrase or sentence. These can turn your prose into nonsense.

6. Spacing. Double space throughout, with the following exception: any indented quotation separated from the text should be single spaced.

7. Titles in text. The titles of all separately printed books, plays, pamphlets, periodicals, paintings, major musical works, and collections of poems should be underlined; do not use italic typeface. You should also underline all major poems that have been separately published (e.g., The Faerie Queene, In Memoriam). Titles of articles, essays, poems, chapters and sections of books, and unpublished works such as theses and dissertations should be enclosed in quotation marks and not underlined (e.g., “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,” “Civil Disobedience”).

8. Quotations.

a. Accuracy. Each quotation should correspond exactly with the original in wording, spelling, and interior punctuation. A capital or lower-case letter at the beginning of a quotation may be altered if it is incorporated into your own sentence. If you underline a word or phrase for emphasis, you must indicate this in parentheses following the quotation (emphasis mine).

When a quotation forms part of your sentence, the entire sentence must make syntactical sense. You can't write, "among the signs of spring Chaucer lists are 'smale foules maken melodye.'" Either adjust the quotation ("Among the signs of spring Chaucer lists are 'smale foules [who] maken melodye'"), or, better, recast your sentence to suit the syntax of the quotation: "Among the signs of spring Chaucer lists is the fact that 'smale foules maken melodye.'" Be especially wary of archaic verb forms: "-(e) st," for example, is a second-person ending; you can't write "Polonius assures Laertes that if he is true to himself he 'canst not then be false to any man.'" "Canst" can only follow the subject "thou."

- b. **Editions used.** You must always indicate the edition from which you are quoting in a "Works Cited" section (see 13 and 14 below). Page numbers (or line numbers in poetry) should be placed in parentheses following subsequent quotations from the same text:

Later in the novel Marlow makes a similar point: "It seemed to me that the house would collapse before I could escape, that the heavens would fall upon my head. But nothing happened" (p. 79).

- c. **Quotation marks:** . Use single quotation marks (‘) only when you indicate a quotation within another quotation. (The English reverse this convention, normally employing what they call "inverted commas.") Notice that the writer has placed one period only at the end of the sentence. *A period after "happened," even though it appears in the original, would be incorrect.*

- d. **Ellipsis.**

- (1) Within a sentence. Use three . . . spaced periods, with a space before the first period. If ellipsis occurs after a complete sentence, do not consider the preceding period as part of the three ellipsis marks. . . .
- (2) Quotations that complete sentences in your text should end with periods even though matter that completed the original may have been omitted.

Browning, on the other hand, often opens his dramatic monologues quite abruptly:

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That a piece a wonder, now.

A period has been placed after "now" because it completes your sentence; in the original the punctuation is a colon, for the sentence is not complete until almost two lines later. It would be incorrect either to leave the colon or to type three periods. You are entitled to begin and end a quotation anywhere you like (short of actual misrepresentation). Put no punctuation at the beginning, and punctuate the end according to the demands of your sentence.

- (3) In the case of poetry, if ellipsis must be indicated at the beginning of a quotation, begin the line approximately at the same place as in the original.

What need they? They are sped; And when they list, their lean and flashy songs

Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw. (ll. 122-24)

- (4) If an omission is lengthy (a line or more in poetry, a paragraph or more of prose), indicate it by a single line of spaced periods:

For I will consider my cat Jeoffry.

.....

For this he performs in ten degrees.

For first he looks upon his forepaws to see if they are clean.

- e. **Interpolations.** Your own comment or explanation within a quotation should be enclosed in square brackets [], not parentheses, even though you may have to put in the brackets by hand. The interpolation of [sic] may be

used to assure your readers that you are quoting accurately although the spelling or sense may seem faulty. Use “sic” sparingly, and never with an exclamation point.

f. Poetry. Quotations of up to three lines of poetry may be run on as part of your text. If you quote two lines, you must place a virgule (/) between the two lines, with a space on each side: “Who mourns for Adonais? Oh, come forth, / Fond wretch! and know thyself and him aright.”

g. Prose.

Prose quotations of ten lines or more should be separated from your text, indented five spaces, with the lines single spaced. Do not use quotations marks unless they occur in the original.

h. References. Use short references whenever possible, often in parentheses following quotations: Hamlet V.ii.8-9; Genesis 5.9; “Ode to Autumn,” 11. 1-4. You will not need to cite the work itself in the parentheses if you have already made your source clear in your text.

i. Closing punctuation. American (not English) usage places commas and periods inside closing quotation marks, and semi-colons and colons outside:

Pope remarked that “No creature smarts so little as a fool.”

“No creature smarts so little as a fool,” Pope remarked.

“No creature smarts so little as a fool”; yet Cibber . . .

“No creature smarts so little as a fool”: perhaps Cibber never

realized the point of Pope’s satire.

9. **Punctuation and spelling.** Be consistent in both. A convenient guide to punctuation can be found at the end of Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary or in Sheridan Baker’s The Practical Stylist. Some special problems:

(a) **Capitals.** Capitalize the first word and all the principal words in titles (but not articles, prepositions, or conjunctions). In mentioning the titles of magazines or newspapers, do not treat an initial definite article as part of the title (e.g., the New York Times), unless the name is cited separately in a footnote or bibliography. Furthermore, “the” at the beginning of the title of any work is omitted after the author’s name in the possessive case: since a possessive is definitive, it takes the place of the definite article. The Canterbury Tales, The Waste Land; but Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales, Eliot’s Waste Land.

(b) **Parentheses.** Use sparingly; no reader likes to be insistently nudged or whispered at.

(c) **Exclamation point.** Use sparingly; don’t shout.

(d) **Italics.** Avoid the excessive use of italics (underlining) for emphasis. Instead, manipulate your language and structure to create the emphasis you want.

(e) **Dash.** A dash is typed as two hyphens—with no blank space before or after—and not as one hyphen between two spaces.

(f) **Foreign words.** Foreign words should be underlined unless, like “tour de force,” they have been naturalized as English words and are found in your dictionary.

10. **Abbreviations.** Abbreviations should normally be restricted to footnotes; spell them out and/or translate them in your text: not “e.g.” but “for example.” Avoid “etc.” Numbers under 100 should be spelled out.

11. **Documentation.** If a paper assignment does not explicitly ask you to use secondary sources, you need not do so. If you do use such sources, you must acknowledge any ideas you borrow—no matter how slight—whether or not you use direct quotation. This means that you must acknowledge points made by friends as well as ideas you have found in books or scholarly articles. Even when you quote from a literary text, it is assumed that the quotation comes

from your first-hand knowledge of the work and not from another source; if it does, you should acknowledge where you first found it.

Plagiarism—academic dishonesty—is considered a serious offense at Northwestern, and severe penalties that are imposed on those who commit it are discussed in the Northwestern undergraduate catalogue, “Dishonesty in Academic Work.” Every undergraduate should be familiar with the pamphlet—Some Notes on Plagiarism and How To Avoid It, available in the Office of Studies (1922 Sheridan).

12. **Gender Inclusive Language.** For the sake of clarity, make sure your language includes both genders when you refer to a mixed group, or when your subject could be either male or female. Example: “Everyone raise his or her hand,” not “Everyone raise his hand” unless the “everyone” refers specifically to a group of males. Similarly, the statement “Everyone who takes this test will find out whether or not she is pregnant” is correct with gender specific language. Sometime words themselves that indicate professions or provide descriptions contain a gender specificity. Often, though, a gender inclusive term is available.

Examples: not “chairman,” but “chair”

not “garbage man,” but “garbage collector” not “fireman,” but “fire fighter”

not “authoress,” but “author.”

Try to use gender inclusive language as gracefully as possible.

13. **MLA Style.** Other styles require footnotes or endnotes, but the new MLA style uses parenthetical citations right in the text. These citations refer the reader to a list of “Works Cited” at the end of the paper. The citation in the text of your paper can include the following information from the work you are referring to: the author’s name, a shortened form of the title, and the page number[s] of the material used. Any of this information can be omitted, however, if it has already been identified in the text. Further, you may omit the title if only one work by that author appears in your “Works Cited” list.

Examples:

a) One seventeenth century philosopher argues that without some form of government, life would be “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes, Leviathan 186).

If you referred to no other work by Hobbes, your citation would read (Hobbes 186). Include enough information so that the reader can find the reference, but omit redundant or unnecessary titles, authors, or even page numbers.

b) Thomas Hobbes believed that without some form of government, life would be “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (Leviathan 186).

To include the author’s name here would unnecessarily repeat information.

c) In his Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes argues that without some form of government, life would be “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short” (186).

Since the work and author have already been mentioned, the citation only specified the page number. When citing a work by two or three authors, include all the names in the parenthetical citation. If the work has more than three authors, supply the name of the first author and follow the name with “et al.”

Poetry, Drama, and the Bible

When you cite poetry, drama, or the Bible, give the numbers of lines, acts, and scenes, or chapters and verses, instead of page numbers. You must still identify your edition in the “Works Cited” page, but this method allows the reader to find the reference in a different edition as well.

Examples:

a) In Shakespeare’s As You Like It, Rosalind indicates a new scene by proclaiming “Well, this is the Forest of Arden” (2.4.14).

The line appears in Act 2, Scene 4, line 14. The progression of numbers is always from the larger to the smaller units. In the new MLA style, writers now use Arabic instead of Roman numerals.

- b) Some people cite the Old Testament creation story (Gen.1.1-2.22) as evidence against evolution.

This reference indicates that the story begins in Chapter 1, Verse 1, and continues through Chapter 2, Verse 22.

- c) In her poem “Aunt Jennifer’s Tigers,” Adrienne Rich compares the proud, embroidered tigers to the terrified hands that made them while bearing “the massive weight of Uncle’s wedding band” (8).

The reader can find this quotation in line 8 of Rich’s poem. If the author and text had not been identified already, the writer would have had to include that information as well in the citation.

14. **List of Works Cited.** The list of works cited at the end of the paper should be alphabetized by author (last name first) and double-spaced throughout. Only list works that you have actually referred to in the text. Begin the first line of each entry at the left margin; indent subsequent lines five spaces.

Example:

Mintz, Sidney W. Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History. New York: Penguin Books, 1985.

Like all entries, this one includes three units separated by periods:

1. The author’s name, last name first.
2. Title. Underline the title and include the subtitle. (The subtitle of this book is The Place of Sugar in Modern History.)
3. Publication information. Give the place of publication, the publisher, and the latest copyright date.

More than One Author

If the books list two or three authors, include all of them but only reverse the names of the first author.

Example:

Bernstein, Carl, and Bob Woodward. All the President’s Men. New York: Simon and Shuster, 1974.

If the book has more than three authors, name the first author, followed by “et al.”

Example:

Wallace, Irving, et al. The Book of Lists. New York: William Morrow Company, Inc., 1980.

Editors

Innis, Robert E., ed. Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.

Anthologized Work

Lowell, Amy. “The Letter.” The Norton Anthology of Literature by Women. Eds. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1985, p.1297.

Translation

Jauss, Hans Robert. Toward an Aesthetic of Reception. Trans. Timothy Bahti. Theory and History of Literature Series, 2. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982.

If the work is part of a series like this one, include that information in your entry.

Article

Wasserman, Earl R. “Collins’ ‘Ode on Poetical Character.’” ELH 34 (1967): 92-115.

Kuttner, Robert. "Against Austerity." The New Republic. 28 December 1987: 16-18.

Notice that citation of a popular magazine differs from citation of a journal.

Book Review

Lipking, Lawrence. "Man of the World." Rev. of John Dryden and His World by James Anderson Winn. The New Republic 28 December 1987: 32-36.

A book review citation includes information about the book reviewed and the reviewing article.

If you use an unsigned article, list it alphabetically by title. For information on how to organize references not explained here, see the

Harbrace Handbook, pp. 423-433 or The MLA Style Manual, section 4.

15. *Reference Works.*

Achtert, Walter S. and Joseph Gibaldi. The MLA Style Manual. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1985.

Baker, Sheridan. The Practical Stylist. 4th edn. New York: Crowell, 1977. This is one of several good manuals on style now available; it has been expanded as The Complete Stylist.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary. Ed. J.B. Sykes. 6th edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976. This is the standard one-volume English dictionary based on the Oxford English Dictionary and its supplements.

Fowler, H.W. A Dictionary of Modern English Usage. Rev. Sir Ernest Gowers. 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1965. The standard, witty, and trenchant guide to English usage.

Miller, Casey and Kate Swift. The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing. Second Edition. New York: Harper and Row, 1988.

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. New York: Modern Language Association, 1977. Available in paperback.

MLA Style Sheet. 2nd edn. New York: Modern Language Association, 1970. The standard pamphlet for preparation of scholarly articles and books.

A Manual of Style. 12th edn. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1969. The most complete guide to the preparation and editing of articles and books.

Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. 4th edn. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1973. Available in paperback

Acknowledgements: MLA Style Sheet; Writing Prose (Yale College, 1975); The Style Sheet (Department of English, Princeton University); Hodges and Whitten, Harbrace College Handbook; Achtert and Gibaldi, The MLA Manual of Style.

[Sample Cover Sheet]

[Title, centered and capitalized:]
SPENSER'S MIRROR OF THE
WORLD: THE FAERIE QUEENE

[Author and class:] Andrew Kozelka '90

[Course number:] English C33

[Instructor:] Professor Cirillo

[Date:] 1 November 1989