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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.*). MLA, publishers of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, seventh edition, says to “italicize words and letters that are referred to as words and letters” (78), as is demonstrated above with *I, we, etc.*, and to “leave only one space after a concluding punctuation mark” (77). 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).

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 (MLA 117-118). 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 is no extra space between paragraphs.

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*,

Italicize the names of books, plays, pamphlets, periodicals (newspapers, magazines, and journals), Web sites, online databases, films, television and radio broadcasts, compact discs, and...works of visual art...Use quotation marks for the titles of articles, essays,

stories and poems published within larger works, chapters of books, pages in Web sites, individual episodes of television and radio broadcasts...and lectures and speeches. (88-89)

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 102). 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, I would abbreviate it *pars.* (MLA 221; *The Purdue Owl* pars. 15-16). Use semicolons to separate more than one source in the same parenthetical citation. If you paraphrase ideas that appear in 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 one or two words and represent other numbers by numerals" (MLA 81-85). 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 suggests it is optional to write out all of the author's names when there are three or more authors, or to write the first author's last name followed by *et. al.*—both in the paper and in the references (155, 215). 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). Gibaldi notes that if you are citing a work with no author listed, shorten the title (248). 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). "Give the name of the writer of the memo, a description of the memo that includes the recipient, the date of the document, and the medium of delivery. Any title of the memo should be enclosed in quotation marks and placed immediately after the writer's name" (MLA 204). 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.

Formatting the in-text citation for material obtained electronically (usually through the Internet) is the same as for hard-copy material. Basically, cite the author’s last name and include a page or paragraph number. Some Web sites do not have an author, in which case cite the name of the article or page on the site (*Dancing Socks*, par. 14). MLA reports the inclusion of URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) “has proved to have limited value...include a URL as supplementary information only when the reader probably cannot locate the source without it or when your instructor requires it” (182). In works cited, include the word *Web* and the access date (MLA 181).

For material from a database, include the following information in works cited:

- Details about the source (Ex. author, journal name italicized, volume.issue, [year], colon, page number [s])
- The name of the database, italicized (Ex. Ebsco)

- The word *Web* (not italicized)
- The date you accessed the work (Ex. 4 June 2003)
- Ex. Duvall, Francis. "The Bermuda Sock Triangle." *Psychology Tomorrow* 6.2 (2007): 33-34. *Ebsco*. Web. 15 Mar. 2008.

In-text, include the author or article title shortcut and the page or paragraph number (s) (MLA 193).

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. The list of entries is alphabetized. See the examples on the following pages for guidance on how to format your Works Cited section.

Works Cited

American Red Cross. *Donating Socks*. Washington, DC, 2000. **corporate author**

Brynziack et al. "Innovative communication." Innovation Convention. Concordia University, St.

Paul. 17 July 2008. PowerPoint. **name of the PowerPoint is in quotation marks**

Cushing, Margaret. *Poetry in a Sock Drawer*. Bar Harbor: Sorrento Press, 1994. Print. **book**

"Dancing Socks." *Dance Stories*. 2007. 1 Jan. 2009. 11 Jan. 2010. <http://www.dance_stories.com/socks_animals>.

website 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. Home page. 6 Sept. 2007. Web. 1 Jan. 2010. <www.geocities.marsha/home>.

---. *MLA is My Friend*. 2nd ed. New Haven: Yale UP, 1996. Print. **book with edition/three**

hyphens indicates same author as above/UP is the abbreviation of University Press

---. "Sock Styles and MLA?" *Socks Today* 4.1 Sept. 2007: 33-34. Web. 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 retrieval date

Duvall, Francis. "The Bermuda Sock Triangle." *Psychology Tomorrow* 6.2 (2007): 33-34. Ebsco.

Web. 15 Mar. 2008. **article retrieved via database**

FitzPatty, Kierton, ed. Home page. 14 Jul. 2006. Web. 1 May 2010. <<http://www.geocities/Eire/poems/geocities.com>>.

web page not easy to find without inclusion of the URL

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

New York: Hawthorn Press, 1985-94. Print. **edited book with two authors**

Gehan, Natalie. Email to the author. 7 June 2008. **personal communication**

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: The Modern

Language Association of America, 2003. Print. **book with edition**

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

Jackson, Non, Frances Poullada, and August Ames. *Semantics of Socks*. London: Long, 1959. Print.

“Let Grammar Dance!” With Zoe Tewes, and Isaac Wright. *Opinion Tomorrow*. Natl. Public Radio.

KQRF, St. Croix, 4 June 2006. Radio. **radio program**

The Modern Dancers. *Dance with Grammar*. Boston: Dover, n.d. Print. **brochure or pamphlet**

The Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th

ed. New York: MLA, 2009. Print. **book**

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 University. 2008. Web. 3 Mar.

2009. **website/since it is not difficult to find on the web, no need to include URL**

“Socks Dance Forever.” National Sock Hop 33.5 July 2002: 9-12. Print. **magazine, no author**

Stinchfield, Clara II. Telephone 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. Print. **meeting**

Tewes, Zoe F., and Isaac Wright. “MLA is Fun.” *St Paul Pioneer Press*. 5 Dec. 1995. A4. Print.

newspaper

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

Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2007. Print. **book with two authors**

