APA and MLA Documentation

- **APA (the American Psychological Association)** is commonly used in the social sciences (psychology, geography and planning, sociology).
- **MLA (the Modern Language Association)** is commonly used in the humanities (English, art, theater). Individual teachers and departments may prefer different styles of documentation, but APA and MLA are the most common types.
- **Primary/field research** (firsthand knowledge) refers to research conducted by you: interviews, observations, surveys, experiments, notes, art you examine, eyewitness accounts, and news reports.
- **Secondary research** refers to research you use that someone else has done: books, articles, biographies, researchers’ reports, book reviews, web sites and other Internet sources.
- **In-text citations or parenthetical citations** are references to the sources you use in the text of the paper.

Similarities between MLA and APA:

- All borrowed material whether you quote directly, paraphrase, or summarize must be cited in the text of the paper and on a Works Cited page (MLA) or a References page (APA).
- Both MLA and APA require double-spacing throughout the paper.
- Works Cited (MLA) and Reference (APA) page entries should be listed alphabetically by author’s last name. If there is no author listed, alphabetize by the first key word of the article’s title. If the author of an article is unknown, use all or part of the title in your in-text citation.
- Any source cited in the text of the paper must appear on the References or Works Cited page; any source listed on the References or Works Cited page must be cited in the text.
- Parenthetical citations should clearly point to specific sources on the Works Cited or References page: the in-text citation should directly correspond to the first word on the Works Cited or References page.
- All lines after the first line of an entry on the References or Works Cited page should be indented five spaces from the left margin (one tab space).
- The heading Works Cited or References should appear on a separate page, centered; do not underline, italicize, bold face, or put the words in quotes.
- Running acknowledgements to introduce borrowed material (“According to Dennis Bohr …”) will make citations easier.
- In both MLA and APA, integrate quotes into the paper smoothly. Do not drop quotes in whole without a lead in or without explanation.
- Short quotations are integrated into the body of the paper using quotation marks, and the punctuation follows the parenthetical citation (for both MLA and APA).
• Longer quotations (more than four typed lines in MLA; 40 words or more in APA) are indented one inch from the left margin; do not use quotation marks; final punctuation comes after the last word of the sentence, not the citation.

Differences between MLA and APA:
• In MLA, if you mention the author in the text of the paper, you cite only the page number at the end of the borrowed material:

  According to Dennis Bohr, Wheaties is a Communist conspiracy (22).

• In MLA, if the author's name is not included in the text, cite the name and page number in parentheses directly after the borrowed material:

  Wheaties is a Communist conspiracy (Bohr 22).

• In APA, when the author's name is used in the text of the paper, the year is placed directly after it in parentheses; the page number is cited at the end of the borrowed material (using ‘p.’ and the page number). Page numbers are required in APA and MLA when you quote directly; in APA, paraphrases do not require page numbers, but they are suggested for clarity:

  According to Bohr (2009), Wheaties is a Communist conspiracy (p. 22).

  Wheaties is a Communist conspiracy (Bohr, 2009, p. 22).

• MLA: On the Works Cited page, the entry should list the author's last name, then first name, separated by a comma (Bohr, Dennis.)

• APA: On the References page, the entry would contain the author's last name, and then the first initial only, separated by a comma (Bohr, D.).

One major difference between MLA and APA citations on the Works Cited or References pages involves capitalization of titles:
• In MLA, capitalize titles according to standard capitalization rules:

  Bohr, Dennis. Macbeth: The Play That Dare Not Speak Its Name.

• In APA, in the text of the paper, follow standard capitalization rules.

• In APA, on the References page, capitalization varies according to the type of work you are citing:

  • For books, capitalize only the first word of the title and the first word after a colon. Italicize or underline the title. (Proper nouns and adjectives are still capitalized.)

- For journal articles, the same capitalization rules apply, but do not italicize the title or use quotation marks for it. (Note that proper names are still capitalized.)


- For periodical titles, capitalize AND italicize as you normally would:

  *Wheaties and Communists Illustrated*

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**Sample MLA Citation**


**Sample APA Citation**