

MLA ~ Titles, Numbers, and Abbreviations

****This is an overview. ALWAYS check the full MLA Handbook (The Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers of Research Papers. 7th Edition.) for complete information****

Titles of Works in Writing

Capitalization:

- Capitalize the first and last words of the title
- Capitalize all other important words included in the title
 - >Parts of Speech to Capitalize:
 - ~nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, subordinating conjunctions (i.e.: after, if, until, where...)
 - >Parts of Speech to Keep in Lower Case:
 - ~articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, “to” in infinitives

Indicating Titles:

Rules for Italics:

- Italicize if:
 - >The work was published independently
 - ~Including books, periodicals, films, operas, paintings, etc.
- DO NOT FORGET:
 - >Italicize any punctuation that is included in a title

Rules for Placing Between Quotation Marks:

- Place between quotation marks if:
 - >The work is part of a larger collection
 - ~Including poems, articles, essays, book chapters, songs
 - >The work is unpublished
 - ~Including lectures and speeches
- DO NOT FORGET:
 - >Include any punctuation before the closing quotation marks
- Use single quotation marks if:
 - >A title within another title would normally appear within quotation marks
 - ~i.e.: “Language and Literary Allusions in ‘The Heights of Macchu Picchu’”
 - >A quotation appears within a title
 - ~i.e.: “Creativity Employed to Prevent ‘Foolish Consistency’”

Identifying Italicized Titles Within Italicized Titles:

- Leave title alone; do not use underlines or quotation marks
 - >i.e.: *Approaches to Teaching Murasaki Shikibu’s The Tale of Genji*

Exceptions:

- Sacred writings >Bible, Koran, King James Version, Genesis, Gospels
- Laws and acts >Magna Carta, Bill of Rights
- Series >Masterpiece Theater
- Societies >American Medical Association, Daughters of the American Revolution
- Buildings >Washington Monument, Smithsonian, Empire State Building
- Conferences and courses >Survey of British Literature ENL204, Urbana Conference
- Music identified by key >Beethoven’s Symphony no. 7 in A, op. 92

Numbers in Writing

Words vs. Numerals

Infrequent number use:

- spell out numbers written in one or two words

Frequent number use:

- use Arabic numerals preceding measurements
 - >i.e.: 15 milliliters, 72 pounds
- use Arabic numerals when numbers are presented together or are reporting data
 - >i.e.: from 12 to 17
 - >i.e.: halved, dropping to 4 units per household
- spell out all other numbers if they can be written in one or two words

****Do NOT begin a sentence with numerals.**

Using Numerals

Always use numerals in:

- addresses, dates, with abbreviations and symbols, decimal fractions, page references, relating numbers, large numbers (combine numerals and words: 17 billion)
- percentages, money
 - >these instances can be written out if the total phrase is three or fewer words

Writing Numbers

Always spell out numbers in:

- centuries (lowercase letters), hours in conjunction with o'clock (eight o'clock), time with quarter and half (half past three)

Roman Numerals

Always use roman numerals in:

- divisions of an outline, names of individuals in a series (John Paul II), citing pages numbered in roman numerals (lowercase letters)

Abbreviations in Writing

Generally, abbreviations are avoided within the text of a paper. Make sure the audience would understand the abbreviation, explaining it if necessary. Always use accepted forms of abbreviations.

Abbreviations are often used in tables and in lists of works cited.

Accepted forms of abbreviation:

- Use a period and a space in abbreviations of peoples' names >i.e.: M. G. Smith
- Abbreviations ending in lowercase letters end with periods >i.e.: inc., etc.
- Abbreviations of solely lowercase letters that represent their own words are separated by periods, but not by spaces >i.e.: a.m., e.g.
 - ~exceptions to the rule: mph, rpm
- Do NOT use periods or spaces between letters, specifically in those of all capital letters >i.e.: BC, MN, CD-ROM

Accepted abbreviations:

- months, units of time, states, provinces, countries, common scholarly abbreviations