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A Sample Paper for the Purpose of Correct Formatting in MLA-8

The Modern Language Association (MLA) has moved toward a less-directive and moreindividualized approach in formatting research papers with the release of the *MLA Handbook Eighth Edition* (hereinafter "*MLA-8*"). For example, MLA repeatedly refers to professors' rights to establish unique formatting requirements ("MLA Style Center"). Accordingly, the formatting guidelines herein are basic recommendations, but students are encouraged to follow their professors' requirements, if and when those differ from what is set forth here.

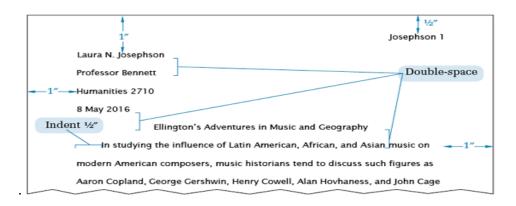
The *MLA-8* itself does not explain how to set up or lay out the "format" of the pages in a research paper. Rather, MLA chose instead to maintain the same guidelines as published in the seventh edition of the *MLA Handbook* (*MLA-7*). It has, however, created a website especially geared to provide all of the formatting answers not included in the *MLA-8* or this sample paper: https://style.mla/org/formatting-papers/. Check there for the most up-to-date formatting rules.

The *MLA-8* and the sample papers on the "MLA Style Center's" website do not normally use headings to separate papers into sections. Therefore, in an effort to help organize the elements of this sample paper without confusing students with section headings that are not common in *MLA-8*, the following chart details the sections addressed in this sample paper, and the page(s) on which each is covered:

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Research papers in *MLA-8* format do not include separate title pages. All pages must include the author's last name, followed by one space and the page number in the header at the right margin (see top right corner of this page). As shown in the figure below from <u>style.mla.org</u> (and in this sample paper itself), the first page of any paper in *MLA-8* format must include separate lines at the left margin with the student's name, the instructor's name, the course number, and the date of completion:



MLA recommends "an easily readable type-face (e.g., Times New Roman) in which the regular type style contrasts clearly with the italic" ("MLA Style Center") in standard size font (typically 12-point). Papers should be "left-justified" (in other words, only the left margin would line up, and the right margin would have a ragged edge, as shown throughout this paper). Students should be sure that their word processing program is not set to automatically hyphenate words that are too long to appear on one line. Everything in *MLA-8* format should be double-spaced, including notes and works-cited entries. Paragraphs should be indented $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the left margin. Only one space should be added after closing punctuation before beginning the next sentence.

MLA-8 is almost identical to *MLA-7* in regards to formatting and parenthetical citations, but the *MLA-8* focuses heavily on simplifying and standardizing the works-cited entries. There are a few notable differences in *MLA-8* versus *MLA-7*, however. Delineations for "print" or "web" are no longer used, for example. Rather, *MLA-8* defines the core elements of the workscited list as including the author(s), title of the source, title of its container, other contributors, version, number, publisher, publication date, and location (20), in that order. These elements are discussed in greater detail in the paragraphs that follow. Block quotes in *MLA-8* are also indented one tab (i.e., $\frac{1}{2}$ ") instead of two (76); citations and works-cited entries for a resource with three or more authors will use et al., as also discussed and demonstrated below. Punctuation within the

works-cited page has also been simplified in the *MLA-8*. DOIs or URLs are encouraged (48, 110); the place of publication is omitted unless necessary for clarification (51). Page numbers in the works-cited list are now denoted by the abbreviation p. or pp. (46). When a periodical has a month or season in addition to the year, it is now always included (45). Volume and issue numbers are denoted by title, as discussed more fully below. Placeholders are no longer used for missing information; such details are simply omitted (111).

For those students already familiar with *MLA-7*, the following chart will help provide a quick visual of these changes:

	MLA-8	MLA-7
Delineations for "print" or	Omit	Required
"web"		
Block quotes	Indented one tab $(1/2")$	Indented two tabs (1")
Three+ authors	Use et al.	Name all three
DOIs and URLs	Encouraged	
Place of publication	Omit	Required
Page numbers	p. or pp.	
Volume and issue number	vol. 3, no. 2	3:2
Missing information	Omit	Include placeholder (i.e., n.d.
		for no date)

The list of works cited includes all of the resources that compile the details referenced throughout the paper. These should be arranged on a separate page at the end of the paper, with the words "Works Cited" centered on the top line (without the quotation marks). Use singular "Work Cited" (also without the quotation marks) when there is only one work cited. *MLA-8* also advocates for double-spacing throughout the works-cited section, as well as a ¹/₂" hanging indent (where the first line of each entry is at the left margin, and lines 2+ of each entry are indented ¹/₂" from the left margin, as shown in the works-cited list of this sample paper).

Since the in-text citations are formatted based on the information derived from the workscited list, attention in this sample paper will first be given to formatting the cited sources. This is especially relevant for works with unknown or corporate authors, since both of those require the title of the work to be moved to the author's position in the works-cited list and thus the in-text citation.

The works-cited list credits and details relevant facts related to each source, including its author, title of source, title of container, other contributors, version, number, publisher, publication date, and location. Sources will not necessarily have every element; input the available information. *MLA-8* has devised a "practice template" (129) for students to plug each applicable element in to create the works-cited entry for each source. Periods follow the author's name, the title of the source, and the location; commas follow everything else. Thus the elements would appear, as applicable, in the following order, with relevant punctuation as noted herein by the color-coding:

Author.

Title of source. Title of container, Other contributors, Version, Number, Publisher, Publication date, Location.

The first author's name should always be inverted in the works-cited list (i.e., Last, First); see the entries in the works-cited list. When there are two authors, the first author's name is inverted, followed by a comma and the word "and" (not in quotation marks), and then the second

author's name in regular first-name-first order. The example given on page 21 of the *MLA-8* is that for Dorris and Erdrich; see that entry in the works-cited list herein. When a resource has three or more authors, *MLA-8* (22) requires that the first author's name be inverted, followed by the abbreviation "et al." (also without quotation marks) in both the in-text citation and works-cited entry. Et al. is a Latin abbreviation for *et alii*, meaning "and others," which is why the word "al." has a period, whereas "et" does not. For example, Eachwort et al. urged others to emphasize the day.

When two or more resources are written by the same author, arrange them alphabetically according to the first major word in the <u>title</u>, then spell out the author's name fully in the first entry, but use three dashes in its place for all subsequent entries by the same author. For example, Morris Second wrote two (hypothetical) articles: "Remember to Arrange by Title" and "Same Author, Titles Arranged Alphabetically." His first works-cited entry includes his name, but the second one replaced his name with the three dashes. This rule applies to two or more works by the same author or the same group of authors in the same order. When a resource includes the same first author plus an additional author, do not use dashes (unless both authors also wrote multiple works that are cited). Note in the works-cited list that Second also co-authored an article with Arthur T. Jones titled "Article with Co-Author."

MLA-8 distinguishes between different titles employed in the role of "author" ---be it as editor, translator, creator, performer, etc. (23-24). These individuals, though named in the author's position, are delineated by the role each played in creating the source. In today's electronic age, *MLA-8* even provides instruction on how to use to online usernames to denote authors of tweets or blogs (24). When the author is unknown or cannot be discerned---such as anonymous works like *Everyman* or video lectures from Blackboard with no known author or

presenter (e.g., "Lesson 21") ---*MLA-8* requires that students skip that field and move the title to the author's position (55-56). When a corporate author also publishes the work, *MLA-8* requires students to omit the author altogether and name it as publisher only (25), as depicted in the work-cited entry for the *MLA-8*.

Titles of works include both wholes with no smaller part (as in a book), and smaller parts of a larger work (as in the chapter of an edited book or an article in a journal). Wholes (e.g., books or journals) should be italicized; smaller parts (e.g., articles) should be encapsulated in quotation marks. For example, John Smith's book *Hunting Squirrels* provides a fascinating journey into the steps to track squirrels, whereas Sara Smith's article "Squirrel Habits" --- published in *The Journal of Squirrels*---details curious behavioral customs the creatures have. Pages 24-29 of the *MLA-8* expound on the details for a myriad of different title formats.

The next core element is the title of the "container," which represents the larger whole of the smaller source cited. If a book chapter is cited, the chapter itself constitutes the smaller title of the work being cited, and the name of the book represents its container. Likewise, a journal is a container for its articles. A whole book in the works-cited list, such as Gilligan's *In A Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*, does not have a container; the title of the source and its container are one and the same (omit the latter, rather than repeating it). Pages 30-36 of the *MLA-8* give examples of various titles and containers. For example, page 35 details how to cite a short story. "The Squirrel Poem" by Joanna Smith is an example of this, as are Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Greene's "The Destructors."

Page 38 of the *MLA-8* explains how to credit editors and contributors. Kennedy and Gioia, for example, penned an introduction to another author's work. If there is an editor or translator, list him or her as an "other" contributor (37-38) in the works-cited entry, then provide

the publisher and date of publication.

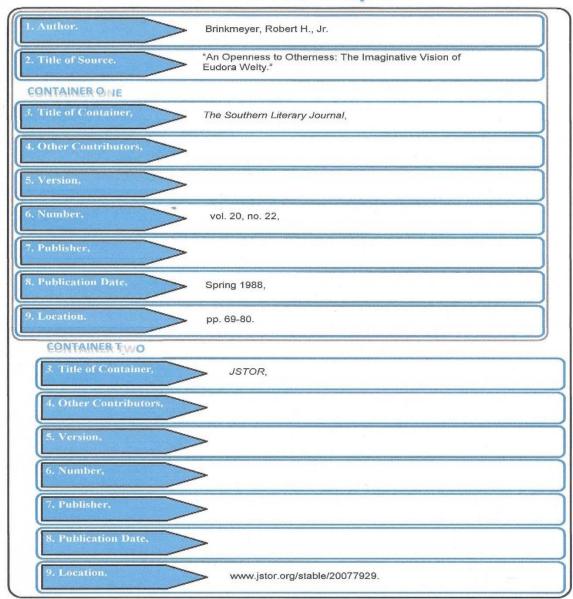
Journal issues and volume numbers are addressed on pages 39-40. *MLA-8* now requires writers to delineate the journal volume by the abbreviation vol., and the volume number by the abbreviation no. For example, Sara Smith's article was published in vol. 30, no. 2, of *The Journal of Squirrels*. This differs from *MLA-7*, which would have denoted the volume and number as 30.2. This is true for magazines, as well.

Special rules for publishers are discussed on page 41 of the *MLA-8*. Gilligan's and Joanna Smith's books, for example, were both published by Harvard's University Press; Hilts depicts how to cite a non-academic publisher (see the works-cited list of this paper for visuals of how to credit these three resources). When, whether, and how to include electronic identifiers such as URLs are explained on pages 44-49.

The *MLA-8* includes a discussion on materials that have been republished, such as Shakespeare's *Othello* and Chopin's "The Story of an Hour." Likewise, including dates of access for online resources may prove beneficial (53). Specifics not included in the *MLA-8*, but documented in the "MLA Style Center" website, include dictionary entries and citing a Bible version with a named editor. The word "heavy" has many definitions, for example---all except one of which are adjectives; it is cited herein so that its entry could be included in the workscited list of this sample paper as a visual for students on how to format dictionary definitions. *The New American Bible*, for example, does not name or credit a specific editor, but *The New Jerusalem Bible* does. The works-cited entries in this sample paper for those resources show the differences. Note that works-cited entries are arranged alphabetically by the first major word, omitting articles such as "a," "an," or "the," as both Bible entries depict below.

Using the practice template provided by MLA-8 (129) looks like this (note that each line

includes the appropriate punctuation as addressed above, as well as necessary italics):



MLA Practice Template

Once all of the known or relevant information is plugged into the template, just take and plug each element in order to craft the works-cited entry:

Brinkmeyer, Robert H., Jr. "An Openness to Otherness: The Imaginative Vision of Eudora

Welty." *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 20, no. 22, Spring 1988, pp. 69-80. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20077929.

Section 2 of Part II details all of the special situations in the works-cited entries that were not addressed in Part I. These include variant forms of authors' names, authors' titles and suffixes, and corporate authors. Specifics regarding titles of works, prefaces, translations, versions, and publishers are also outlined, as are details on URLs and DOIs (110), punctuation, and formatting and ordering the works-cited list. Page 113 covers how to order multiple works by the same author, which is also addressed on pages 5-6 of this sample paper; the pages thereafter discuss multiple works by co-authors, alphabetizing by title, and cross referencing.

Once the works-cited entries are prepared using *MLA-8*'s practice template, writers will be able to cite those sources properly within the body of the paper. Section 3 of the *MLA-8* provides a thorough discussion of in-text citations. *MLA-8*'s goals regarding in-text citations "are brevity and clarity, guiding the reader as unobtrusively as possible to the corresponding entry in the works-cited list" (116). In-text citations usually require the author's name and page number. When the author is unknown, name the title, in quotation marks, as it appears in the title place in the works-cited entry. "MLA Style Center" is an example throughout this sample paper. No punctuation is required between the author and page number. For example, racial bias must be addressed when teaching on *Othello* (Bartels 45).

When a corporate author is named parenthetically, abbreviate commonly-abbreviated terms (i.e., Dept. for Department). For the sake of brevity, titles of sources may be abbreviated if they are longer than a noun phrase, which consists of a noun and one or more modifiers (117). For example, *Owen's Northern Lights* would be spelled out fully each time, since it is comprised solely of a noun and two modifiers; whereas *Owen's Lights of the North* can be shortened to *Owen's Lights*, since "of the North" is a prepositional phrase that is not part of a noun phrase.

Note that the *MLA-8* does allow writers who refer to material from the same source multiple times in the same paragraph to cite that source only once, at the end of their paragraph, as long as no other sources were used in between (124).

As with the works-cited list, citations of sources with three or more authors will employ the term et al. Resources without a known author will name the title in the author's position. Writers are encouraged to name the author in the beginning, middle, or end of the sentence. The following three sentences exemplified each option. Eachwort et al. stressed the importance of eating a wholesome breakfast to start one's day (12). In "The Squirrel Poem," Joanna Smith detailed the antics of squirrels. "The Destructors" foretells the cruel and macabre plot of the Wormsley Common Gang to deconstruct Old Misery's home from the inside-out (Greene 3).

Part II addresses the details of *MLA-8* style, beginning with "the mechanics of scholarly prose" (61). Some of these elements are discussed in detail in the rest of this sample paper. The chart below itemizes those issues <u>not</u> addressed in detail herein, and their applicable page numbers in the *MLA-8*.

Names of persons, capitalization and punctuation	67
Shortened titles	70
Titles within titles	71

Italics and quotation marks to denote different titles within the body of the paper are addressed on pages 25-28 and 68-69 of the *MLA-8*, as well as pages 7-8 of this sample paper herein. These will match their respective presentations in the Practice Template, so once those are fleshed out, the student would just mirror that formatting (italics or quotation marks, depending on the type of source or container) throughout the paper as well.

The *MLA-8* includes an extensive list of accepted abbreviations, including all of the books of the Bible, as well as some other classical works (95-102). *MLA-8* also addresses rules

on indirect sources, beginning on page 124. It favors finding the original source whenever possible, but details how to incorporate an indirect source when the original source is not available. For example, Bhabha believes that boundaries are created when critics insist upon bearing "witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation" (qtd. in Bartels 46).

Beginning on page 75, *MLA-8* delves into how to incorporate quotations into one's own work (including specific rules for prose, poetry, and drama). Punctuation within quotations is addressed on page 87. Note the different rules for short quotes (four lines or less) versus larger quotes (more than four lines), as discussed on page 78 of the *MLA-8* and exemplified throughout this paper. Quotes four lines or less¹ should be incorporated directly into the paragraph, along with other related sentences; the period falls after the parenthetical citation for such shorter quotes (76). If a parenthetical citation includes a number that is not a page or line number, include an abbreviated label, such as par. for paragraph, or ch. for chapter (126-27). For example, in Greene's story "The Destructors," the main character is described as a "new recruit [who] had been with the gang since the beginning of the summer holidays, and there were possibilities about his brooding silence that all recognized. He never wasted a word even to tell his name until that was required of him by the rules" (par. 2).

Quotes greater than four lines must be blocked (*exception*: only three lines in poetry, discussed below), with the entire left margin of that quote indented $\frac{1}{2}$ " (*MLA-8* 76-80). Block quotes are introduced with a colon; the closing punctuation follows after the end of the quote, before the parenthetical citation. For example:

There would be no one to live for her during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with

¹ Exception: *three* lines or less for poetry.

which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellowcreature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination. (Chopin 149)

The rules for numbers begin on page 92 of the *MLA-8*. Spell out numbers in word form that constitute one or two spoken words (i.e., one, thirty-six, one hundred, fifteen thousand); use numerals to represent numbers that constitute three or more spoken words (e.g., $1^{1}/_{2}$, 101, 151, 1,570). Use commas for any number greater than 999, other than in delineating page or line numbers, street addresses, or calendar years. When denoting a range of numbers, provide full numbers through ninety-nine (e.g., 9-12). For numbers greater than 100, *MLA-8* allows writers to abbreviate the second number to its last two digits, when there is no confusion. For example, 1001-09 would indicate pages 1,001 through 1,009; but 96-101 cannot be abbreviated, in order to maintain clarity since the first number is not the same. This is true with years as well, provided the first two digits in both numbers are the same (93).

Students in ENGL 102 and other literature courses will find instructions and examples of how to cite prose or verse works such as Shakespeare (*MLA-8* 77-80, 121). In verse works with line numbers, use the word "line" or "lines" (without quotation marks) the first time line numbers are cited, but omit that in future citations (*MLA-8* 121). Longer verse works should be cited by division (act, scene, canto, book, part), as well as line number, using periods to separate the divisions. Quotations of more than <u>three</u> lines of poetry should be block quoted (78). Recall the closing punctuation differences between short and long quotes, discussed fully on pages 12-13 of this sample paper, and again depicted in the examples below. If the citation details do not fit on the same line as the quote, include them on the next line, at the right margin. The following provide visual examples of these rules. In the late 15th century English morality play *Everyman*,

the Messenger forewarns that in death, "Strength, Pleasure, and Beauty, / Will fade from thee as flower in May" (lines 17-18). In Shakespeare's *Othello*, character Iago bemoans:

Why, there's no remedy; 'tis the curse of service,

Preferment goes by letter and affection,

And not by old gradation, where each second

Stood heir to the first. Now, sir, be judge yourself,

Whether I in any just term am affined

To love the Moor. (1.1.35-40)

MLA-8's rules on citing scriptural writings from its Style Center webpage instruct students to begin works-cited entries for such with the title of the scriptural work, which should be italicized (e.g., *The New American Standard Bible*). In the body of the text, general references to scriptural works like the Bible should not be italicized unless referring to a specific published edition. Identify Scriptures in-text by giving the abbreviated name of the book, along with the chapter and verse numbers (*MLA-8* 123). The first citation also requires the entry in the workscited list for the version that was consulted (122), again, using italics for specific versions. Subsequent citations of the same version omit the name of the version, and name only the abbreviated book, chapter, and verse. For example, in a vivid prophetic vision, Ezekiel saw "what seemed to be four living creatures" ---each with the faces of a man, an ox, a lion, and an eagle (*New Jerusalem Bible*, Ezek. 1.5-10). Later, in the last book of the Bible, John echoed this passage when describing his own vision (Rev. 4.6-8).

Page 126 specifies to use semicolons to separate multiple sources in the same set of parentheses (i.e., Gilligan 56; Hilts 12); use commas to denote different pages in the same source (i.e., Bartels 20, 33, 44-46). *MLA-8* does not allow back-to-back parentheses. Instead, enclose

both within the same set of parentheses, with the prominent information first, and the lessprominent information in brackets (127).

Students would, of course, NOT include any color-coding or footnotes in their

works-cited entries. However, for the sake of clarity and ease in identifying what each entry represents, each one that follows in this sample paper is color-coordinated to its corresponding footnote, with a brief description of what each depicts. Also remember that *MLA-8* requires double-spacing, even in notes, but for the sake of readability in this sample paper, each footnote corresponding to the works-cited entries is single-spaced. Always be sure to begin the works-cited list on its own separate page.

Works Cited

Bartels, Emily. "Othello and Africa: Postcolonialism Reconsidered." *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 54, no. 1, 1997, pp. 45-64. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2953312.²

Brinkmeyer, Robert H., Jr. "An Openness to Otherness: The Imaginative Vision of Eudora Welty." *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 20, no. 22, Spring 1988, pp. 69-80. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20077929.

Chopin, Kate. "The Story of an Hour." 1894. *The Literature Collection E-book*, edited by X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia, Pearson, 2016, p. 149.³

Dorris, Michael, and Louise Erdrich. *The Crown of Columbus*. HarperCollins Publishers, 1999.⁴

Eachwort, A., et al. *The Emphasis of the Day*. Strouthworks, 2011.⁵

Everyman. Late fifteenth century, Literature and Spirituality, edited by Yaw Adu-Gyamfi and

Mark Ray Schmidt, Pearson, 2011, pp. 266-87.⁶

Gilligan, Carol. In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development. Harvard

UP, 1982.⁷

Greene, Graham. "The Destructors." 1954. ENGL 102: Liberty University, http://media.

pearsoncmg.com/pcp/pcp_97542_lit_lu/ebook/media/greene_destructors.swf.8

² Secondary source where the direct (primary) source is unavailable.

³ Story in an edited e-book (note that editors' names are not inverted). The year the literary work was originally published must be included, as well as the year the book it is contained in was published. (You might need to conduct a quick Google search to find the original publication date.)

⁴ Book with two authors. Note that the first author's name is inverted (last name first), but the second is not.

⁵ Resource with three or more authors.

⁶ Anonymous work, with title in the author's position. Note the abbreviated page numbering.

⁷ Book published by a university. Note that for university presses, the words *university* and *press* are abbreviated without periods: UP.

- "Heavy, Adj.¹ and N." Oxford English Dictionary, Oxford UP, 2015, <u>www.oed.com/view/Entry/</u> 85246?rskey=aIe8OM&result=1.⁹
- Hilts, Philip J. Protecting America's Health: The FDA, Business, and One Hundred Years of Regulation. Knopf. 2003.¹⁰
- Kennedy, X. J., and Dana Gioia. "Aristotle's Concept of Tragedy." *The Literature Collection Ebook*, edited by X. J. Kennedy and Dana Gioia. Pearson, 2016, pp. 945-46.¹¹

"Lesson 21: Analysis and Evaluation of Lyrical Poems." ENGL 102. Liberty University Online,

tunes.apple.com/us/podcast/lesson-21/id427903381?i=1000092370995&mt=2. Accessed

23 Jan. 2016.¹²

MLA Handbook. 8th ed., Modern Language Association of America, 2016.¹³

"MLA Style Center: Formatting a Research Paper." MLA Style Center. Modern Language

Association, 2016. style.mla.org/formatting-papers/.14

MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing. 3rd ed., Modern Language Association of

America, 2008.

The New American Bible. Foundation, 1997.¹⁵

¹⁰ Note that for a non-academic publisher, only the principal name is used (Knopf for Alfred A. Knopf). You do not need to include words and abbreviations such as *company*, *Inc.*, *publishers*, etc.

¹² Lesson on Blackboard. NOTE: Though *MLA-8* requires double-spacing for footnotes, they are single-spaced internally hereafter, for the sake of saving space and not detracting from the works-cited entries.

¹³ Resource with corporate author as publisher. See section 2.1.3 (104).

¹⁴ Website.

¹⁵ Bible with no editor or translator. <u>Note</u> that articles such as the word "The" do not count for alphabetizing purposes.

⁸ Short story linked on LU's Blackboard website.

⁹ Dictionary entry.

¹¹ Article in book by editors of an anthology.

The New Jerusalem Bible. General editor, Henry Wansbrough, Doubleday, 1985.¹⁶

Second, Morris P. "Remember to Arrange by Title." Journal of Styling Skills, vol. 11, no. 1,

<mark>2015, p. 18.</mark>

- ---, "Same Author, Titles Arranged Alphabetically." *Journal of Styling Skills*, vol. 8, 2011, pp. 12-13.¹⁷
- Second, Morris P., and Arthur T. Jones. "Article with a Co-Author." *Partners in Ethics*, vol. 2, 2016, pp. 10-11.¹⁸
- Shakespeare, William. *Othello*. [circa 1602]. *The Literature Collection E-book, e*dited by X. J.

Kennedy and Dana Gioia. Pearson, 2016, pp. 898-a912.¹⁹

Smith, Joanna. "The Squirrel Poem." *Poems about Wildlife*, edited by John Smith, Harvard UP, 2016, pp. 122-23.²⁰

Smith, John. Hunting Squirrels. Mifflin Publishing, 2004.21

Smith, Sara. "Squirrel Habits." The Journal of Squirrels, vol. 30, no. 2, 2009, pp. 40-42. JSTOR,

http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/000001.22

²⁰ Work in an anthology.

²¹ Book with one author.

¹⁶ Bible with one editor.

¹⁷ Two resources by the same author, in different years. Arrange alphabetically by title and add three dashes in the author's position for the second+ sources by that same author.

¹⁸ A resource with a co-author, when the first author also published multiple resources alone. Note no dashes are used.

¹⁹ Drama with unknown original date. From MLA's website: "Placeholders for unknown information like *n.d.* ("no date") are no longer used. If facts missing from a work are available in a reliable external resource, they are cited in square brackets. Otherwise, they are simply omitted." See p. 111 of *MLA*-8.

²² Journal article retrieved from a database.