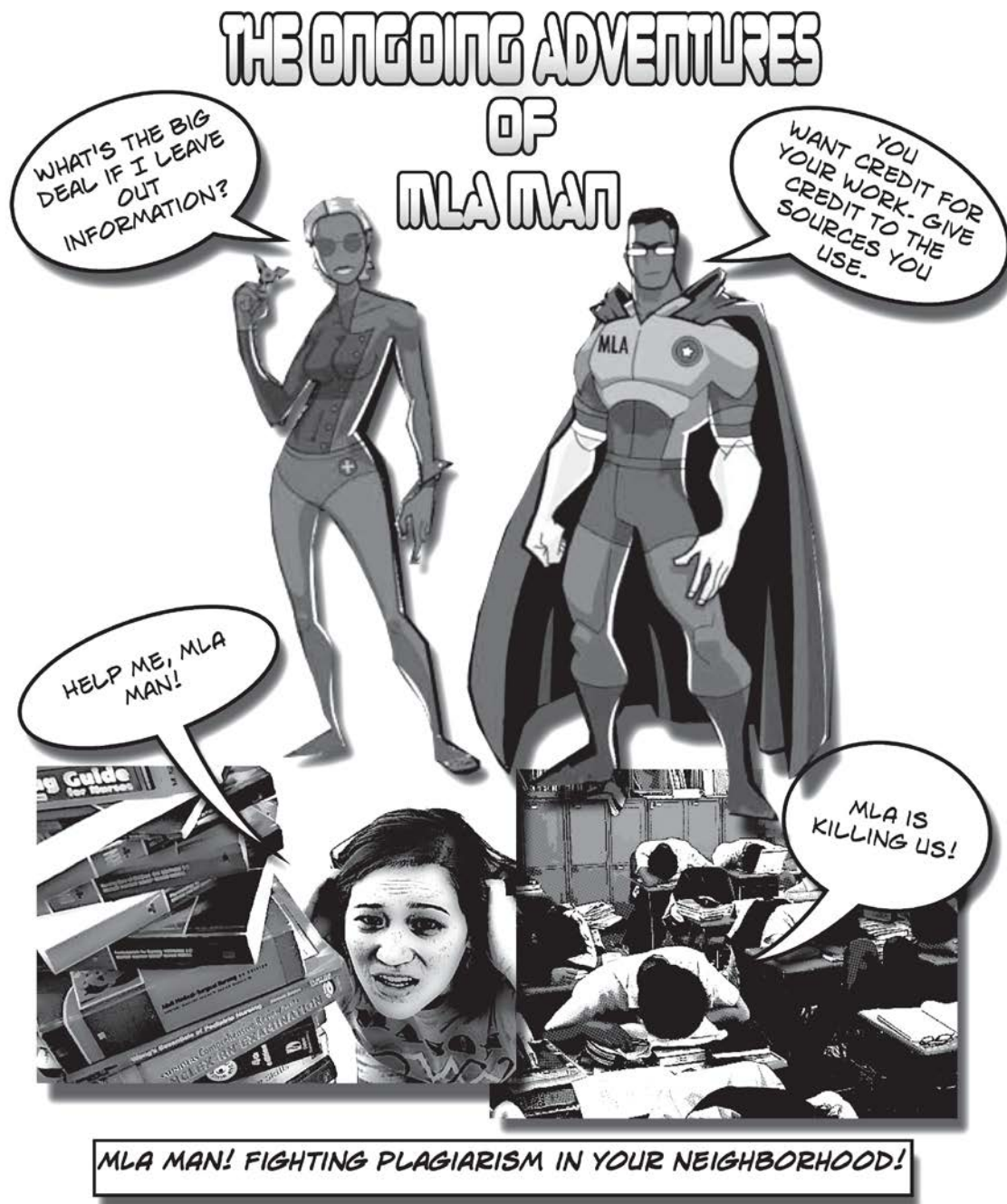# Chapter 8: MLA

Photo credit: Lynn McClelland

What Is MLA?

MLA stands for Modern Language Association—an international association with over 25,000 members from 100 countries. MLA publishes a style guide for formatting papers. There are other style guides, but this section will focus on key information from the *MLA Handbook*, 8th ed.

Basic MLA Formatting for Papers (See image below.)

- 1" margins
- Double spaced
- Paragraphs indented ½"
- No extra space between paragraphs
- A header on the top right hand corner ½" from the top of the paper should include: Student's last name and then leave a space and the page number
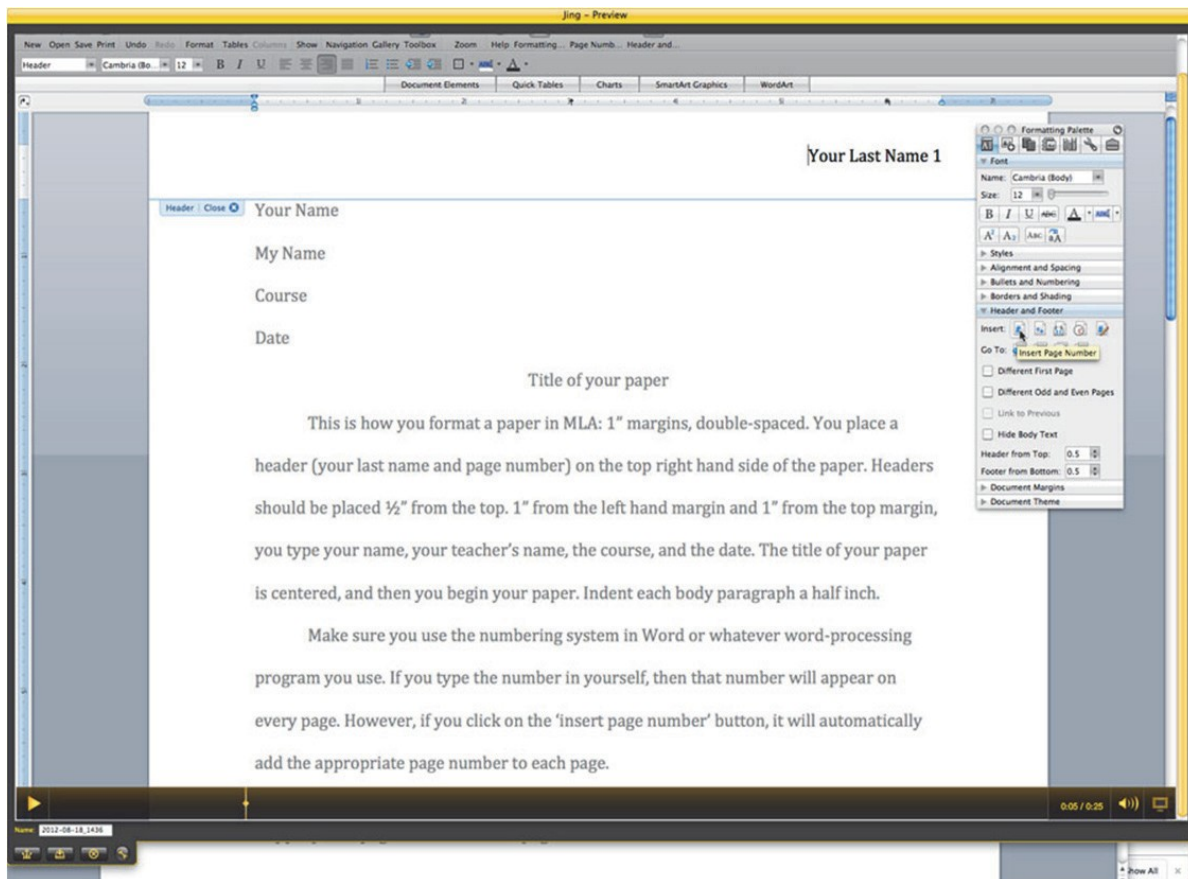
On the first page on the top left-hand side include:

> Your full name
>
> Teacher's Name
>
> Course Title
>
> Date

Incorporating Sources and In-text Citations

In-text citations direct the reader to sources listed in a type of bibliography known as a Works Cited page. There should be a direct correlation between the information provided in the text of the paper

and the Works Cited page. Here are a couple of examples of how someone could use a source in a paper and how it would refer to a Works Cited page.

Examples

According to Dr. Ian Wilmut, chair of Reproductive Science at the University of Edinburgh, "about one quarter of the lambs that were born alive died within a few days because they hadn't completed normal development" (qtd. in Wade).

Later, Wilmut further noted that the science had not advanced enough to apply it to humans indicating "that for a clinician to be suggesting doing that [cloning humans] is quite appalling" (qtd. in Wade).

Sample Works Cited Entry

<div align="center">Works Cited</div>

Wade, Nicholas. "The Clone Named Dolly." *New York Times,* 14 Oct. 2013.

      www.nytimes.com/2013/10/14/booming/the-clone-named-dolly.html.

As you can see, the in-text or parenthetical citations include the author's last name. When your audience refers back to the Works Cited page, the entry goes under the author's last name, so the audience can quickly identify the original source.

Plagiarism: Using another writer's words and ideas in an essay without giving proper credit to that individual. This is a violation of the student code of conduct.

Paraphrase: Taking a section of information from a source and rewording it to keep the essence of the text and ideas. This still requires a citation.

Summary: In your own words, stating the main idea and key points of the whole of the source. A summary must also be cited.

Parenthetical citation: Placing the source information in parentheses after borrowed material. Usually you include the author and the page number, if available. Example: (Polliard 7)

If no author is given, use an abbreviated version of the title of the article beginning with the first word of the title. Example: ("Multiple Personalities in *Hamlet*" 7) would become ("Multiple…" 7).

Attributive tag or signal phrase: An introductory phrase before a quote or paraphrase that indicates the source of the information by providing the author or the title of the article. Example: According to Professor Polliard, plagiarism can potentially result in a failing grade for the course.

ABC's for Incorporating Sources

Always cite your information
- Use an attributive tag to indicate where source material begins.
  Example: According to Dr. Ian Wilmut, head researcher at the Edinburgh Institute,
- Use a parenthetical citation after information borrowed from a source whether you paraphrase it, summarize it, or quote it.
  "Simply being an introvert can also feel taxing—especially in America..." (Walsh 42)
- Use quotation marks around material that is taken word for word from the source (see previous example).
- Include a complete Works Cited page at the end of the essay (next lesson and assignments).

Balance the source material with paraphrases and quotations
- Do not use an exact quotation for every piece of documented information.
- Use quotes only when the information is highly technical or can't be stated equally well in your own words.
- Consider what the audience would find interesting in terms of quotations.
- Only use the pertinent information. Do not include a whole paragraph when a sentence will do.

Connect the source material to the topic sentence with explanation between sources.
- Don't plan on using quote after quote without connective commentary.
- Connective commentary means that you interpret the significance of the source material in relation to the topic sentence or thesis statement. Why is this information relevant? Use your own words and insight to illustrate the usefulness of the source information.
- An essay should have more of your own words than it has source information; source information is meant to add "backing" or credibility to your ideas. At least 85% of the paper should be your work and ideas with no more than 15% of the information coming from outside sources.
- Don't be a name-dropper! Provide context to explain the background qualifications/credentials of the person credited for the original information whenever possible.

Creating an Attributive Tag

- **Sample quote**: "The fear response is controlled by the autonomic nervous system and so is largely impervious to higher order cognitive control, and the system is biased, that is, hyper-responsive and prone to erring on the side of caution."

- **Where the quote came from**: This quote was written by Dr. Mathias Clasen in his article, "Monsters Evolve: A Bio-Cultural Approach to Horror Stories" and was found on page 223.

- **Appropriate Attributive Tag**: According to Dr. Mathias Clasen of Arhaus University, Denmark, "The fear response is controlled by the autonomic nervous system and so is largely impervious to higher order cognitive control, and the system is biased, that is, hyper-responsive and prone to erring on the side of caution" (223).

Sample Paraphrase and Summary from Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL)

The original passage:

> Students frequently overuse direct quotation in taking notes, and as a result they overuse quotations in the final [research] paper. Probably only about 10% of your final manuscript should appear as directly quoted matter. Therefore, you should strive to limit the amount of exact transcribing of source materials while taking notes. Lester, James D. *Writing Research Papers*. 2nd ed. (1976): 46-47.

A legitimate paraphrase:

> As indicated in Dr. James D. Lester's book, *Writing Research Papers*, research papers students often quote excessively, failing to keep quoted material down to a desirable level. Since the problem usually originates during note taking, it is essential to minimize the material recorded verbatim (Lester 46-47).

An acceptable summary:

> Students should take just a few notes in direct quotation from sources to help minimize the amount of quoted material in a research paper (Lester 46-47).

A plagiarized version (bold text reflects exact words and/or phrasing from original source):

> Students often **use too many direct quotations** when they take notes, **resulting in too many of them in the final research paper**. In fact, **probably** only **about 10% of the final** copy should consist of **directly quoted material**. So it is important to **limit the amount of source material copied while taking notes**.

The version considered plagiarism contains the exact words and phrasing from original source, and it does not give credit to Lester's work.

Practice Exercises

> **Exercise 1:** Given the excerpt from a recent *Time* magazine article, evaluate the attempted paraphrases for plagiarism and citation accuracy. Use a highlighter to note words and phrases lifted exactly from the passage.

Sample Excerpt:

Walsh, Bryan. "The Upside of Being an Introvert (and Why Extroverts are Overrated). *Time,* 6

February 2012, pp. 40-45.

"Simply being an introvert can also feel taxing—especially in America, land of the loud and home of the talkative. From classrooms built around group learning to open-plan offices that encourage endless meetings, it sometimes seems that the quality of your work has less value than the volume of your voice" (Walsh 42).

1. Simply being an introvert can also feel taxing—especially in America, land of the loud and home of the talkative (Walsh 42).

2. Being an introvert in America is challenging because we are the land of the loud and home of the loquacious. Today's classrooms are adapted around group learning environments, and office settings have open-plans that encourage endless meetings (Walsh 42).

3. In an article published recently in *Time* magazine, the author discusses how introverted people struggle to be successful in classrooms and business settings because these work environments are planned to enable students and employees to work in groups and participate in long business meetings. Often the amount and quality of a person's work goes unnoticed compared to the person who speaks the loudest and produces the least.

4. Sometimes introverted people struggle to be successful in classrooms and business settings because these work environments are planned to enable students and employees to work in groups and participate in long business meetings. Often the amount and quality of a person's work goes unnoticed compared to the person who speaks the loudest and produces the least (Walsh 42).

Exercise 2: Pretend that you have been assigned an essay to argue the virtues of an introverted personality. Consider and analyze the information below to include as possible support. To create a sense of **balance** in source material, evaluate whether the following excerpts would be more effective as quoted or paraphrased material. Check the box for either quote or paraphrase. Be prepared to share and explain your answer.

Hints:
- Can the information be paraphrased without losing any of the value of the style or poignancy of the information?
- Does the original wording of the information offer any special insight?
- Does the information have ideas that would speak to the audience in a way that would make them understand the material better than a paraphrase?

"Shyness is a form of anxiety characterized by inhibited behaviors. It also implies a fear of social judgment that can be crippling" (Walsh 40).

Paraphrase ☐   Quote ☐

"In schools, it's the bolder kids who get attention from the teachers, while quiet children can too easily languish in the back of the classroom" (Walsh 42).

Paraphrase ☐   Quote ☐

"Introverts may be able to fit all their friends in a phone booth, but those relationships tend to be deep and rewarding" (Walsh 42).

Paraphrase ☐   Quote ☐

"And simply by virtue of their ability to sit still and focus, introverts find it easier to spend long periods in solitary work, which turns out to be the best way to come up with a fresh idea or master a skill" (Walsh 42).

Paraphrase ☐   Quote ☐

"There's even a case to be made that introverted CEOs are the business leaders of the future" (Walsh 44-45)

Paraphrase ⬜   Quote ⬜

Exercise 3: The passage below is taken from the same *Time* article written by Bryan Walsh. Explain why the passage is a good example of balancing and connecting his ideas with "backing."

The very fact that introverts are more sensitive to their environment often means they're fully aware that they appear out of step with the expectations of others, and they can easily internalize that criticism. Just about every adult introvert can remember being scolded, even if gently, for being too quiet as a kid. Anytime a teacher grades on participation, introverted kids will be at a disadvantage. There's nothing wrong with parents' nudging their shy children into the world, but there is something wrong if it's more than a nudge. "You don't want to break the kid by overwhelming their coping capacity," says Jay Belsky, a psychologist at the University of California at Davis. "The key is sensitive encouragement."

1. How much of the paragraph is the author's own words and ideas?
2. What does the quote at the end add to the paragraph?

Formatting the Works Cited Page

A Works Cited page is an MLA formatted bibliography. A Works Cited entry usually has three basic parts: Author. Title. Publication Information. When a work has no author, then an entry includes the title and publication information.

Requirements for the Works Cited Page

According to the Purdue OWL, you need to provide the necessary information for readers to find your sources. Ask yourself, "What information is necessary to make finding the sources foolproof?"
- In-text citations should look consistent throughout your paper.
- Works Cited lists include core information, such as author's name, title of source, publication information, based upon the type of source, and should be uniform and simple so readers can locate the sources.
- Entries are double spaced
- Only the first line of each entry goes on the left margin; subsequent lines are indented a half inch
- Entries are organized in alphabetical order based upon author's last name. If a source does not have an author, use the title.
- Important change: When citing a web page that has been published previously in print, it is no longer necessary to include the original publication date.

Telling the Difference between Magazines and Journals

Magazines	Journals
Shorter & simpler titles	Long & complicated titles
Shorter articles	Usually longer articles
Lower page numbers	Higher pages numbers
Published more frequently	Published less frequently
Usually have specific publication date	Generalized publication
Lots of photographs and colored images	Graphs
Ads for food, drink, cologne, cars, etc.	No ads for food, drink, cologne, cars, etc.
No bibliography	Bibliography, a. k. a. Works Cited page

Sample Entries

Here are some sample entries taken from the Purdue OWL and the *MLA Handbook*:

Book in Print

Jacobs, Alan. T*he Pleasures of Reading in an Age of Distraction*. Oxford UP, 2011.

Scholarly Journal

Kincaid, Jamaica. "In History." *Callaloo*, vol. 24, no. 2, Spring 2001, pp. 620-26.

Magazine

Poniewozik, James. "TV Makes a Too-Close Call." *Time,* 20 Nov. 2000, pp. 70-71.

E-book

Smith, Simon. *Rocking the New World.* Penguin Classics, 2010. *ACLS Humanities. E-book,*

> hdl.handle.net/2028/heb.07588.0001.001.

Database Source (journal)

Goldman, Anne. "Questions of Transport: Reading Primo Levi Reading Dante." *The Georgia Review*,

> vol. 64, no. 1, 2010, pp. 69-88. *JSTOR.*

Database Source (magazine)

Crocker, Michael. "A Witness to History." *Newsweek,* 14 Jan. 2015, pp. 45-47. *Academic Search*

> *Premier.*

Corporate Authors

Corporate authors can be organizations, institutions, and government agencies to name a few. When works are created by corporate authors but published by another source, entries are placed under the corporate author's name. When the corporate author also publishes the work, the entry goes under the title of the work.

United Nations. *Consequences of Rapid Population Growth in Developing Countries*. Taylor and

> Francis, 1991.

"Zika Virus Disease." *Mayo Clinic*, 1998-2016, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/zika-

virus/home/ovc-20189269.

Page from a website (No original publication date because it is from *The Atlantic's* website)

Deresiewicz, William. "The Death of the Artist–and the Birth of the Creative Entrepreneur." *The*

Atlantic, 28 Dec. 2014, www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2015/01/ death-of-the-artist-

birth-of-entrepreneur.

Blog

Hollmichel, Stephanie. "The Reading Brain: Differences Between Digital and Print." *So Many Books*,

25 Apr. 2013, somanybooksblog.com/2013/04/25/the-reading-brain-differences-between-

digital- and-print.

Online Video

"The Bomb." *PBS*, 28 July 2015. *PBS*, www.pbs.org/video/2365530722/.

McGonical, Jane. "Gaming and Productivity." YouTube, uploaded by Big Think, 3 July 2012,

www.youtube.com/watch?=mkdzy9bWW3E.

Exercise for Formatting Entries for a Works Cited Page

Directions: Create a Works Cited page from the list of sources below.
- Alphabetize entries;
- Double space;
- When an entry in longer than one line, be sure to indent subsequent lines of text;
- Do not use bullets or numbers on your Works Cited page.

You found the article, "Ethics and Marketing on the Internet: Practitioners Perceptions of Societal, Industry and Company Concerns." It was written by Victoria Bush and originally published in Journal of Business Ethics. It can be found in volume 23, issue 3, was published in 2000. The article appears on pages 237-348.

On page 36 of its July 23, 1999 issue, *Time* magazine published "The Power of Forgiveness." Robert Catchem was the author. You found the article in *Academic Search Premier*.

You decide to use Norman Zimmer's "Forgiveness Sonnet Sequences." It was found in the journal, *PMLA*, 1999 edition, volume 43, pages 202 through 295.

American Life is a monthly magazine published in Atlanta. In volume 16, number 3 of that publication, which was published August 1999, Thomas Kelly's article, "Barking Up the Wrong Tree," appeared. It was printed on pages 188 through 193.

You went to the library to check out the book, *Walking,* by Henry David Thoreau. You decide to use a quote from it. The book was published in 1922 by Pearce-Longman.

Thomas Kelly also wrote a short article called, "A Critical Analysis of Dog Walking." It appeared in the *Journal of American Wolfhounds* (volume 3, number 12). It was published in 2004 and was found on pages 578-625. You found it in the online database, *Academic Search Premier*.

You are doing a report on the Challenger disaster. You find information on the web page, "Challenger STS 51-L" on the National Aeronautic and Space Administration web site. The web page was last updated on November 23, 2007.

You decide to write your cause/effect paper on Bipolar Disorder. You find information on the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) web site. The title of the web page is "Bipolar Disorder." There is no date on this web page, but the URL is https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/bipolar-disorder/index.shtml.

Additional Resources: PVCC Databases and MLA Research Practicum (exercise) is available at the PVCC English Division website/PVCC English Resources: https://pvccenglish.wordpress.com/

Requirements for Parenthetical Citations

When using outside sources in your work, it is important to give credit to the original source and provide basic in-text citations also known as parenthetical citations at the end of the sentence that contains that borrowed information. Parenthetical citations may contain the following:
- Author's name
- Title of the work
- Page numbers
- Paragraphs numbers

What needs to appear in parentheses is based upon how much information you include in the attributive tag and what kind of source is being cited. (Parts of this section are from the Purdue OWL website.)

Examples

Here are some examples from the Purdue OWL and the *MLA Handbook*:

Parenthetical Citations with Author's Name (print source)

Quote with attributive tag

18th century Romantic Poet, William Wordsworth was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Quote without attributive tag

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Paraphrase with attributive tag

18th century Romantic Poet, William Wordsworth, extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

Matching Works Cited entry

Wordsworth, William. *Lyrical Ballads*. Oxford UP, 1967.

Parenthetical Citations with Author's Name (online source)

Quote with attributive tag

American author and philosopher, Henry David Thoreau wrote, "I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived" (par. 16).

Matching Works Cited entry

Thoreau, Henry David. *Walden: an annotated edition*. 1999-2009. thoreau.eserver.org/

walden02.html.

Parenthetical Citation for Sources without Authors Quote with attributive tag

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, Bipolar Disorder is a "brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy and activity levels" ("Bipolar Disorder").

Quote without attributive tag

Bipolar Disorder is a "brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy and activity levels" ("Bipolar Disorder").

Matching Works Cited entry

"Bipolar Disorder." *National Institute of Mental Health*, www.nimh.nih.gov/

health/topics/bipolar-disorder/index.shtml.

Parenthetical Citation Exercise

Directions: For each entry, you will do the following. Write the last word of the sentence in each example and then the appropriate parenthetical citation. Then you will create a properly formatted Works Cited page.

- John Muir was an inventor, naturalist, environmental philosopher and wilderness activist. In a letter to his wife, Louisa, he wrote, "Only by going alone in silence, without baggage, can one truly get into the heart of the wilderness."

  The quote was obtained from the "John Muir" page on Yosemite National Park's website at this url: https://www.nps.gov/yose/learn/historyculture/muir.htm.

- Surf Snowdonia is a wave pool located in Dolgarrog, Wales, U. K. Its claim to fame is that it's the first man-made wave pool to host a top professional surfing contest with surfers competing from all over the world. Surf Snowdonia is located in the forested mountains of Wales "once a derelict aluminum factory, it has been transformed into one of the most innovative surfing facilities in the world."

  This information and quote was found in an article on the Wavegarden web site, the builders of Surf Snowdonia. The title of the article is "Big Success at World's First Wavegarden Surfing Contest: Red Bul Unleashed, Surf Snowdonia." The URL of the web site is http://www.wavegarden.com/. The article is on the Wavegarden home page.

- What is the difference between water use and water consumption? Water use is the amount of water necessary to function. For example, a manufacturing plant may require 10,000 gallons to run. "Even if the plant returns 95% of that water to the watershed, the plant needs all 10,000 gallons to operate."

  This information comes from Paul Reig's article, "What's the Difference Between water use and Water Consumption" on the World Resources Institute web site at this url: http://www.wri.org/blog/2013/03/what%E2%80%99s-difference-between-water-use-and-water-consumption.

- According to Pablo S. Torre, a sportswriter and columnist for ESPN, 78% of NFL football players will be bankrupt or in financial trouble within two years of retiring.

  This statistic was taken from the *Sports Illustrated* article, "How (and Why) Athletes go Broke."
  Here is the web site for this article, http://www.si.com/vault/2009/03/23/105789480/how-and-why-athletes-go-broke.

- According to computer scientists, it's possible to create an algorithm to predict potential ISIS terrorist attacks. In fact, they have already done it. By tracking the pace of development of a group of ISIS sympathizers, it is possible to predict real-life attacks.

  This information was taken from the web page, "The Computer Algorithm Might Be Able to Predict the Next ISIS attack." It can be found on the PBS *NewsHour* web site at this address: http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/this-computer-algorithm-might-be-able-to-predict-the-next-isis-attack/.