

## 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. 7<sup>th</sup> 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The work is unpublished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