

5. NAVIGATING ACADEMIC CONVENTIONS: TITLES, QUOTATIONS, REFERENCES, AND OTHER PRACTICAL MATTERS

5.1. Titles

Understanding how to properly use **italics or inverted commas for titles** is more than a stylistic formality. These conventions act as visual cues that help your reader immediately distinguish between different types of sources, such as a self-contained book and an article within an academic journal. By applying these rules consistently, you demonstrate attention to detail, ensure the clarity of your arguments, and observe the conventions you are expected to follow in an Undergraduate Dissertation.

Italics or inverted commas for titles?

Longer works are italicised while shorter works are placed in quotation marks:

- Italicise titles if the source is self-contained and independent. Titles of books, plays, films, journals, newspapers, databases, and websites are italicised (underlining is used instead of italics when you write by hand).
- Place titles in quotation marks if the source is part of a larger work. Articles, essays, book chapters, poems (unless they are long poems that constitute a standalone work), a short-story included in a short-story collection, webpages, songs, and speeches are placed in quotation marks.

In all cases, capitalise all principal words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.). Do not capitalise articles, prepositions, or conjunctions unless they are the first word of the title or subtitle. For instance, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Art of War*, *There Is Nothing Left to Lose*.

Here are some examples:

- **Book title:** My favourite book is *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien.
- **Magazine title:** There was an interesting article in *Time* about health and aging.
- **Newspaper title:** What does *The Wall Street Journal* say about the market today?
- **Album and song title:** “Yesterday” is a pop song originally recorded by The Beatles for their album *Help!* (1965). According to the *Guinness Book of Records*, “Yesterday” has the most cover versions of any song ever written.
- **Article in a newspaper:** David Grann’s “City of Water” is one of the most fascinating articles ever published by *The New Yorker*.
- **Article in a specialised journal:** The teacher asked us to read an article entitled “The Ironical War between Victorian and Modern Values in John Fowles’ *The*

French Lieutenant's Woman", published in the *International Journal of Languages' Education and Teaching*.

- **Short story and short-story collection:** *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* is one of the books I remember reading as a teenager. "The Adventure of the Speckled Band" was my favourite story.
- **Poem title and poetry volume:** William Blake's "The Lamb" and "The Tyger" are perhaps the best-known poems in the volume *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*.
- **TV show title:** Most viewers know that already, but *Bridgerton* is based on a number of novels written by Julia Quinn. The same goes for *Outlander*, a historical fantasy series based on Diana Gabaldon's novels.
- **Movie title:** Sam has memorised many lines from *The Lion King*.

5.2. Quotations

Knowing how to integrate the words of others is also important. While shorter quotations (of no more than four lines) are enclosed within **quotation marks**, longer excerpts require their own **indented block**.

For TFG in the field of literature, use the **MLA citation style**. The MLA (Modern Language Association) has established a number of rules to insert quotations in a text and to write a Works Cited section. It is essential to acknowledge your sources, whether you are quoting directly or paraphrasing another's work. Failing to do so constitutes plagiarism, which is a serious form of academic misconduct. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.3.

Quoting someone's words in your essay

Direct quotes are generally incorporated in one of two ways: as **short in-text citations** or as **indented block quotes**. They differ in terms of length and formatting. **Paraphrasing** is actually the most common way to incorporate someone's *ideas*, while **in-text and block quotes** are the ways to incorporate their exact *words*.

Don't use italics when you quote unless the text you are quoting is written in italics in the original. In MLA style, any italics within a quotation are assumed to be from the original author. For explicit clarification, though, you may add (emphasis in original) in your parenthetical citation, after the page number:

Example 1: Dickens insists that "it was *the* age of wisdom, it was *the* age of foolishness" (1, emphasis in original).

Conversely, if you wish to italicise words yourself in order to draw your reader's attention to them, add (emphasis added) in the same position:

Example 2: As Orwell makes clear, it is the pigs specifically who decide that “all animals are equal, but some animals are *more* equal than others” (97, emphasis added).

• **In-text citations** are used for brief quotations. If the quotation is no longer than four lines, use inverted commas and integrate the quoted text directly into your sentence.

Example 1: Wilbert McKeachie argues that, when beginning to teach a new group, “the key to a good start is not so much the choice of content (important as it may be) but rather the ability to manage the activities of the class effectively” (7). It is simple teaching techniques that get students involved.

[as you mention the name of the author before the quotation (full name or just the surname), you only have to indicate the page number in the parenthetical citation]

OR

Example 2: The modern world requires both the ability to concentrate on one thing and the ability to attend to more than one thing at a time: “Ideally, each individual would cultivate a repertoire of styles of attention, appropriate to different situations, and would learn how to embed activities and types of attention one within another” (Bateson 97).

[here the author you are quoting is not mentioned before the quotation, so the parenthetical citation includes the author’s name (his/her surname, not full name here) and the page number]

OR

Example 3: Gothic literature is often defined by its “preoccupation with the macabre, the supernatural, and the atmospheric,” creating a sense of dread that is unique to the period (“A Guide to Gothic”).

[here the source may be an internet document with no author, so you give the document’s title between inverted commas. If the document had an author, you would include the author’s name between parenthesis and nothing else if there is no page number, as often happens with the web]

Note on MLA punctuation:

The MLA primarily follows the punctuation conventions of American English:

- General rule: Commas/periods always go inside the closing quotation marks.

Example: “The results were inconclusive,” the lead researcher noted in the report.

See also Example 3 above.

- The most common exception to the rule: If you are citing a source at the end of a quotation, the comma (or period) must follow the parentheses.

Example: “The world is a stage” (Shakespeare 12), but the actors are often unrehearsed.

See also Examples 1 and 2 above.

- If the quoted text is longer than four lines, use **block quotes**:

Block quotes are indented and use no quotation marks. In such cases, the parenthetical citation goes after the period, as the following example shows.

Example 1:

In *A Brief History of English Literature*, John Peck and Martin Coyle approach the eighteenth century as a contradictory period:

Behaviour was gross and physical in a way that is unimaginable today. Novels, such as those of Fielding, Sterne and Smollett, are full of a coarse humor and brutality that even some of their contemporaries found unacceptable. And a rapidly expanding commercial economy was quite complacent about exploiting people. Yet, at the same time, this was a society beginning to establish new standards in polite behaviour. (144)

OR

Example 2:

Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanises him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Brontë 78)

If the author's name is not mentioned before the quotation, his/her name is included in the parenthetical citation: (Brontë 78). In this, the rules for block quotes are not different from those applying to quotations between inverted commas.

Refining quotes: Using ellipses and brackets

Sometimes, a direct quote does not perfectly fit the grammar of your sentence, or it contains unnecessary information. In MLA style, you use ellipses to take things out and brackets to put things in.

1. Ellipses (Removing text)

If only part of a quote is needed, it is possible to omit information and replace it with ellipses, marked by three spaced periods. Ellipses (. . .) are used when information is

omitted from the middle of a quote. Please note that brackets are not needed around ellipses unless they would add clarity (when, for instance, the text you are quoting already contains ellipses).

Example: Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* begins by stating that "Gregor Samsa . . . found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin" (1). (*Here you are omitting words from the middle of the sentence*)

Please note:

- Ellipsis is not commonly used at the beginning of a sentence or when quoting a short phrase.

- Original text: "Elizabeth Gaskell provides an example of the positive spirit that is encountered in a great deal of fiction in the 1850s. By the 1860s, a sense of failure was becoming widespread; there was an awareness that material prosperity had not actually improved people's lives" (Peck and Coyle 181).
- Correct: Peck and Coyle note that Gaskell represents the "positive spirit" found in most fiction of the 1850s. By the 1860s, however, "a sense of failure was becoming widespread" regarding the effects of material prosperity on people's lives (Peck and Coyle 181).
- Incorrect: Peck and Coyle note that Gaskell represents the ". . . positive spirit" found in most fiction of the 1850s. By the 1860s, however, ". . . a sense of failure was becoming widespread" regarding the effects of material prosperity on people's lives (Peck and Coyle 181).

- When you omit the last part of a sentence, the sentence-terminating period is placed outside the parenthetical reference (after the parenthesis).

Example: In *Walden*, Thoreau argues that by simplifying one's life, "the laws of the universe will appear less complex . . ." (152). (Original sentence: "In proportion as one simplifies his life, the laws of the universe will appear less complex, and solitude will not be solitude, nor poverty, nor weakness weakness").

- When the omitted material spans two or more sentences, four dots should be used for omissions:

- Original text:

One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin. He lay on his armour-like back, and if he lifted his head a little he could see his brown belly, slightly domed and divided by arches into stiff sections. The bedding was hardly able to cover it and seemed ready to slide off any moment. His many legs, pitifully

thin compared with the size of the rest of him, waved about helplessly as he looked. (Kafka 1)

- Example:

This is the beginning of Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*: "One morning, when Gregor Samsa woke from troubled dreams, he found himself transformed in his bed into a horrible vermin. . . . His many legs, pitifully thin compared with the size of the rest of him, waved about helplessly as he looked" (1). (*When your quote omits an entire sentence or more, as happens here, you use an ellipsis but you also add a period before it*)

Remember: The general rule is to use three dots. Four dots should be used for omissions between two or more original sentences.

2. Brackets (Adding or changing text)

If you need to add a word for clarity's sake, or change a verb tense/capitalisation so the quotation fits your sentence's grammar, use square brackets [].

Example: Whistledown notes that "[the Bridgerton family] remains the center of every scandal" (Quinn 114). (*The original quote might have just said "they", so the brackets clarify who "they" are*).

For extra information and more examples, you may wish to visit the following sites:

MLA Style Centre:

[Why do periods and commas go inside quotation marks in MLA style?](#)

Purdue Online Writing Lab -Purdue University:

[MLA Formatting Quotations](#) (short quotations; long quotations; adding or omitting words in quotations)

MLA 9 Resource Centre:

[In-text Examples](#)

[Square Brackets and Ellipses](#)

Lumen Learning:

[MLA In-text Citations](#)

5.3. The Works Cited Section

When you quote or paraphrase, you give very brief information about your source. All relevant data must appear in the final section of your dissertation, starting on a new page under the heading: WORKS CITED.

A Works Cited list is not exactly the same as a Bibliography. A Works Cited list is specific and restrictive. It includes only the sources you have actually quoted, paraphrased, or summarised directly within your dissertation. A Bibliography is much broader. It includes every source you cited plus every background text you read during your research, even if you did not end up quoting them in the final draft. The closing section of your dissertation is not a Bibliography.

Your sources, collected in the Works Cited list, must be substantial in quantity, high in academic quality, and integrated meaningfully into your argument. A good dissertation demonstrates a balance of sources, incorporating both traditional print media (like monographs and edited collections) and digital resources where appropriate.

It is highly recommended to compile your Works Cited list progressively as you write your dissertation, rather than leaving it for the final stage. Including a complete list of sources with every draft allows your supervisor to review your citations and Works Cited section progressively. This ensures that any formatting errors are caught and corrected early, rather than being repeated throughout the entire project. Besides, recording your sources immediately reduces the risk of accidental plagiarism and also saves you from having to retrace your steps months later to find a specific page number or a half-remembered journal article.

- **Recommended websites to write your Works Cited section:**

At the time of writing this Guide, the latest version is the MLA 9th edition. The following websites provide reliable tools and examples to help you compile your Works Cited list in accordance with the most recent MLA guidelines.

Landmark College Guides:

- [Quick reference guide](#): Getting started with MLA Citations, 9th edition
- [Full guide](#)

Purdue Online Writing Lab -Purdue University:

[MLA Works Cited Page](#)

Look at the list on the left side of the screen and click on the links to see examples of how to cite books, periodicals, electronic sources, etc.

MLA Works Cited Page: Basic Format

MLA Works Cited Page: Books

MLA Works Cited Page: Periodicals

MLA Works Cited: Electronic Sources (Web Publications)

MLA Works Cited: Other Common Sources

MLA Additional Resources

MLA 9 Resource Centre:

[Citation Examples](#)

Look at the list on the left side of the screen and click on the links to see examples:

Citation Examples

Book with Personal Author(s)

Book with Editor(s)

Book with Organization as Author

Parts of Books

Multivolume Works

Government Publication

Journal Article

Magazine Article

Newspaper Article

Images

Media

Other Formats

Websites, Social Media, and Email

ChatGPT

 **Note of caution 1:** While the internet is a powerful tool, it must be used with academic rigour. Be wary of over-relying on general websites, blogs, or non-peer-reviewed articles. Sources such as *SparkNotes* or personal opinion pieces carry no academic weight. Avoid “over-searching” the web at the expense of deep reading. The core of an English Literature dissertation remains the close analysis of primary texts and

engagement with established scholarly critics found in university databases like JSTOR or Project MUSE.

⚠ Note of caution 2: While Generative AI tools can be helpful for brainstorming or clarifying some concepts, copying and pasting AI-generated text into your dissertation is a form of plagiarism/academic misconduct. AI models frequently invent “facts,” misquote literary texts, and fabricate non-existent bibliographic references. Relying on AI for citations in the text and entries in the Works Cited section is a fast track to academic inaccuracy. AI “hallucinations” can be spotted, just as it is not difficult to notice when a student’s writing shifts suddenly between his/her own voice and the characteristically “robotic” style of an AI.

5.4. Other Practical Considerations

- 1) Think of an effective title for your dissertation.** If your title is good, it will fulfil the following requirements:
 - First, it predicts content: it advances the main focus of your essay
 - Second, it catches the reader’s interest
 - Third, it reflects the tone or slant of the piece of writing
- 2) Line spacing, alignment and font.** Double-space and justify the text. Use a standard font (like Times New Roman, point 12).
- 3) Paragraphing:**
 - Consider whether a new paragraph is necessary. Avoid writing paragraphs that are too short. Order your paragraphs so that each one follows logically on from the previous one.
 - As to **paragraph layout**, there are two main options:
 - a. Indentation method.** Indent the first line of every new paragraph (except for the first line of the essay or of a new section or sub-section). If you use indents, you should avoid “extra spaces” between paragraphs.
 - b. Block method.** The first line of the paragraph is NOT indented, but then you leave extra space between paragraphs to clearly separate them.

Do not use both indents and extra spaces.
- 4) Insert page numbers.** Page numbering must begin with 1 on the first page of the Introduction. Preliminary sections—such as the cover page, abstract, and Table of Contents—do not include page numbers.
- 5) Ensure consistency between quotations/paraphrases and the Works Cited section** (are all citations included in the Works Cited, are there duplicate or incomplete references?, etc.).

- 6) **Ensure spelling is consistent throughout** (stick to British or American English and use it consistently).
- 7) **Ensure your dissertation follows MLA citation rules.** Do not “mix and match” styles.
- 8) **Headings and subheadings:**
 - Are they consistently formatted? Establish a hierarchy and use distinct visual styles for different levels of headings (e.g., chapter titles should look different from sub-sections). Then, stick to the style.
 - Never leave a heading at the very bottom of a page with the text starting on the next. Use a page break to keep the heading with its content.
- 9) **Avoid mismatches between the Table of Contents and the actual page numbers in the text.** This often happens after final edits, when adding a single paragraph may push a chapter heading onto a new page.
- 10) The **Works Cited** section must be listed in the Table of Contents and included in the document’s total page count, but it is standard practice **not to assign it a chapter or section number** (e.g., do not label it as “5. Works Cited” or “Chapter 5. Works Cited”).
- 11) **Always re-read and spell-check your work before every submission**, whether you are sending a preliminary draft to your supervisor or preparing the final version for the official deposit.

If you wish to have a look at other TFG, go to

<https://zaguan.unizar.es/collection/trabajos-fin-grado?ln=es>

ZAGUAN is the University of Zaragoza’s institutional repository. It contains thousands of defended TFG, TFM (Master's), and Doctoral theses. You can filter the repository by introducing the name of a supervisor, a writer’s name, or a work’s title in order to narrow your search.