

## Using Supplementary Notes in MLA Style

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**Summary:** Defines supplementary notes and explains when to use them and how to format them in MLA documentation style.

**Learning Objectives:** To define supplementary notes. To format endnotes and footnotes correctly. To identify reasons to use supplementary notes.

Using supplementary notes is a good way to add depth to your paper, to provide your reader with interesting additional material, and to impress your audience with the breadth and depth of your knowledge. In this handout, we'll define supplementary notes, discuss how to format them, and suggest some uses for them.

### What are Supplementary Notes?

MLA style makes use of parenthetical references (author and page number) to document certain kinds of information. This system works well to allow you to direct your readers to the sources from which you derived your paper. But you can add another, very impressive dimension to your paper by using notes—either footnotes or endnotes.

Endnotes or footnotes can be used to provide notes about content or documentation. Content notes are notes that supplement or explain the primary content of your paper, while bibliographic notes provide additional bibliographic information about your sources.



Ultimately, supplementary notes (whether content or bibliographical) give your reader additional information about your topic that might be interesting and important but that might disrupt the flow of information if you include it in the body of your paper.

Both kinds of notes are formatted in the same way. **Note, though, that as a rule, MLA uses only endnotes. Footnotes should be used only if requested by the professor.**



**Hint:** Many word processing programs, including Microsoft Word, contain features that will help writers insert footnotes and endnotes. To learn more about these features and how to use them, use the Help feature in the word processing program or perform an Internet search. An Internet search for using footnotes in Microsoft Word revealed several helpful websites, including the following link: <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/adding-footnotes-and-endnotes-in-word-2007.html>



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## Endnotes

The following example shows how material is presented as an endnote in the text of the paper. Notice the number 1 in superscript at the end of the third sentence: that is the note number. Endnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the paper.

This kind of authoritarian dominion over wives had psychological as well as legal implications according to Robert Thompson (74-86). He contends that the pervasiveness of such attitudes required reciprocal attitudes of subordination or deference in the relationship. These attitudes were embodied in wife and child.<sup>1</sup> Psychological characteristics . . .

The content or text of the endnote (the material you've written that supplements or explains some aspect of your paper) will appear at the end of your paper. All of the notes are gathered together and presented in numerical order on a separate page at the end of the text.

This page is labeled Notes and appears between the last page of text and the Works Cited page. All bibliographical references made on the Notes page will be cited in alphabetical order on the Works Cited page along with the citations from the text itself. The Notes page and Works Cited page are numbered in sequence with the rest of the paper.

The Notes page has some specific formatting requirements. Because it is a continuation of the paper, the Notes page should have a running header with the appropriate page number. The title *Notes* should be centered on the first line of the page. Notes should be listed in numerical order and formatted paragraph style with the first line indented. Like everything else in an MLA paper, the Notes page should be double-spaced.

Smith 8

### Notes

1. For a different point of view, see Ross 3. Ross contends that working class women never learned the habit of deference from their middle class counterparts.
2. The working class neighborhood in Edwardian England was a hostage to its own ideas of respectability. . .

Note: All sources given in your content notes will appear on your Works Cited page along with the material cited parenthetically in text.



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## Footnotes

This example demonstrates the relationship between the text and the note if the information is presented as a footnote, meaning at the bottom of the page.

In the text, a superscript numeral should be placed at the end of the sentence where the added information is relevant.

This kind of authoritarian dominion over wives had psychological as well as legal implications according to Robert Thompson (74-86). He contends that the pervasiveness of such attitudes required reciprocal attitudes of subordination or deference in the relationship. These attitudes were embodied in wife and child.<sup>1</sup> Psychological characteristics . . .

At the bottom of the page on which the superscript numeral(s) appears, the content of the note(s) will appear beginning four lines below the text.

The note should have the first line indented with subsequent lines on the left margin. Footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the paper, so notes 1, 2 and 3, for instance, might appear on page 1 of the paper, notes 4 and 5 on page 3, etc. Arabic numbers should be used. Notes should contain the numeral, in standard font, not superscript, followed by a period, and then the text. The footnote is double-spaced.

. . . Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper. Text of paper.

Text of paper. Text of paper.

1. For a different point of view, see Ross 3. Ross contends that working class women never learned the habit of deference from their middle class counterparts.

## Uses for Supplementary Notes

The list below shows examples of some of the common uses for notes.

*Provide a Blanket Citation:*

3. For further studies supporting Jones's conclusions see Garrett 38; Farmer and Wilson 345-78; and Hart, Bennet, and Karloff 211.



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*Give Contrasting Information:*

2. On the other hand, Smyth notes a different result altogether in his work, contending that the overall outcome of Rommel's appeal was negative because external factors like the progress of the war intervened (58-60).

*Evaluate a Source:*

4. While Berker's summary implies that Kohlberg's theory of moral development is universal and ungendered, he obviously fails to understand or account for the impact of Kohlberg's failure to include a representative sample of females in his study (127-35).

*Cite a Major Source Requiring Frequent In-Text Citation:*

1. All references to *Huckleberry Finn* can be found in McMichael, et al., *Concise Anthology*.

*Explain Methods, Procedures, Tools:*

5. The original research group for this anecdotal study of childbirth practices in the early twentieth century were women who had practiced as midwives in New York city between 1900 and 1920. The study group was limited to those who had registered with the city to practice under the aegis of a licensed doctor.

*Provide Definitions:*

7. For the purposes of this paper, *post-structuralism* is defined as the movement that seeks to discern the relationship between language, representation, and reality by examining the creation of and forces within certain linguistic systems.

Works Cited

Modern Language Association of America. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed.  
New York: MLA, 2009. Print.



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