Using Microsoft Word for MLA Citations & Works Cited

**Why Do We Use In-Text Citations and a Works Cited Page?**

When writing research papers, essays, or projects, it’s important to recognize that almost every strong idea builds on the work of others. By using in-text citations, you give credit to the original author right at the moment you use their words, ideas, or data. This transparency helps your reader understand exactly where your evidence comes from. Meanwhile, a Works Cited page is a complete list of every source you referenced, organized so anyone can locate the materials themselves. Together, these tools show honesty in your work, prevent plagiarism, and demonstrate academic integrity. They also make your paper stronger, because readers can see that your arguments are backed by trustworthy research and not just personal opinion.

**Why Use Microsoft Word? While there are many text editors available today, Microsoft** Word is one of the most powerful and student-friendly tools for creating academic papers. Word has a built-in References Manager that lets you save source information, insert citations with a click, and automatically generate a properly formatted Works Cited page. This means you spend less time worrying about punctuation and spacing rules, and more time focusing on your actual writing. Other apps, like Google Docs or Notes, require you to type citations manually, which increases the chance of mistakes. Using Word reduces errors, saves time, and gives your paper a polished, professional look that meets the standards of high school, college, and even workplace research writing. Additionally, students in Pinellas County Schools (PCS) have free access to Microsoft Office 365, including Word. By learning to use these tools now, you are not only making your schoolwork easier but also preparing for future success in higher education and careers, where accurate citation and professional document formatting are essential skills.

# Step 1: Set Up MLA Format in Word

* Margins: 1 inch on all sides (Layout  Margins  Normal).
* Font: Times New Roman, 12 pt.
* Spacing: Double-spaced (Home  Line Spacing).
* Header: Insert  Page Number  Top of Page  Right, then type last name before number.

# Step 2: Add Sources to Word’s Source Manager

* Go to the References tab.
* Click Manage Sources  New.
* Choose the source type (Book, Website, Journal, etc.).
* Fill in author, title, year, publisher, etc.  Click OK.
* Repeat for all sources you plan to use.

# Step 3: Insert In-Text Citations

* Place your cursor after the sentence you want to cite.
* Go to References  Insert Citation.
* Select the correct source.
* Word inserts a parenthetical citation (e.g., (Smith 23)).

# Step 4: Create a Works Cited Page

* At the end of your paper, insert a Page Break (Ctrl + Enter).
* Go to References  Bibliography.
* Select Works Cited.
* Word will automatically generate a list of all the sources you cited.

# Step 5: Make Sure It’s MLA Style

* In References  Style, select MLA.
* Check formatting: Titles capitalized correctly, hanging indents in the Works Cited, double spacing.
* Update later by right-clicking your Works Cited list  Update Citations and Bibliography.
* **Quick Reminder:** Always double-check Word’s formatting against MLA guidelines (MLA Handbook or Purdue OWL) — the software isn’t perfect.