

Formatting Footnotes And Endnotes: *MLA Handout #4*

There are several ways to use footnotes and endnotes in a paper. Footnotes are at the bottom of the page, and endnotes are in their own section at the end of the paper but before the bibliography; both footnotes and endnotes are generally numbered consecutively throughout the document.

Extra information

You can use footnotes to give your reader more information or explanation of a point without going into an unnecessary tangent within the body of the text. For example, let's say you were writing a paper on Darwin, which contained this sentence:

Darwin took years to come up with his theory of evolution, relying largely on hands-on experimentation in the Galapagos as well as in his home laboratory.¹

The footnote could read:

¹ There are anecdotes of Darwin throwing marine iguanas into the ocean to find out why they always swim back to land.

This is additional information that you want to provide, but which does not flow well within your main text.

Evaluative bibliographic comments

You can use footnotes to qualify your citation where that is appropriate, for example:

¹ See Blackmur, especially chapters three and four, for an insightful analysis of this trend.

² On the problems related to repressed memory recovery, see Wollens pp. 120– 35; for a contrasting view, see Pyle.

Numbering Endnotes and Footnotes

Footnotes in MLA format are indicated by consecutively-numbered superscript arabic numbers in the main text **after** the punctuation of the phrase or clause the note refers to:

Some have argued that such an investigation would be fruitless.⁶

Scholars have argued for years that this claim has no basis,⁷ so we would do well to ignore it.

However, note references appear **before** dashes:

For years, scholars have failed to address this point⁸—a fact that suggests their cowardice more than their carelessness.

Do not use asterisks, daggers, or other symbols for note references. The list of endnotes and footnotes (either of which, for papers submitted for publication, should be listed on a separate page, as indicated below) should correspond to the note references in the text.

Formatting Endnotes and Footnotes

The MLA recommends that all notes be listed on a separate page titled Notes (no quotation marks or italics), which should appear before the Works Cited page. This is especially important for papers being submitted for publication. The notes themselves are listed by consecutive superscript arabic numbers and appear double-spaced in regular paragraph format (a new paragraph for each note) on a separate page under the word Notes (centered, in plain text without quotation marks).

In the case that you need to format footnotes on the same page as the main text, footnotes should begin four lines (two double-spaced lines) below the main text. **Single-space** notes formatted as footnotes on the page, but double-space between individual notes.