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# **Guidelines**

for Term Papers in  
Literary & Cultural Studies

**Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik**

Lehrstuhl für Anglophone Literatur & Kultur

## Table of Contents

Topic.....	3
Content.....	4
Format .....	5
Length and page numbering.....	6
Structure.....	6
Title page.....	7
Language use .....	8
Finding literature.....	9
Bibliography.....	10
In-text citations .....	11
Electronic reference managers.....	11
Handing in term papers.....	12
Assessment and feedback.....	12
Support and information.....	12
Checklist.....	13
Feedback sheet.....	14

## Topic

Some instructors will provide you with topics, but most will let you find an appropriate topic. When choosing a topic, please make sure it fulfils the following criteria:

- ❖ You are **interested** in the topic.
- ❖ The topic area in *general* has been discussed in a **course** you took with the instructor. The *specific* topic and your research question may, and perhaps even should, differ from the contents you have already discussed in the course.
- ❖ Topics need to be **specific enough** to allow you to go into detail when writing the term paper, e.g. you cannot write a term paper about a broad topic such as “Shakespeare”, but you could, for instance, analyse how Shakespeare uses language to create a particular emotion in a scene in one of his plays. Likewise, “industrialism” would be too broad, but the effects of industrialisation on one particular city or region at a specific time in history would be an option.
- ❖ As a rule, there needs to be enough **secondary literature** about the topic, i.e. books, journal articles, etc. that cover aspects of your topic. For some very new topics, secondary literature may not exist (yet)—in those cases applying existing theory to a new topic might be an option that you would need to discuss with your instructor in advance.
- ❖ The topic should be **easy to structure** in a meaningful way (see below under “Content”).
- ❖ It should inspire you to **think, reflect and evaluate** for yourself, i.e. you should not just summarise known facts.

Please discuss possible term paper topics and hypotheses early. The *Studien- und Prüfungsordnung* states that topics must be finalised together with the instructor by no later than the last week of the course. Make an appointment with your instructor and/or use the regular office hours and try to do the following things before discussing the topic:

- ❖ Think your topic through and consider alternative topics. Ask yourself: How can it be structured? What is my point? Is it specific enough for a term paper?
- ❖ Prepare 2-3 research questions or hypotheses that you could explore before you come to the meeting.
- ❖ Check the MLA International Bibliography and other databases for secondary literature. Bring a first, printed bibliography with secondary literature that deals with your topic.
- ❖ Bring a paper copy of *Antrag auf Zuteilung eines Themas zur Hausarbeit* and fill in your name, matriculation number and course/module details beforehand.

## Content

For all term papers, it is important to demonstrate that ...

- ❖ The topic has been understood and seen in the right **context**;
- ❖ An **appropriate amount of academic literature** has been consulted to support the thesis statement;
- ❖ The primary and secondary literature has been correctly **understood, and convincingly analysed and interpreted**;
- ❖ The argumentation is **clear and coherent**, the text makes sense and does not contradict itself;
- ❖ The term paper is **well-structured** (chapters, subchapters, paragraphs) in a way that allows the *reader* to follow the argumentation at all times, and it begins with an introduction, which is followed by the main part(s) and a conclusion and/or summary;
- ❖ The **structuring principle** should be recognisable to the reader and make sense for the topic, e.g. chronological order (past—present—outlook), cause—effect, problem—solution, thesis—antithesis—synthesis to name a few;
- ❖ All **sources are properly identified** within the text and listed in the bibliography.

In general, students are expected to give a **critical assessment** of the topic, which means that they do not simply recite the ‘hard facts’, but engage in an academic process of analysis, interpretation and evaluation that is based on scientific literature and methods. Based on the facts and arguments that you cite in your term paper, it should become obvious to the reader what your own contribution to the topic is (e.g. comparison, interpretation, contextualisation, etc).

A term paper is **NOT to be confused with a biography of an author, a plot summary or a general overview of a topic**. Certain aspects of an author’s biography, of the plot of a book, or of the general overview may be included, but only (!!) if they are directly relevant for your research question. Everything else is redundant and must be left out. You can assume that your instructor *knows* the biography of the author, the plot, and general events in an historic era and is much more interested in what you would like to say specifically about your thesis statement.

## Format

- ❖ **Headings:** Headings should be bold and larger in size than regular text. Consider using a sans-serif font such as **Arial**, **Verdana** or **Gill Sans** for headings to highlight them in contrast to (serif) regular text.
- ❖ **Text:** For regular text, please use a serif typeface such as **Garamond** or **Times New Roman**, font size 12, line spacing 1.5, justified or left-aligned.
- ❖ **Footnotes:** May be used for additional information that deepens or explains arguments in the main text, but that is not 100% relevant to your line of argumentation. They should not be used excessively, but only when they add something valuable that could not be placed in the main text. Footnotes should be numbered, single-spaced and in font size 10.
- ❖ **Page margins:** 2.5 cm on the left, right, and top and 2 cm at the bottom
- ❖ **Bold**, *italic*, and underline should not be used for emphasis unless it is absolutely necessary; try to keep it plain and simple as much as possible. If emphasis is needed, then use italics, but use it sparingly.
- ❖ **Do not use fancy colours**—black and white are just fine; if necessary use one other colour.
- ❖ **Examples, tables, maps and images must be numbered:** (1), (2), Map 1, Map 2, Image 1, Image 2, etc.
- ❖ **Quotation marks** in English are always at the top (English “XYZ” vs. German „XYZ“). If your word processor uses the German version, change the language of the document to English. This will automatically change the formatting style to English as well.
- ❖ A **hyphen** (-) is used to link words (e.g. “self-interest”). A **dash** (—) is used to separate additional information—insertions like this one, for instance—from the main sentence.
- ❖ **Titles** of books and plays are usually given in italics (= *kursiv*), those of essays, articles, short stories, and poems in ‘simple’ (not “double”) quotation marks in British usage. In American usage, all of the latter are put in “double” quotation marks.
- ❖ **Thousands and decimals:** The number *one hundred thousand* is written “100,000” in English but “100.000” in German whereas one and a half is written “1.5” in English and “1,5” in German. A rule of thumb: it is always the opposite from what you would use in German.
- ❖ **Longer citations** (> three lines) are to be indented (= *engerückt*; for instance: 1.25 cm margin to the left and right) and visually separated from your own text by using single-spacing and by reducing the font size to 10 instead of the usual 12.

## Length and page numbering

The length requirement is stipulated in your *Studien- und Prüfungsordnung* (exam regulations). Be sure to check how many pages you need to write before you start writing. Giving you a minimum and a maximum of pages you are allowed to write is an essential part of the assignment, which means that not fulfilling the length requirements may result in not meeting overall standards for passing or a lower grade. Here are some more guidelines for you:

- ❖ Every page must be numbered in the bottom right corner. The title page and the Table of Contents (ToC) should not be numbered.
- ❖ Page numbering begins with “1” on the page of your ‘Introduction’ and continues until the very end of the paper. Choose the option *not* to display the page number on the first page (=ToC). Do your title page in a separate .doc file that you add to the printed / PDF version.
- ❖ The title page, table of contents, bibliography, appendix, photos, maps, and everything else that is not text written by you does not count towards the length requirement.
- ❖ Stick to the formatting (see above) and do not change margins, headings, font sizes or spacing, except in such cases where these guidelines recommend alterations.
- ❖ If you need to include many and/or large images or tables, then please place them in an appendix at the end of the term paper rather than directly in the main text.

## Structure

- ❖ **Title page:** See chapter “Title page” below for more information.
- ❖ **Table of Contents:** The ToC contains headings and page numbers of chapters and subchapters down to the third level. It immediately precedes the main text and provides an overview of your term paper. Use the automatic function in your word processing program in order to make headings and page numbers congruent across the document.
- ❖ **Introduction:** Informs the reader about your topic and hypothesis and stresses its relevance, states the main (!) secondary literature on the topic and the method/approach you use, and defines relevant concepts and terms with the help of academic literature. Be sure to write a short, relevant and interesting introduction because this is the *first* thing your instructor reads so you want to make a good impression from the very beginning. The introduction’s length should be about 10-15 % of the total text’s length.
- ❖ **Main part,** divided into several sub-chapters: The analysis, interpretation and evaluation takes place here. This is where you demonstrate that you have understood the topic, read relevant secondary literature and weighed the arguments. The main part should not simply be a summary of known facts, i.e. you need to do your own thinking here (see “Content”).
- ❖ **Conclusion or summary:** Presents the main results of your term paper, states the answer to your research question, and establishes a link to the original hypothesis in the introduction. The conclusion’s length should be about 10-15 % of the total text length.
- ❖ **List of sources** (aka “Bibliography” or “References”): Lists all the sources you used in the term paper in alphabetical order with full title information (author, title of text, place of publication, year of publication, etc) in the MLA citation format.
- ❖ **Appendix** (optional): Used for images, tables, graphics or primary sources (e.g. a historical document, map, law code) if essential to the understanding of the term paper.
- ❖ **Plagiarism declaration** (obligatory): States that you have cited all the ideas and words (direct, indirect or in translation) of others that you used when writing this term paper and that you have written the term paper yourself.



## Language use

As a student of English, you are expected to hand in term papers that demonstrate a superior command of English grammar, spelling, punctuation, style and vocabulary. Please make sure to **proof-read** your text before handing it in to make sure there are no errors. Perhaps even consider having someone *else* proof-read your term paper. Poor language use would reflect negatively on your effort and abilities and might result in a lower mark and/or a request to correct all errors, or, in extreme cases, even failing the term paper as a whole.

The paper should be written in **clear and logical English, avoiding redundancy and unnecessary repetition**. Anything that does not lead to the point or that has already been said should be omitted.

The **vocabulary and register** of a term paper must be appropriate to the university context in which it is written—in other words: C1+. You want to avoid using only very simple words or phrases and instead write on a level of vocabulary and style that reflects academic standards.

Try to express yourself well by using **formal language** rather than spoken/colloquial language. On the other hand, do not overdo it, i.e. using “formal language” is not to be confused with overly dry and lengthy writing full of empty “fancy” words that have no actual meaning. You need to keep the golden mean when it comes to style and register.

In addition, it is essential that you use the appropriate **terminology** within the field correctly: make sure that you have fully understood all the literary, cultural or linguistic terms you use.

There should be **no contractions** (“I’m”, “isn’t”) in the text.

The text as a whole should be written in English. If you quote from sources in languages other than English, please confer with your supervisor whether you need to provide translations in a footnote.

When working on your paper, you should consult:

- ❖ the ***Oxford English Dictionary***
  - you enjoy free access from within the university network via [www.oed.com](http://www.oed.com)
  - particularly as a passive dictionary, i.e. to help you understand primary and secondary texts, the usage and etymology of terms, etc.
- ❖ the ***Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary***
  - particularly as an active dictionary, i.e. to help you write correct present-day English
  - contains extra information such as verb valency, prepositions, countable/non-countable, etc.)
- ❖ a **thesaurus**
  - provides more precise/suitable alternatives for too commonly used or colloquial words and for words that might not be quite appropriate
  - e.g. Webster’s Thesaurus at [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)
- ❖ a university-level **grammar book**
  - you can consult it whenever you encounter a grammatical dilemma
  - e.g. *My Grammar Lab*, *Cambridge Advanced Grammar in Use*
- ❖ a **writing handbook**
  - contains useful background information on specific aspects of academic writing
  - e.g. the classic *Harbrace Essentials* or *The Little Seagull Handbook*

## Finding literature

Finding relevant and appropriate literature is a large part of the job of writing a term paper and is a basic academic skill. One of the main aspects of what you are expected to do is to position your own ideas within the context of the existing scholarly work. Therefore, the efficient use of secondary literature is of vital importance to any term paper and failing to find (and use) enough<sup>1</sup> relevant texts in the field of your term paper may detract from your grade.

To find relevant and appropriate literature go to databases such as the *MLA International Bibliography* and *Online Contents - SSG Anglistik*. Library catalogues (OPAC, GBV) are very limited as aids to finding literature, since they do not contain the titles of essays in journals and books, i.e. they are only useful if you *already know* exactly which book/journal you are looking for and just need to know in which (electronic or real) location a book or journal is to be found. Some journals and books are not available in Greifswald, but only via **inter-library loan** (*Fernleihe*) which can take two to three weeks, so be sure to search for literature early.

**Primary sources** are texts (e.g. manuscripts, novels, poems, plays), films, fine art, photographs, pictures, historical documents, maps, law codes and similar items as *objects* of your analysis.

**Secondary sources** are (a) interpretations and critical evaluations of those primary sources and (b) texts providing historical/cultural (e.g. literary history) or theoretical (e.g. literary theory, stylistics) background information. Consider the following types of secondary literature:

- ❖ **Introductions and companions** present basic knowledge and overviews of an academic discipline. These can be books or edited books and they form a good starting point to get an overview and to find suitable literature in their bibliography.
- ❖ **Books** (aka monographs) are written by one author on a particular subject and will give you detailed information about various aspects of the topic.
- ❖ **Edited books** are edited by one or more person but contain chapters or essays from multiple authors, i.e. they draw on the expertise of various specialists to shed light on a topic from various angles.
- ❖ **Journal articles** are essays on specific topics that are published in scientific journals. They discuss particular aspects in a shorter format of usually between 5 to 30 pages.

When selecting sources be sure to consider the following aspects:

- ❖ **MLA International Bibliography:** If the text has been admitted to the MLA Bibliography then it usually meets a certain level of quality.
- ❖ **Relevance:** Does the source contain relevant information for my hypothesis?
- ❖ **Date of publication:** If the source is older than 20 years, check if the facts and conclusions in it are still up-to-date in academic discourse?

**Internet sources** (websites, Wikipedia, blogs, etc.) *may* be useful in order to get a general overview of the topic. However, they must not be used in/for the term paper, because (a) they usually do not have an identifiable author and (b) they have not undergone the reviewing and editing processes that most books and journals require and are thus not necessarily reliable. There are exceptions such as websites of organisations (UNESCO, EU, statistics offices), online versions of print publications, or websites curated by reputable academics or societies. Of course internet sources such as blogs and websites may be used as primary sources, i.e. when you analyse them linguistically or as a literary medium with the help of secondary sources.

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<sup>1</sup> A rule of thumb: the number of pages you are supposed to write should be approximately equal to the number of different secondary sources that you use.

## Bibliography

The bibliography is a complete and formally consistent list of all **sources** used during the writing process. Reference managers will create a bibliography automatically for you. In the liberal arts and humanities, the **MLA citation style** is most commonly used and therefore it is also the international standard that we use in Greifswald.



Here is an **example of a bibliography** in MLA citation style:  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/12/>

Some guidelines for the bibliography:

- ❖ Every source you cite in the text must appear in the **bibliography**, so please double-check whether your bibliography is complete.
- ❖ The MLA citation style must be **consistently used**, i.e. do not alternate between two different styles.
- ❖ The bibliography is listed **alphabetically** by last name of the author. If an author is represented with multiple publications then these are listed chronologically (oldest first). If there three or more authors/editors you may state the first of them and then add “et al.” which is Latin (et alii) for “and others”. Works with no identifiable author may be listed under the title or in some cases under “Anon.”, which stands for “anonymous author”.
- ❖ The **titles** of novels, monographs, anthologies, compilations, newspapers or journals should be in *italics*. Titles of journal articles, essays, short stories and poems should be in “quotation marks,” not italics.
- ❖ If relevant for the term paper, films, visual and audio sources should be listed separately from (printed and electronic) text sources.

In the following table, you find links to **guides with detailed information and examples** of citations compiled Purdue University’s Online Writing Lab:

TYPE OF SOURCE	LINK TO SPECIFIC EXAMPLES
<b>Book</b>	<a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/06/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/06/</a>
<b>Article</b>	<a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/07/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/07/</a>
<b>Electronic source</b>	<a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/08/</a>
<b>Other source</b>	<a href="https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/09/">https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/09/</a>

## In-text citations

### IMPORTANT

**All passages** (e.g. ideas, concepts, facts, numbers, direct or indirect quotes) **that you copy or paraphrase from another source** (author, book, journal article, internet, encyclopaedia, film, documentary, etc.) **must be identified meticulously. To use material from somebody else** (even when paraphrasing it in your own words!) **without acknowledging its source is plagiarism and can lead to serious consequences and ruin your academic career.** It is a serious academic offence to use ideas without identifying their source.

Use the **Modern Language Association (MLA) citation style** for in-text citations and bibliographies. Use an electronic reference manager to be sure to use the correct citation format (see below).

The MLA citation style uses the author-page system of citing literature in the text.



For specific examples, please refer to this guide:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>

## Electronic reference managers

Use an electronic reference manager when writing a term paper. Basically, reference managers will help you find, organise, store and use literature. They can be used to **insert citations** into MS Word (or other word processors) while you are writing, and they automatically **create a bibliography** at the end of your term paper. Reference managers let you use different citation styles, among them MLA (literary studies & cultural studies) and Harvard or Chicago (linguistics).

The earlier you get used to working with an electronic reference manager, the better. Especially when you are writing your bachelor or *Staatsexamen* thesis, it will make working with literature much easier and faster.

Your main options are (there are more, of course):

- ❖ **Mendeley** is free to download and use at [www.mendeley.com](http://www.mendeley.com)
- ❖ **Citavi** is available at the University Computer Centre (*Rechenzentrum*)
- ❖ **EndNote** is available at the University Computer Centre (*Rechenzentrum*)

There are many on-line tutorials on how to use these reference managers. These can be found on the particular company website or on YouTube. See which one works best for you.

## Handing in term papers

### What to hand in:

- ❖ Send a **searchable PDF** by e-mail to your instructor. Make sure you send it to the correct e-mail address (see website).
- ❖ Hand in a **printed copy in a binder/file** either in person or via mailbox or pigeon hole on the day of the deadline or earlier.
- ❖ Attach the signed **plagiarism declaration** (obligatory).
- ❖ Add a copy of a **feedback sheet** if your instructor uses it (ask your instructor).

### Some notes on deadlines:

- ❖ Term papers must be handed in on the day of the deadline or earlier. Failure to hand in the term paper on time may result in an automatic “fail”.
- ❖ The deadline can be postponed only if the student provides evidence to the exam office (*Prüfungsamt*) that he/she is seriously ill. A simple cold, other term papers, a broken car or a booked holiday will not be accepted as sufficient basis for an extension.
- ❖ If the deadline happens to be on a Saturday/Sunday/holiday then you need to make sure you hand it in on the last working day before the deadline.
- ❖ Keep in mind that the secretary’s offices close at 11.30 AM. As a last resort, there is a *Fristenbriefkasten* at the exam office which is emptied at midnight. In case your instructor needs to receive the paper urgently, it is faster to contact him by e-mail about it and leave it in their postbox the following day.

## Assessment and feedback

Your instructor will mark your term paper and will give you feedback on it either in person or in writing. Term papers may be collected during weekly office hours of teaching staff; some instructors choose to deposit the paper at the secretary’s office for collection.

Your mark will be entered into the student portal (*Selbstbedienungsportal*).

## Support and information

WHO	WHAT	LINK
<b>Instructor</b>	<i>Support on topic, hypothesis, structure, assessment &amp; feedback</i>	<a href="http://ifaa.uni-greifswald.de">http://ifaa.uni-greifswald.de</a>
<b>Zentrales Prüfungsamt</b>	<i>Exams, extension of deadlines, marks</i>	<a href="https://www.uni-greifswald.de/studium/ansprechpartner/pruefungsamt/">https://www.uni-greifswald.de/studium/ansprechpartner/pruefungsamt/</a>
<b>Studien- und Prüfungsordnung</b>	<i>Goals of a module, length of term paper</i>	<a href="https://www.uni-greifswald.de/studium/waehrend-des-studiums/rund-um-die-pruefungen/pruefungs-und-studienordnungen/">https://www.uni-greifswald.de/studium/waehrend-des-studiums/rund-um-die-pruefungen/pruefungs-und-studienordnungen/</a>
<b>Student portal</b>	<i>Exam registration, marks, courses</i>	<a href="http://his.uni-greifswald.de">http://his.uni-greifswald.de</a>

## Checklist

### A) Before you start writing your term paper

- ✓ I have registered for the module exam at the *Prüfungsamt* in time.
- ✓ I have fully understood the topic.
- ✓ I have searched the *MLA International Bibliography* to make sure that enough literature is available to write the term paper.
- ✓ I have discussed the topic and hypothesis with my instructor.
- ✓ I have filled in the *Prüfungsamt* form that states my term paper topic together with my instructor.
- ✓ I know what the deadline for my term paper is.
- ✓ I know how to use an electronic reference manager such as Mendeley, Citavi, EndNote (recommendation).

### B) Before handing in your term paper

- ✓ I have checked grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Twice.
- ✓ Examples, images, maps, etc. are consistently numbered.
- ✓ All sources used in the writing process have been identified in the text wherever they were used and are listed in the bibliography.
- ✓ The bibliography is complete and consistent. I have used the MLA citation style and double-checked the bibliographic data in the term paper and in the reference manager.
- ✓ All the pages are numbered in the bottom right corner (except the title page and ToC).
- ✓ The Table of Contents reflects the chapter names and page numbers correctly.
- ✓ The text is clearly structured and contains no unnecessary or redundant information.
- ✓ I have used relevant secondary literature that substantiates and supports my argumentation.

### C) When handing in your term paper

- ✓ I have printed a paper copy and put it in a binder to leave it with the instructor or secretariat on the day of the deadline (or before).
- ✓ I have sent the term paper as a searchable PDF version to my instructor by e-mail.
- ✓ I have attached and signed the plagiarism declaration.

# Feedback sheet

With my signature, I confirm that this is my own work and that I have read and understood the departmental regulations relating to plagiarism (details on website). I have referenced all sources I used writing this text.

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

TOPIC: \_\_\_\_\_ DEADLINE: \_\_\_\_\_

*NB! Ticks in the boxes do not correspond to marks. They serve as a guideline as to where you can improve and where more attention is needed.*

FOCUS		
- sharp focus on question/topic, fluency, thread - all points are relevant for the task / question - no redundancy and no repetition of content	1 2 3 4 5 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
- exactness = using precise words/phrases - conciseness = getting to the point, no wordiness - no unnecessary words, filler words, repetition	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
CONTRAST		
- balanced argumentation showing both sides - topic is presented in its context - integration of relevant sub-themes - the structure is understandable and appropriate	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
- creativity, originality, reflexion, own thoughts - analysis + interpretation + evaluation - conclusive and logical argumentation - critical approach, problematic issues mentioned	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
UNITY		
- text structure (intro, body, ending) - paragraph structure (topic sentence, supporting details/evidence) - use of connectors and transitions - consistent layout (margins, font size, spacing, ...)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
- purposeful use of evidence - correct use of sources, quotes, data, images, ... - sources are reliable, appropriate, relevant - correct and consistent referencing (MLA)	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
LANGUAGE		
- grammatical accuracy - spelling - punctuation - well-formed and varied sentences	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	
- range of vocabulary - creative and appropriate choice of words - style and register (formal/informal) - command of terminology	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	

FURTHER COMMENTS: