Student’s Name

Professor’s Name

Class and Section

Day Month Year

How to Format Your Paper in MLA

This handout is an introduction to how you construct a paper in MLA format. To start, every page of the paper should have a header in the upper right-hand corner. This header should only consist of your last name and the page number. You can do this by going to “Insert” and “Page Number” (pick Plain Style 3). The next piece of MLA formatting on the first page should be the heading (not to be confused with the header). There are four items that should be included in the heading: your full name, the name of your instructor, your class and section number, and the date. Please note the MLA requirements for dates; list dates as Day Month Year (you can spell out shorter months’ names and use abbreviations for longer months: 16 July 2016). There is no punctuation between these items. All four items listed in your heading should be double-spaced.

            Additionally, your paper should always have a title. This title should not be italicized, in bold font, or placed in quotation marks. It should be centered and give readers a clear indication of the main topic or theme of the paper. The entire essay should be double spaced only; this includes one double space between the last item of the heading and the title, between paragraphs, as well as between the title and the first sentence. The paper should be written in Times New Roman size 12 font. The margins of the paper should be one inch on every side. For each new paragraph, hit the “Tab” key to indent the first line .5 inch. Once you finish writing your paper, staple the pages together in the left-hand corner. Alternatively, save your document as a .doc (or .docx) file for dropbox submission. The essay’s first page should look like this handout.

Furthermore, as you compose paragraphs in an MLA formatted essay, you will find that formatting the first page is only one part of the MLA requirements to consider. Whenever you are citing information in a paragraph (i.e. to support an idea or claim made in your thesis with evidence from a research source), you also need to include what MLA calls *in-text citations.* In-text citations come in a number of different forms, but there are some basic features and types used most often. With MLA formatting, the author is the focus rather than the currency (like in APA), so when setting up a citation, the important things to include are the author’s name and the page number. In MLA, the author’s name can typically go two places: 1) in the sentence with a signal phrase, or 2) in the citation at the end of the quote or paraphrase that you have included. A signal phrase is an action verb that indicates how the author makes information clear. For example, a signal phrase could be “says,” “expresses,” “states,” “suggests,” etc. If you use the author’s name in the sentence (i.e. Smith says), then put the page number in the citation like this: (23). If you don’t use the author’s name in the sentence, put it in front of the page number: (Smith 23). If you don’t have an author, use the title of the source before the page number (article titles go in quotation marks). Note: use the author’s full name the first time it is mentioned, then after, only use the author’s last name in the sentences and citations. Notice that in those examples, the in-text citation goes inside the final period of the sentence.

So, what types of sentences require MLA in-text citations? The answer – quotations and paraphrases. Anytime you insert or format a quote or a paraphrase, MLA format encourages you to cite where you are getting the information. Remember, in-text citations tell readers what sources to look for on your works cited page, so the more correct that trail, the better. Here is an example of an MLA cited quote: According to the “MLA Formatting and Style Guide” from the *Purdue Owl*, “Writers who properly use MLA also build their credibility by demonstrating accountability to their source material” (Russell et al.). There are many MLA rules, so be sure to check with the instructor or a style guide for more information. For example, be sure to look at formatting rules for block quotes, quotes within quotes, summaries, etc. These paragraphs demonstrate MLA formatting (with transitions, margins, etc.), as does the following works cited page. Good luck with MLA format!

Works Cited

For any type of source, you will want to rely on an MLA formatting guide, your instructor’s preferences, or another website perhaps like the *Purdue Owl*.

Here is an example of a citation for a work from a website:

Russell, Tony, et al. “MLA Formatting and Style Guide.” *owl.english.purdue.edu,* The Purdue U Writing Lab, 2016, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01. Accessed 23 Feb. 2016.

Here is an example of a citation for an article on nursing from a scholarly journal:

Christiano, Charlene. "Nursing and Social Media 101." *Beginnings (American Holistic Nurses' Association),* vol. 31, no. 4, (2011), pp. 4-6. *MEDLINE with Full Text,* eds.b.ebscohost.com/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?sid=87159297-ca47-4da0-9fb1-a6be40f502c6%40sessionmgr103&vid=8&hid=121. Accessed 1 June 2016.

Here is an example of a citation for a textbook:

Bullock, Richard, et al. *The Norton Field Guide to Writing.* 4th ed.,W. W. Norton, 2016.

Here is an example of a citation for a work from a textbook:

Tan, Amy. “Mother Tongue.” *The Norton Field Guide to Writing.* 4th ed., W. W. Norton, 2016, pp. 649-655.

Note that for this final page in MLA, the margins, double spacing, header, and font stay the same. This page is titled “Works Cited”, but if you only have one source cited in the paper, you can just make the title “Work Cited”. While different types of sources require different citation formatting, notice that what stays the same is that the first line of each citation is the only one not indented. Anytime a citation goes over one line, all the lines after the first require a hanging indent. To insert a hanging indent for the remaining lines, start by clicking in front of the lines you want to indent. Then, go to the paragraph settings button and click “Special,” then choose “hanging.” Each citation entered on the page needs to be listed in alphabetical order. This page is always the last page of your essay. (The newest *MLA 8th Edition* and the *Purdue Owl* were used for updated MLA rules.)