

# MLA Checklist for Research Paper

The following requirements must be met for the format requirements for a MLA-style paper:

## General Format Specifications for all Pages of the Paper

- \_\_\_\_\_ Double spaced.
- \_\_\_\_\_ One inch margins
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10 – 12 pt font, Times New Roman or Courier New
- \_\_\_\_\_ Last name & page number in upper right hand corner of all pages

## Page One of the Paper

- \_\_\_\_\_ Author's name is in the header on the left hand side of the first page .
- \_\_\_\_\_ Instructor's name appears as the second line of the header on the left margin of the first page.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The name of the course appears as the third line of the header on the left margin of the paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The date, in MLA format, appears as the fourth line of the header on the left margin of the paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The title of the paper appears centered above the text. The text of the title should not be underlined, italicized, in bold, or in quotation marks.

## MLA Citations

- \_\_\_\_\_ Every source cited in the text must be documented in a Works Cited page at the end of the paper.
- \_\_\_\_\_ The author's name (or a key word from the title) is located in a parenthetical citation or in an introduction to the borrowed material (IBM).
- \_\_\_\_\_ Page number(s) (if applicable) are always placed in the parenthetical citation.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parenthetical citations at the end of the sentence are followed by the appropriate punctuation mark (comma or period). [Unless you indent the entire quotation]
- \_\_\_\_\_ Where appropriate, blended sources are used to support major claims of the paper.

## Punctuation

- \_\_\_\_\_ Quotations of four or fewer lines are placed within double quotation marks.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Quotations of more than four lines are indented ten spaces [1 inch] from the left margin. The text is double spaced. Use a comma or a colon after the last word in the text to mark the beginning of the quotation. The parenthetical citation for longer quotations follows the punctuation at the end of the last sentence of the quoted material.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Verse of three lines or less is placed in double quotation marks within the text. Separate lines of verse which appear in a single line of text by a slash (/) with a space before and after the slash.

\_\_\_\_\_ Periods and commas are ALWAYS placed inside quotation marks if there is no parenthetical reference.

\_\_\_\_\_ Question marks and exclamation marks not originally in the quotation go outside the quotation marks.

\_\_\_\_\_ If a parenthetical reference ends a sentence, place the period after the reference.

\_\_\_\_\_ Use single quotation marks to set off a quotation within a quotation.

\_\_\_\_\_ An ellipsis (...) is used when omitting words, phrases or sentences from quoted material. Be sure that the omission of content does not substantially change the meaning

## General Format Specifications

\_\_\_\_\_ Spell numbers of one or two words. [three, five million]

\_\_\_\_\_ Use numerals for numbers of more than two words. [3.56 2,456 1,489 602]

## Works Cited Page

\_\_\_\_\_ "Works Cited" [without the quotation marks] is centered at the top of the page.

\_\_\_\_\_ The "Works Cited" page is a separate page at the end of the paper.

\_\_\_\_\_ The "Works Cited" page is double-spaced.

\_\_\_\_\_ The first line of the first entry is typed flush with the left-hand margin.

\_\_\_\_\_ The second and all following lines of the entry are indented one-half inch.

\_\_\_\_\_ The "Works Cited" page contains entries that are listed in alphabetical order by the first word in each entry.

\_\_\_\_\_ The "Works Cited" page **ONLY** contains references that are actually cited in the paper.

## (OPTIONAL CONTENT SECTION)

### Specifications for Content

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis is clearly stated in the introduction to the paper.

\_\_\_\_\_ Topic sentences are evident in each paragraph of the paper.

\_\_\_\_\_ The focus of the paper synthesizes your sources. It is an essay, not a report.

\_\_\_\_\_ Your original thought is evident and separated from the borrowed material with appropriate citations and quotations.

\_\_\_\_\_ You form arguments and ideas into paragraphs of your own creation. You DO NOT simply cut and paste evidence.

\_\_\_\_\_ Thesis is clearly restated in the conclusion of the paper.

\_\_\_\_\_ The minimum number of required sources are included on the "Works Cited" page.

\_\_\_\_\_ ALL borrowed material is cited.

## Formatting Titles of Texts in MLA Style

### General Rules

These rules apply to titles in the text, in parenthetical citations, and in Works Cited page entries. A title appears the same way no matter where in a document it appears. No titles are underlined. No titles get both quotation marks and italics.

### Formatting Titles

In general, titles of short works go in quotation marks and titles of long works are italicized. (Note: underlining is not used in any style.)

*On Writing: A Memoir of the Craft* (book)

"House Mothers and Haunted Daughters: Shirley Jackson and Female Gothic" (journal article)

### Capitalizing Titles

Capitalize the first letter of the major words of titles. Minor words, such as articles, prepositions, and coordinating conjunctions, are not capitalized unless they are the first word of a title or subtitle.

"Why Boys Don't Play with Dolls" (a short essay)

*In the Heat of the Night* (a film)

Quotation marks	Italics
Any short work	Any long work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poems</li><li>• Newspaper Articles</li><li>• Short Stories</li><li>• Magazine Articles</li><li>• Web Pages</li><li>• Songs</li><li>• Chapters</li><li>• TV Show Episodes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Book</li><li>• Website</li><li>• Play</li><li>• Film</li><li>• Newspaper</li><li>• TV Show</li><li>• Magazine</li><li>• Album</li></ul>

## Citing Sources in the Text

In MLA style, writers place references to sources in the paper to briefly identify them and enable readers to find them in the Works Cited list. These parenthetical references should be kept as brief and as clear as possible.

- Give only the information needed to identify a source. Usually the author's last name and a page reference are enough.
- Place the parenthetical reference as close as possible to its source. Insert the parenthetical reference where a pause would naturally occur, preferably at the end of a sentence.
- Information in the parenthesis should complement, not repeat, information given in the text. If you include an author's name in a sentence, you do not need to repeat it in your parenthetical statement.
- The parenthetical reference should precede the punctuation mark that concludes the sentence, clause, or phrase that contains the cited material.
- Electronic and online sources are cited just like print resources in parenthetical references. *If an online source lacks page numbers, omit numbers from the parenthetical references. If an online source includes fixed page numbers or section numbering, such as numbering of paragraphs, cite the relevant numbers.*

**Examples on back→**

**Author's name in text:**

Dover has  
expressed this  
concern (118-21).

**Author's name in reference:**

This concern has  
been expressed  
(Dover 118-21).

**Corporate authors (such as websites run by a company or  
organization)**

(United Nations,  
Economic  
Commission for  
Africa 51-63)

**Works with no author**

When a work has no author, use the work's title or a shortened  
version of the title when citing it in text. (If abbreviating a title, beg  
with the word by which it is alphabetized in the Works Cited list.):

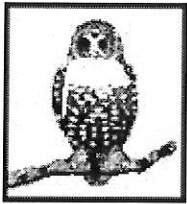
as stated by the  
presidential  
commission (*Report*  
4).

**Online source with numbered paragraphs**

(Cornwell, pars.  
4-5)



# MLA Page Format



First page

Following  
pages

Works-Cited  
page

When revising your essay, make sure your paper follows MLA style format. This page contains some general guidelines for the physical arrangement of your pages.

For answers to specific questions, either follow the links on the preceding page, refer to the MLA Handbook, 4th ed., or check with your instructor.



The opening page to your essay should use the format shown below:

▲ top

1"  
↑  
Your Name  
↓

double  
space  
text  
←

Instructor's Name

Class information (English 1A)

Date

Center Title of Essay

Begin your paragraph one double-spaced line below

1" ←

1" → your centered title; the paragraph should begin with a  
1/2" tabbed indent. The paper's heading goes in the  
upper-left corner of the first page only. Use 1" margins  
all around. Double space everything, including blocked  
quotes. Do not justify the right margin.

double  
space  
text  
←

Only the first page should include the whole heading and title. All margins--top, bottom, and sides--should be set to one inch (1") throughout the whole

paper. Don't add extra spaces between the heading and the title, nor should there be extra spaces between the title and the body of the paragraph.

Use a reasonably-sized font: either 10 characters per inch or a 12 point font. And choose a font that is easy to read rather one that is decorative: "Arial," "Lucida," "Modern," "Palermo" or "Times New Roman" are some good choices. Scripted fonts are hard to read even if they do make your paper "look nice"; it is the content of the paper that is most important, and making it easy for your readers to understand that content is always a good choice.



Pages that follow the opening page to your essay should use the format shown below:

▲ top

The diagram illustrates the required format for the body pages of an essay. It features a large rectangular box containing the following elements:

- Header:** Located in the upper right corner, it consists of the text "last name and pg #". Above this text is a vertical double-headed arrow labeled "1/2\"", indicating the header's height.
- Text Alignment:** The main body text is centered within the box.
- Line Spacing:** The text is double-spaced. This is indicated by a vertical double-headed arrow on the right side of the box labeled "double space text".
- Paragraph Spacing:** Paragraphs are separated by a single space. This is indicated by a horizontal double-headed arrow on the left side of the box labeled "1\"".
- Text Content:** The text inside the box reads: "On all consecutive pages, place a header in the upper right-hand corner; the header should include your last name followed by the page number. All the text on these pages should be double spaced, including any blocked quotes. Paragraphs should be separated by a single space--do not add extra spaces between paragraphs. When you quote an author or use her ideas, be sure to document your source correctly with a parenthetical reference."

Instead of the full heading, pages that follow the opening page should use a header in the upper right corner: your last name and the page number.

Do not add extra spaces between paragraphs--that is a business format. Instead, make sure to continue indenting paragraphs one-half inch (the usual tab default setting).

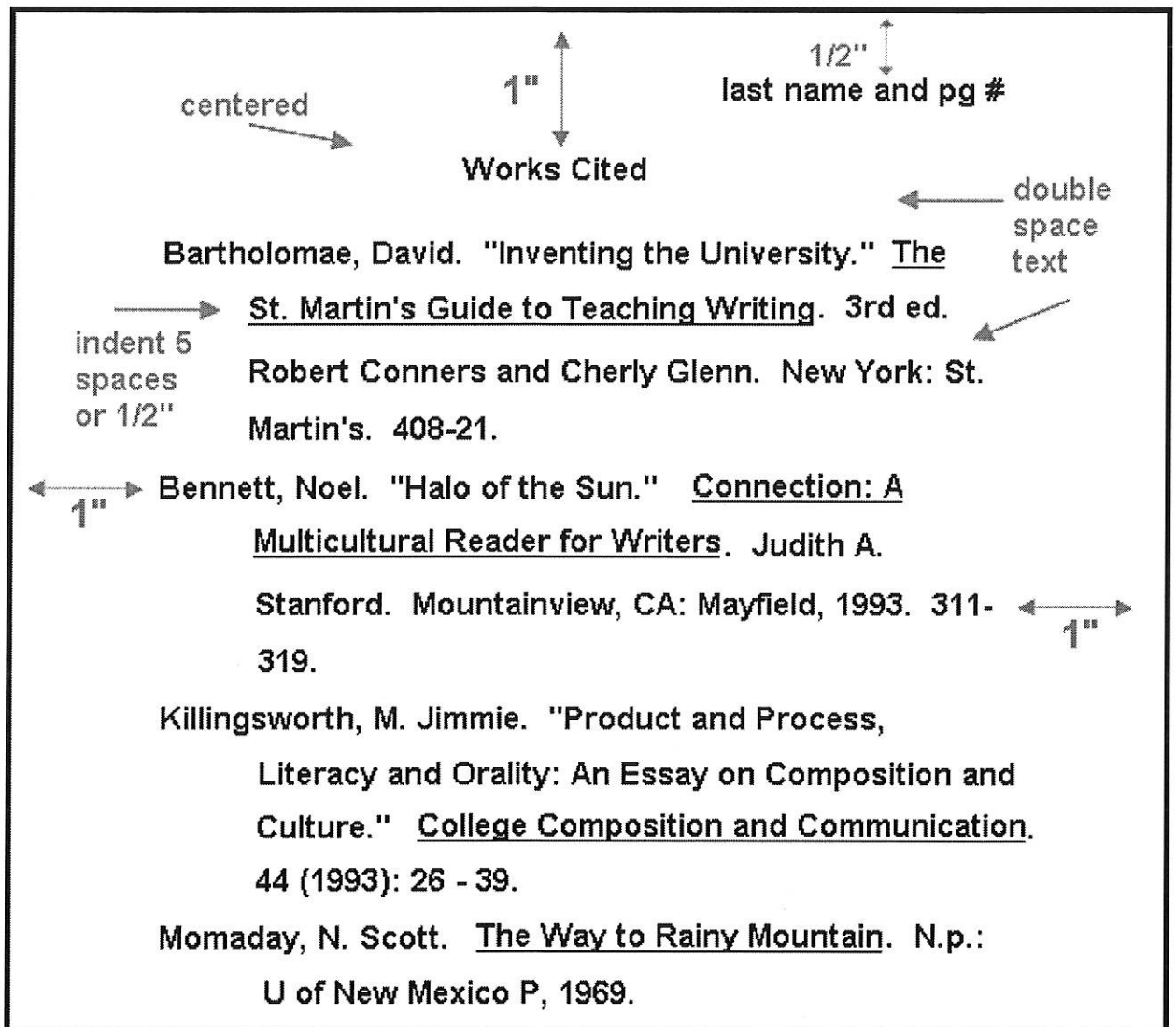
Make sure that you properly document your source with parenthetical references so there can be no questions about plagiarism. Guidelines for

parenthetical referencing can be found on at this linked page.



Finally, if you have referenced outside sources, you must include a works-cited page to show your readers where you found your information; use the format shown below:

▲ top



The works-cited page at the end of your essay gives your readers the list of sources you actually referenced within your paper, allowing your readers to easily find those sources themselves. The works-cited page is **NOT** a bibliography, listing all of the texts you may have researched in preparing the paper.

Note that this page should have a header as well. And again, the page should be double spaced, including the citations.

The citation entries should be listed in alphabetical order by the authors' last names. If there are multiple authors, the proper format is as follows:

Enos, Richard Leo, and John M. Ackerman.

If there are two or three authors, give their names in the same order as on the title page; it is only necessary to reverse the names of the first author, but make sure a comma separates each author and place a period after the last author's name.

Or, if there are more than three authors:

Belenky, Mary Field, et al.

If there are more than three authors, you have a choice of format. You can choose to follow the format for multiple authors given above (which could result in a great deal of typing), or you can add "et al," meaning "and others" after the initial author's name. Just make sure to include the comma between the author's name and "et al" and to place a period after.

Clarity should always be your guide; help your readers whenever possible.

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last updated:  
08/20/98

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