

MLA 8 Formatting a Research Paper

The most common MLA formatting is presented here. If your instructor has specific requirements for the format of your research paper, *check with them* before preparing your final draft. When you submit your paper, be sure to keep a secure copy. **For more help, visit the MLA Style site:** <https://style.mla.org/formatting-papers/>

Margins Except for the running head (see below), leave margins of *one inch* at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text.

Text Formatting Use an *easily readable typeface* like Times New Roman in which the regular type style contrasts clearly with the italic, and set it to a *standard size* (12 point). **Do not justify** the lines of text at the right margin; **turn off** any automatic hyphenation feature in your writing program. **Double-space** the entire research paper, including quotations, notes, and the list of works cited. **Indent the first line** of a paragraph 1/2 inch from the left margin. **Indent set-off quotations** 1/2 inch as well (for examples, see pp. 76–80 in the *MLA 8 Handbook*). **Leave one space** after a period or other concluding punctuation mark, unless your instructor prefers two spaces.

Heading and Title A research paper does not need a title page. Instead, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, **type your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date** on separate lines, double-spacing the lines. On a new, double-spaced line, center the title. *Do not italicize or underline your title*, put it in quotation marks or boldface, or type it in all capital letters. Follow the rules for capitalization in the *MLA 8 Handbook* (pp.67–68), and italicize only the words that you would italicize in the text.

Running Head with Page Numbers **Number all pages** consecutively throughout the research paper *in the upper right-hand corner*, 1/2 inch from the top and flush with the right margin. **Type your last name, followed by a space, before the page number.** Do not use the abbreviation *p.* before the page number or add a period, a hyphen, or any other mark or symbol. Your word processing program will probably allow you to create a running head of this kind that appears automatically on every page. For more help, search YouTube for instructions on creating a running head in the word processing program you use.

Placement of Works Cited List The list of works cited appears *at the end of the paper*, after any endnotes. **Begin the list on a new page.** The list contains the same running head as the main text. The page numbering in the running head continues uninterrupted throughout. **Center the title, Works Cited**, an inch from the top of the page. (If the list contains only one entry, make the heading *Work Cited*.) **Double-space between the title and the first source in the list.** Begin each source entry flush with the left margin; if it runs more than one line, **indent the subsequent line or lines half an inch from the left margin.** This format is sometimes called *hanging indentation*, and you can set your word processing program to create it automatically for a group of paragraphs. **Double-space the entire list.** Continue it on as many pages as necessary. For more help, search YouTube for instructions on creating a hanging indent in the word processing program you use.

Paper and Printing If you print your paper, use only white, 8½-by-11-inch paper of good quality. Some instructors prefer papers printed on a single side because they are easier to read, but others allow printing on both sides as a means of conserving paper. Follow your instructor's preference.

Electronic Submission There are at present no specific standards for the electronic submission of research papers. Check with your instructor for guidelines for electronic submission (e.g., by e-mail, on a Web site, etc).

For help putting your citations in MLA format, use the practice template on the next page.

MLA Practice Template

1 Author.

2 Title of source.

CONTAINER 1

3 Title of container,

4 Other contributors,

5 Version,

6 Number,

7 Publisher,

8 Publication date,

9 Location.

CONTAINER 2

3 Title of container,

4 Other contributors,

5 Version,

6 Number,

7 Publisher,

8 Publication date,

9 Location.