

MLA FORMATTING: WORD DOCUMENTS

Many instructors want you to format your papers according to MLA guidelines, and it can be hard to remember how to do all of these things until you've done them multiple times. You can use this guide and the list below as a checklist to follow as you format your essays in Word.

Your paper is in MLA format if it:

- has 1 inch margins on all sides
- is typed in a legible (easily readable) font—like Times New Roman, Calibri, or Cambria
- is entirely in font size 12
- is double-spaced throughout the entire document
- begins every paragraph with an indentation
- includes a header with your last name/surname and page numbers on the right side
- begins the first page with your name, the class information & date on the left side
- has a title centered on the first page before the essay begins
- includes a Works Cited page at the end of the essay with alphabetized MLA citations

Be aware that there are some differences in how things work between different versions of Word and between Word for PC and Word for Mac. These steps should work most of the time.

Margins

Word defaults to setting 1 inch margins on all sides of a document. Unless you've changed your default settings before, every Word document you begin should have the correct margins. But, you can check this by clicking on the **Page Layout** tab, and then **Margins**—it will show you which setting is currently being used. If for some reason it's not on "Normal," click on **Normal** and you'll have the correct margins.


Font and Size

The traditional font used in MLA formatted papers is Times New Roman and sometimes instructors will require this font. But if there are no font requirements, you can feel free to use any font that is easy to read and not overly large, like Calibri (which is the font Word sets as a default when you begin a new document), Cambria, or others. Always submit your papers in a font that is size 12, no larger and no smaller. Teachers can tell if you've enlarged your font size to meet page requirements! Change the font and size of your text on the **Home** tab, under the **Font** section.

Line Spacing

MLA formatting requires the text of your paper to be double-spaced. The default when you begin typing is usually single-spacing. You can change the spacing before you begin typing, or you can change it after you have typed everything up by highlighting all of the text and *then* completing the steps listed here.

To quickly change the spacing *before* you've started typing:

From the **Home** tab, find the **Paragraph** section and the button that looks like this:  Click the button and choose **2.0** as your spacing.

To quickly change the spacing *after* you've typed your essay:

Highlight all of your text and right click within some of the highlighted text. Select **Paragraph** from the dialog box that pops up, and once in the Paragraph menu, find the **Spacing** section, click on the **Line Spacing** drop-down box, and select **Double**. Click **OK** at the bottom of the dialog box.


Indented Paragraphs

The first line of every paragraph of your essay should be indented. You should do this by hitting the **Tab** key on the keyboard (located on the left side) once at the beginning of the paragraph. Do not indent by hitting the space bar multiple times—that's what the Tab key is for!

Header and Page Numbers

In an MLA formatted paper, the header contains your last name/surname and the page numbers for your essay. Putting this information in the header means that it will be on the top of every single page in the document and the page numbers will automatically update for you. Inserting a header takes a few steps but is very easy!

Begin on the first page of your document. Click on the **Insert** tab on your document—you'll find it right next to Home. Next, find the **Header & Footer** section and click on **Header**—this will bring up multiple kinds of headers to choose from. Select the first option, **Blank**.

This will open up the header on top of the document. There will be a box that says "Type Text" – type your last name/surname with a single space afterwards. Now, go back to the **Home** tab and in the **Paragraph** section, click on the **Align Text Right** button: 


Once your last name/surname is on the right side of the screen, you can insert the page number. To do so, make sure that your cursor (the blinking straight line on the screen where you type) is still positioned after your name and the space you added after your name. Click on the **Header and Footer Tools**, which is in green above the rest of the menu. On the left side of the screen, find the **Header & Footer** section and click on **Page Number**. When the box pops up, click on **Current Position** and select the first option, **Plain Number**. The page number will now appear after your name and it will automatically update as you add more pages to your essay.

Your Name and Class Information

After the information in the header, the first thing you will type in your document will be four lines giving basic information about you and the course. This should all be on the left side of the paper and double-spaced. Word automatically begins every document with text justified to the left, so begin by typing your full name on the first line and hitting Enter. Next, type the full

name of your instructor and then hit Enter. Next, type the Course name and number (e.g. English 101) and then hit Enter. Finally, type the date, with the day first, month next, and then the year (e.g. 28 February 2019). Hit Enter one more time. On the next line, you will type your paper's title.


Paper Title

Every paper needs a title, and the title will follow on the next line after you are finished with the course information. The title should be centered, using the **Center** button in the **Paragraph** section on the **Home** tab: 

Title your paper creatively and specifically! Your title should represent the topic(s) discussed in your essay. You should not just call your paper something like "Essay 1."

Works Cited

Your Works Cited includes all of the sources you have summarized, paraphrased, and quoted from in your essay, listed in alphabetical order. This page needs to go at the end of the essay and begin a new page. When you have reached the end of your essay, hit Enter until you arrive on a new page. Then, type Works Cited and center the text.

Your actual Works Cited entries should be left-justified and double-spaced. After you've centered the Works Cited heading, when you move on to the next line and begin typing up your citations, make sure you change the text justification back to the left by clicking the **Align Text Left** button: 

Hanging Indents

Your citations need to have what is called a **Hanging Indent**, where the text starts out left-justified but the second line of the citation is indented. The easiest way to do this is to type all of your citations up and then change the formatting after you are finished.

To give your citations a hanging indent, **highlight all of your citations** (or each individually) and right-click inside the highlighted text. Select **Paragraph** and find the **Indentation** section. Click on drop-down box under the word **Special** and select **Hanging Indent**. Click **OK** at the bottom of the dialog box.

Your citations now have a Hanging Indent, which looks like this:

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article in Quotation Marks." *Title of Magazine in Italics*,

1 Mar. 2019, www.URLofArticle.com.

Firstname Lastname

Instructor's Name

Course Number

Date

Title of Your Paper