

## MLA Writing Format

Explorable.com 184.8K reads

The Modern Language Association or the MLA writing format is used commonly when writing papers in the liberal arts and humanities field.

This writing format provides guidelines to researchers and writers in formatting research papers and other reports, especially when referencing sources. Referencing and citing of sources is very important as this protects writers from allegations of plagiarism. By properly referencing, you demonstrate accountability to your source materials.

When you are to write a paper using the MLA format, here are the general formatting guidelines that you should follow:

- **Margin.** Margins should be set to one (1) inch on all sides (top, bottom, left and right).
- **Font Size and Type.** Font for text all through out the paper should be 12-pt. Make sure you use a legible font face, and refrain from using decorative fonts. It is recommended that for any font you choose to use, regular and italics type of this should differ enough to be recognized from one another.
- **Spacing.** The entire paper should be double-spaced. This includes the title and the body of each paragraph. Avoid adding extra spaces between the heading and the title of your paper as well as between the title and body itself. For spacing after punctuation, observe one space after periods and other punctuation marks unless specified by your instructor.
- **Text Indentation.** For the text body, indent the first line of each paragraph approximately half-inch from the left margin which also equates to 5-7 spaces. It is recommended that you make use of the Tab key for uniformity, rather than pressing the space bar 5-7 times.
- **Order of Pages and Pagination.** Place a header that numbers all the pages of your paper in the upper right corner of each page, half inch from the top and right-flushed. However, this may vary upon the specifications preferred by your instructor. Sometimes

headers are asked to be typed with your last name first, then the page number in Arabic numeral form. This is still in accordance to MLA writing format. It is advised that you first ask for your instructor's guidelines to make sure you're both in the right page.

- **Endnotes.** Endnotes should be placed on a separate page preceding your Works Cited page. Place a "Notes" title for this section, centered on the page and must remain unformatted.



The banner features a bright orange background. At the top center is a white icon of a flask with a flame, followed by the word "EXPLORABLE" in a white, sans-serif font. Below this, the phrase "Quiz Time!" is written in a white, cursive script. Three white-bordered image boxes are arranged horizontally. The first box shows a pair of red roller skates on a wooden deck, with the text "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" below it. The second box shows a fan of colorful pencils, also with the text "Quiz: Psychology 101 Part 2" below it. The third box shows a Ferris wheel at sunset, with the text "Quiz: Flags in Europe" below it. In the bottom right corner of the banner, there is a white text link: "See all quizzes =>".

## Title Page

When authoring papers in MLA writing format, remember that the Title Page is not necessary unless you were specifically asked by the instructor to make one. In case you were instructed to do so, your Title Page will then serve as your Page 1. You are expected to list your name, your instructor's name, course and the date on the upper left corner of the page. Make sure you double-space after each line.

After the date, double-space once again then enter the Title of your paper, aligned at the center. Refrain from formatting the Title further, such as underlining, italicizing, typing the Title in all capital letters or full capitalization, or placing your Title in quotation marks.

Quotation marks can however be used if you are at the same time referring to other works in your Title. If this is the case, here are some examples on their proper formatting:

*Fearing and Loathing in Las Vegas as Morality Play*

Racism in "Crash"

Remember that only the first page should include the whole heading and title. Here's an example of a Title Page following the MLA writing format:

<http://www.dianahacker.com/pdfs/Hacker-Daly-MLA-Title.pdf> [1]

# Section Headings

When writing a long research paper in MLA writing format, it's best to make use of Section Headings as these will improve your paper's readability. Section Headings could be individual chapters of a book or named parts of an essay.

There are two types of headings you can use: the numbered headings and the formatted, unnumbered headings. Whichever you choose to use, make sure you maintain this type of sectioning throughout the paper.

What follows are sample numbered headings that can be used as your reference when making headings for your own paper using the MLA writing format:

1. Soil Conservation
  - 1.2 Terracing
    - 1.1 Erosion
2. Energy Conservation
  - 2.2 Alternative Sources of Energy
    - 2.1 Traditional Sources of Energy
3. Water Conservation

For formatted and unnumbered headings, here are some examples:

**Level 1 Heading: Bold, Flush Left**

*Level 2 Heading: Italicized, Flush Left*

**Level 3 Heading: Bold, Centered**

*Level 4 Heading: Italicized, Centered*

Level 5 Heading: Underlined, Flush left

If you choose to use only one level of headings (this means all sections are parallel and distinct and do not include any sub-headings) it's good practice to make these Section Headings are uniform and resemble one another grammatically. It's important that you remain consistent throughout your paper.

In the event you choose to employ multiple levels of headings (meaning some sections include subsections or sub-headings) it may be a good idea to provide your instructor or editor with a key of level headings you used and their corresponding formatting.

## Body

Now that you're done with your title page and section headings, let's move on to the body of your research paper [2].

All general MLA writing format guidelines apply to the body of your research paper. Between paragraphs, refrain from adding extra spaces as this is only done when you're expected to write in business format. Otherwise, be consistent and follow the general guidelines for the entirety of your paper.

## Text Citations

When writing research papers [3], it is crucial to properly document your sources with parenthetical references not only to support your paper's credibility but also to avoid being accused of plagiarism [4]. Being accused of plagiarism is a serious offense and may even result in your failing the paper or entire course.

Here are some guidelines in parenthetical referencing for papers following the MLA writing format:

- When referencing outside sources following the MLA writing format, include a page for Works Cited to show readers where you found your data and information. This will also allow your readers to easily find the mentioned source materials themselves.
- Remember that the Works Cited page is not the same as Bibliography [5] or a listing of all information you may have researched in the preparation and writing stage of your paper.
- Format your Works Cited page by creating a header. The whole page should be double-spaced just like the rest of the document, including citations.
- List citation entries in alphabetical order by the authors' last names.

---

**Source URL:** <https://staging.explorable.com/mla-writing-format>

### Links

[1] <http://www.dianahacker.com/pdfs/Hacker-Daly-MLA-Title.pdf>

[2] <https://explorable.com/parts-of-a-research-paper>

[3] <https://explorable.com/writing-a-research-paper>

[4] <https://explorable.com/academic-plagiarism>

[5] <https://explorable.com/writing-a-bibliography>