



Introduction to MLA Style

STEP 1: PAPER FORMAT

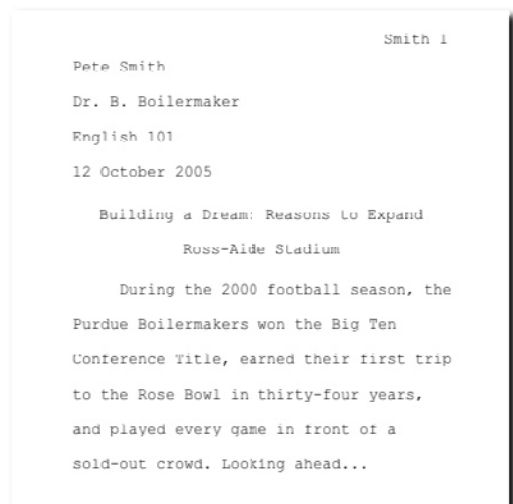
Below are some basic guidelines for formatting a paper in Modern Language Association (MLA) Style. It's always best to consult the current [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#) (Ref LB 2369.G53 2003) for any MLA question. If you are using MLA style for a class assignment, it's also a good idea to consult with your professor — they're the ones who can tell you how the style should apply in your particular case.

General Guidelines

- Double-space the text of your paper and use a standard font.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks.
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides. Indent the first line of a paragraph one half-inch (five spaces or press tab once) from the left margin.
- Create a header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Again, be sure to use double-spaced text.
- Double space again and center the title. Don't underline your title or put it in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case, not in all capital letters.
- Double space between the title and the first line of the text.
- Create a header in the upper right-hand corner that includes your last name, followed by a space with a page number; number all pages consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin.



STEP 2: IN-TEXT CITATIONS

Citing your references allows readers to know which sources you consulted in writing your essay. In MLA style, referring to the works of others in your text is done by using what's known as parenthetical citation. Immediately following a quotation from a source or a paraphrase of a source's ideas, you place the author's name followed by a space and the relevant page number(s).

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).

The citations tell readers that the information in the sentence can be located on page 263 of a work by an author named Wordsworth. If readers want more information about this source, they can turn to the Works Cited page, where, under the name of Wordsworth, they would find the following information:

Wordsworth, William. Lyrical Ballads. London: Oxford U.P., 1967.

STEP 3: FORMATTING QUOTATIONS

To indicate *short quotations* (fewer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks. Provide the author and specific page citation in the text, and include a complete reference on the Works Cited page. Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation.

According to some, dreams express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184), though others disagree.

According to Foulkes's study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (184).

Is it possible that dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184)?

For quotations *longer than four typed lines*, please check the [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#).

STEP 4: WORKS CITED PAGE

According to MLA style, you must have a Works Cited page at the end of your research paper. All entries in the Works Cited page must correspond to the works cited in your main text.

Capitalization and Punctuation

- Capitalize each word in the titles but do not capitalize articles, short prepositions, or conjunctions unless one is the first word of the title or subtitle: Gone with the Wind, The Art of War, There Is Nothing Left to Lose
- Use italics or underlining for titles of larger works (books, magazines) and quotation marks for titles of shorter works (poems, articles)

Sample Entries for Works Cited Page

Book by one author

Keegan, John. The First World War. New York: Knopf, 1999.

Electronic Book

Author's Last Name, First Name. Title of Book. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Name of Library or Library System subscribing to the database, its City and State. Day Month Year of Access <URL>.

Norman, Richard. The Moral Philosophers. New York: Oxford UP, 1998. Duke University Libraries, Durham, NC. 14 Aug. 2001 <<http://www.netlibrary.com>>.

Article in an on-line database (library subscription service)

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." Title of the Printed Source Day Month Year: Page number (if starting page only given, note starting page, followed by a hyphen, a space, and a period). Title of the Database. Name of the Service or Vendor (if available). Name of Library or Library System subscribing to the database, its City and State. Day Month Year of Access.

Chandler, Robert J. "An Uncertain Influence: The Role of the Federal Government in California, 1846-1880." California History Winter 2003: 224- . Expanded Academic ASAP. InfoTrac. Folsom Lake College Library, Folsom, CA. 15 Dec. 2003.

STEP 5: WHERE TO FIND MORE INFORMATION

For detailed style guidelines, the entire [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers](#) (2003 ed.) can be found in the Folsom Lake College Library reference section. Its call number is Ref LB 2369.G53 2003.

For more information, ask your instructor or your reference librarian.

Additional MLA Style help can be found at <http://wserver.flc.losrios.edu/~library/research.htm>.

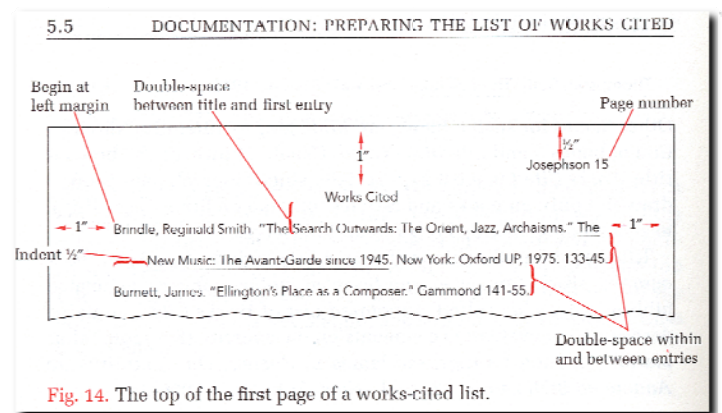


Fig. 14. The top of the first page of a works-cited list.