

MLA General Format

MLA Style provides a structured format for writing and citing research. This system enables writers to refer to sources via parenthetical citations within the text and detailed entries on a Works Cited page.

Using MLA style demonstrates academic integrity by attributing ideas to their sources, which builds the writer's credibility and helps prevent both accidental and intentional plagiarism.

To ensure accuracy and consistency, students should consult the MLA Handbook (9th edition). Advanced scholars may refer to the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing (3rd edition). These references are widely available in academic libraries and writing centers.

Paper Format Overview

The following formatting rules reflect those outlined in the MLA Style Manual:

General Formatting Guidelines:

- Use standard white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- Text should be double-spaced and typed in a legible 12 pt. font like Times New Roman.
- Leave only one space after periods unless instructed otherwise.
- Margins should be set to 1 inch on all sides.
- Indent the first line of each paragraph by half an inch using the Tab key.
- Include a header with page numbers in the upper right-hand corner, half an inch from the top and flush with the right margin.
- Italics are used for longer works and when emphasis is necessary.
- Endnotes, if any, should appear on a separate page before the Works Cited page titled "Notes."

Formatting the First Page:

- MLA style does not require a title page unless specified by the instructor.
- In the top left corner, include the student's name, instructor's name, course title, and date—all double-spaced.
- Center the paper title, using standard capitalization (Title Case), without bold, italics, or quotation marks.
- Begin the text on the line below the title, double-spaced.
- Include a header with the writer's last name and page number in the upper right-hand corner of every page.

Section Headings:

Section headings improve readability. MLA recommends numbering essay sections with Arabic numerals followed by a period and space (e.g., 1. Early Writings).

Books may use unnumbered headings. If only one heading level is used, they should all follow the same grammatical structure. For multiple heading levels, provide a formatting key to instructors or editors.

Example Heading Styles:

Numbered Headings:

- 1. Soil Conservation
 - 1.1 Erosion
 - 1.2 Terracing

Formatted, Unnumbered Headings:

- Level 1: Bold, flush left
- Level 2: Italics, flush left
- Level 3: Centered, bold
- Level 4: Centered, italics
- Level 5: Underlined, flush left