MLA Format for Research Papers

From the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers: Seventh Edition*.

1. **Margins and Indentations**: Except for page numbers, leave margins of one inch at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text. Indent the first word of a paragraph one-half inch from the left margin.

2. **Text Formatting**:
   - Use an easily readable typeface (Times New Roman is recommended) in the standard size, 12 points.
   - Double space the entire research paper, including the Works Cited page.
   - Do not justify the lines of text at the right margin or center them. Do not use automatic hyphenation or hyperlinked text. These options can be turned off in your word processing program.
   - Use only one period after all punctuation, including periods and question marks that conclude a sentence.

3. **Heading**: Do not use a title page unless you are told to do so, but instead use a standard heading at the top of the first page on the left. Double space this heading. The heading should include Your Name, Instructor's Name, Title of Course/Grade/Section, Date.

   Jane Doe

   Mr. Rice

   Academic English 11, Mod 3

   January 10, 2010

4. **Title**: Continuing to double-space, put the title of the paper on the line after your heading. Center it, but do not put the title in italics, quotation marks, underline, or bold. Do not use a period after the title.

5. **Page Numbers**: Number all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. Type in your last name before the page number. Word processing software allows you to create a running header with last name and page number to make it easier than inserting it individually on each page. This header should appear on every page, including the Works Cited page.

6. **Quotations**: All quotations should be double-spaced like the rest of the paper. Quoting poetry differs from quoting prose; see the *MLA Handbook* for how to quote poems. If a quotation of regular prose extends to more than four lines, set it off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin, and typing it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a quotation displayed in this way. Example:

   At the conclusion of Lord of the Flies, Ralph and the other boys realize the horror of their actions:

   > The tears began to flow and sobs shook him. He gave himself up to them now for the first time on the island; great, shuddering spasms of grief that seemed to wrench his whole body. His voice rose under the black smoke before the burning wreckage of the island; and infected by that emotion, the other little boys began to shake and sob too. (186)

7. **Ellipsis**: When omitting material from the original sentence or paragraph when quoting a source, use ellipsis points, or three spaced periods, to indicate that your quotation does not completely reproduce the original. Example:

   "Educate your children to self-control . . . and you have done much to abolish misery from their future

   and crimes from society" (Franklin 233).

8. **Parenthetical or In-Text Citations**: References in the text must clearly point to specific sources in the Works Cited list.
   - A typical in-text citation of a book or printed source with an author consists of the author's name and the page number of the information being cited in parentheses. Example: (Anderson 23).
   - Only the page number is needed when citing the same author consecutively or when the author's name is used in the sentence.
   - For sources that do not have page numbers (Web pages, for instance), use the author's name only.
   - For sources that do not have an author, use the title in quotation marks. Shorten the title if needed. Example: ("Looking to the Future" 18).

9. **Works Cited Page**: The list of works cited is a separate page and the last page of the paper. All sources cited in the paper should be included, listed alphabetically by the author's last name or the title if there is no author. The page should include the title Works Cited centered at the top of the page. The entire page should be double-spaced. The entries of the Works Cited page should be typed with the hanging indent format, meaning that the second and subsequent lines of each entry are indented by one-half inch. See the *MLA Handbook: Seventh Edition* or the pink and blue citation forms in the library (MLA Works Cited/Works Consulted Format for Print Sources and MLA Works Cited/Works Consulted Format for Electronic and Non-Print Sources).

For additional help with the Modern Language Asociation (MLA) format, including how to format individual citations, consult the *MLA Handbook: Seventh Edition* or visit the Methacton Library Web site for links on citations, including: **Noodle Tools, the bibliography generator (www.noodletools.com)** or **The Purdue Online Writing Center-OWL (http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl).**

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