

MLA Formatting and Handbook Quick Guide

I. Formatting Your Paper

- Essays should be typed, double-spaced on standard-sized paper (8.5 X 11 inches) with 1 inch margins on all sides.
- Preferred typeface is 12-pt Times Roman.
- In the upper right-hand corner of each page, include your last name followed by one space and the page number.
- Indent the first line of every paragraph and the first line of every footnote or endnote. For consistency, use the tab key, which should be set at five spaces. Indent set-off ("block") quotations one inch from the left margin (about ten spaces). Double-space set-off quotations.
- Do not include a title page unless your instructor requests it. In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, include your name, your instructor's name, the course, and date. Double-space each line.
- Double space and center your title. Do not underline your title, put it in quotation marks, or use all capital letters. Follow rules for capitalization in Section 3.6.1 and rules for underlining in Sections 3.3 and 3.6.2.
- Sample pages appear on pages 320-321 of the *Handbook*.

II. Guide to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th ed., 2003*.

Organizing Your Paper

Unlike APA style, MLA style does not specify specific parts or sections of a research paper, such as title page, abstract, introduction, etc. Unless requested by your instructor, papers do not include a title page. Papers generally include a list of works cited or bibliography at the end, however MLA style does accommodate the use of Documentation Notes, which eliminates the reference list. While use of Documentation Notes is rare in undergraduate papers, before starting your paper, be sure to clarify which method of documentation your instructor prefers: **either** 1) List of Works Cited and Parenthetical Notes **or** 2) Documentation Notes. For more information, see "Citations and Reference List" below.

Formatting Your Paper

Sections 4.1-4.10 (pages 132-138)

Sections 4.1-4.10 discuss how to present the text of your entire paper, including the kind of paper you should use, fonts, spacing, margins, page numbers and headers, paragraphs and indentations, and formatting tables and illustrations.

Proper Mechanics and Usage

Sections 3.1-3.8.5 (pages 79-130)

These sections discuss proper use of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, italics, names of persons, titles, quotations, and numbers. This is helpful if your instructor wants the text of your paper to conform to MLA guidelines.

Sections 7.1-7.7.4 (pages 262-281)

These sections cover the use of abbreviations, including time designations, geographic names, publishers' names, and common scholarly abbreviations. Section 7.7 covers abbreviations for commonly cited works, including the Bible, Shakespeare, and Chaucer. Section 7.6 covers symbols and abbreviations used in proofreading.

Sections 1.1-2.8 (pages 3-63)

These sections discuss the research and writing process, including selecting a topic, conducting research, evaluating sources, taking notes, outlining, writing drafts, writing style, and avoiding plagiarism.

Citations and Reference List

Sections 6.1-6.5.2 (pages 238-260)

These sections discuss how to write in-text, or parenthetical, citations. This style of citation follows the author-date format, briefly identifies your sources for readers, and enables them to locate full bibliographic entries for your sources in the alphabetical reference list at the end of your paper. This section is helpful for properly composing and formatting all in-text citations in your paper.

Sections 5.1-5.9.9 (pages 142-235)

These sections discuss how to write bibliographic entries for the works cited list at the end of your paper. This section is helpful for properly composing and formatting your entire reference list.

Sections B.1-B.4 (pages 298-317)

These sections cover the alternative Documentation Note citation system and its variants. This system, which eliminates the Works Cited list, is rarely used in undergraduate papers.

III. Quick Guide to Important Topics in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 6th ed., 2003.

The Research and Writing Process

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