



# Success Center General Guidelines for MLA Formatting

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The Modern Language Association (MLA) is the style of documentation often used in liberal arts and humanities disciplines to indicate how a writer has incorporated research information into a paper. The two main components of MLA style documentation are **in-text citations** (brief references in the text of the paper) and a **works cited page** (a complete alphabetical listing of each source used in the paper), which is placed at the end of the paper.

Using any part of someone else's work, whether quoting directly or simply paraphrasing that writer's ideas, requires clear acknowledgement. By providing accurate citations and references, a writer is able to build credibility with readers and direct them to research sources. Additionally, carefully and accurately citing sources in MLA style will help students avoid plagiarism. (See the *SWIC Student Handbook* Student Conduct Code for more information regarding plagiarism.)

## **MLA Formatting (Always check with your instructor for his or her specific requirements.)**

- Set the entire paper for double spacing, including the heading, any block quotations, and the Works Cited page – do not add extra spacing between paragraphs or after titles.
- Use a standard font such as Times New Roman size 12.
- Set margins at one inch on all sides.
- Use a page header to display last name and page number at the right margin of each page.
- At the left margin, create a heading that includes your name, the instructor's name, the class, and the date. (A separate title page is not necessary in MLA unless required by the instructor.)
- Center the title (do not bold, underline, italicize, or enlarge the font).
- Position visuals such as charts, images, etc., near the corresponding text in the paper and provide a caption with notes and citation information about the source. Use the label "Fig. 1" for all visuals except tables, which are designated "Table 1." Number figures and tables consecutively in the paper.
- Start the works cited on a separate page and continue with the next page number.
- Alphabetize the list of sources by the author's last name or, if no author is available, by the title of the work (ignoring initial articles such as "a", "an", "the").
- Italicize the titles of books, journals, magazines, etc., as well as website names.
- Use quotation marks around articles published as part of a larger work.

Detailed examples of MLA documentation are on the "MLA Citation Style" and "MLA Documentation Style" handouts. For more examples of how to place quotations in your papers, see the handout "Integrating Quotations in Essays and Research Papers."

For additional information on MLA style, come to the Success Center for assistance or to consult a copy of the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. You may also visit their website: <https://style.mla.org/>