

MLA Format: Everything You Need to Know Here

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EasyBib Guide to MLA 8 Format

The **Modern Language Association** (MLA) is an organization responsible for developing MLA format, often called MLA style. MLA format was developed as a means for researchers, students, and scholars in the literature and language fields to use a uniform way to format their papers and assignments. This uniform, or consistent, method to developing an MLA paper or assignment allows for easy reading. Today, MLA is not only used in literature and language subject areas; many others have adopted it as well.

The Modern Language Association released the 8th and most current edition of their *Handbook* in April 2016. The *Handbook* provides thorough instructions on MLA format citing, as well as guidelines for submitting work that adheres to the Modern Language Association's rules and standards. Although we're not affiliated with the MLA, our citation specialists bring you this thoughtful and informative guide on the format.

Our MLA format guide provides an overview of MLA format in relation to paper formatting. It answers the question, "What is MLA Format?" This guide does not serve as a reference or overview for MLA citation format. For help determining the proper structure for MLA format citing, or for help with an MLA format works cited list, refer to the individual source pages and other guides on EasyBib.com. Here is another **informative site** which may help with further understanding of MLA citation format.

Looking for information about previous editions to the *Handbook*? Want to learn more about the origin of "What is MLA format?" **Click here** to learn about the previous editions to the *Handbook*.

For a visual guide to MLA 8 citations, see our **infographic**.

Formatting Overview

There are various sections in this guide. Each section provides an in depth overview of the different components to keep in mind when developing an MLA paper.

This guide includes the following sections:

1. Paper choice
2. MLA heading format and instructions for developing an MLA format title page
3. Running Head & Page Numbers
4. Margins
5. Paragraphs
6. Quotations
7. Paraphrases
8. Spacing
9. Font and Font Size
10. Punctuation
11. Abbreviations
12. Numbers, including the use of numbers in MLA outline format
13. Images, Tables, and Musical Scores
14. Lists
15. **MLA works cited** format
16. MLA citation format
17. Binding
18. Edits
19. Submission
20. Sample Paper

1. Paper Choice

While many professors, instructors, and publications allow electronic submission, some prefer printed, hard copies of papers. This section focuses on the type of paper to use for printed submission. If you're submitting your assignment electronically, see section 19, titled "Submission."

If you choose to print your MLA format paper, use white paper only. Do not use ivory, off-white, or any other shades or colors.

Choose a standard, high quality paper to print your project on. Do not use cardstock. It is not necessary to use resume paper. Use typical, high quality printer or copy paper.

When it comes to size, 8 ½-by-11-inch paper is the recommended size. If you'd like to use a different size, ask your teacher prior to submission.

2. MLA Heading Instructions

There are two options when it comes to creating the MLA header for your project:

1. An MLA format heading can be placed at the top of the first page, or,
2. A title page can grace the front of the assignment. If you choose to create a title page, keep in mind that there aren't any official MLA title page or MLA format cover page guidelines. See more information below.

If choosing option 1, creating an MLA heading, the first item typed on the MLA format paper should be your full name. Position your name one inch from the top and left margins of the page. Add a double space beneath your name, and type the name of your instructor. Below the professor, or instructor's name, should be a double space, followed by the name of the course, class, or section number (if available). Below it, include another double space and add the assignment's due date.

The assignment's title should be placed below the due date, after a double space. Align the title so it sits in the center of the MLA format paper. The title should be written in standard lettering, without underlines, bold font, italicized font, or any quotation marks. Only include italics if your title includes the title of another source.

Here is an example of an MLA header for an MLA format essay, paper, or assignment:

Neal E. Bibdarsh

Professor Haujeemoto

English 201

2 Nov 2017

The Trials and Tribulations of Lincoln's Reciting of *The Gettysburg Address*

Most research papers use a standard MLA format heading, like the one seen above. If your instructor requires you to create a standalone title page, ask him or her for specifications. MLA does not have specific instructions for developing an MLA title page. We recommend you use an MLA header for your project.

Click [additional information about essays](#) to see an example of a header

3. Running Head & Page Numbers

A running head is a brief heading that is placed in the top right corner of every page in a project. The running head consists of the writer's last name, followed by a space, and then the page number.

Here is an example of a running head that might be seen in the top right corner of a research paper:

Peterson 7

The running head is placed half an inch from the top margin and one inch from the right margin of the page.

Do not place the word "page," or use an abbreviation, such as p. or pg., before the page number.

General tips to keep in mind:

- Placed in the upper right-hand corner, one half inch from the top, flush with the right margin.
- Type your last name before the page number. (To make this process easier, set your word processor to automatically add the last name and page number to each page).
- Do not place p. before the page number.
- Many instructors do not want a page number on the first page. Ask your instructor for their specific preferences.



Before adding this information manually onto every single page, check to see if the word processor you're using has the capability to automatically add this information for you. Try looking in the settings area where page numbers or headers can be added or modified.

Quite often, the running head and page numbers begin on the second page, but your instructor may ask you to include the running head on the first page of the assignment. As always, if your instructor provides you with specific directions, follow his or her guidelines.

4. Margins

Use one-inch margins around the entire page. The running head should be the only item seen in the one inch margin (see above for more on running heads).

Most word processing programs automatically default to using one inch margins. Check the page settings section of the program to locate the margin size.

Learn more on [justified](#) wording and other guidelines. *Note:* the instructions in this link follow the 7th edition of the *Handbook*. The same justification rules apply in the 8th edition. If your professor requests you use 7th edition guidelines for your work cited MLA format page, click here for [more information](#).

Additionally, here's [more on margins](#).

5. Paragraphs

Indent the first word in every paragraph. Sentences should begin one half inch from the left margin.

It is not necessary to manually measure half an inch. Use the "tab" button on the keyboard to create a half inch space.

Like all other sections of the assignment, paragraphs should be double spaced.

6. Quotations

Quotes are added into assignments to help defend an argument, prove a point, add emphasis, or simply liven up a project.

Quotes should not take up the majority of your paper or assignment. Quotes should be sprinkled sparingly throughout. Use direct quotes from outside sources to enhance and expand on your own writing and ideas.

Words from quotes belong to the individual who spoke or wrote them, so it is essential to credit that individual's work. Credit him or her by adding what is called an "MLA format in text citation" into the body of the project.

There are three ways to add quotes:

1. **With the person's name in the sentence.**

Example:

Dan Gutman shares a glimpse into the overall plot by stating, "I didn't know it at the time, but a baseball card—for me—could function like a time machine" (5).

In the above example, Dan Gutman is the author of the book that this quote is pulled from.

1. **Without the person's name in the sentence**

Example:

The main character's confusing experience is realized and explained when he states "I didn't know it at the time, but a baseball card—for me—could function like a time machine" (Gutman 5).

In the above example, Dan Gutman's name isn't included in the sentence. It's included in the parentheses at the end of the sentence. This is an example of a proper MLA style citation in the body of a project.

1. **In a block quote, which is used when a large quote, of 4 lines or more, is added into a project.**

For more on block quotes and a further, detailed explanation on the use of quotes, including MLA footnotes, refer to our [MLA In-Text Citation](#) and Parenthetical Citations Guide. In this guide you'll find further information including directions for the use of quotes without an author, page numbers, and how to properly credit work from electronic sources.

Need further help with quotes or MLA format examples? Learn more about [the style in the news](#).

7. Paraphrases

Paraphrases are created when text or speech from another source are added into a project, but the writer chooses to summarize them and weave in his or her own writing and writing style.

Even though the writer modifies the information from another source, it is still necessary to credit the source using proper MLA format. Paraphrased information uses the same MLA reference format as stated in the section directly above this one.

Here is an acceptable paraphrase:

Original text:

“Stay hungry. Stay foolish.” Steve Jobs

Paraphrase:

Steve Jobs encouraged students at Stanford to continue with their determination, drive, and ambitious behavior. They should never be simply satisfied with the status quo. They should continue to push themselves despite possible obstacles and failures.

To develop a well-written paraphrase, follow these simple, step-by-step instructions.

1. Find a phrase, sentence, paragraph, or section of original text you'd like to turn into a paraphrase.
2. Read the text carefully and make sure you fully comprehend its meaning. A writer can only develop a well-written paraphrase if the information has been fully grasped and understood. If you're having difficulty understanding the information, take a few minutes to read up on tricky words and background information. If all else fails, ask a friend to see if they're able to make sense of the concepts.
3. After analyzing and completely understanding the original text, put it to the side. Take a moment to think about what you've read and connect the idea to your own assignment.
4. Now that the information is completely understood, take a moment to rewrite what you've read, in your own words and writing style. Do not simply substitute words in the original text with synonyms. That's plagiarism! Show off and demonstrate your ability to process the original information, connect it to the content in your paper, and write it in your own individual and unique writing style.
5. Include an in-text reference next to the paraphrase. All paraphrases include references, similar to direct quotes. See section 6 of this guide to learn how to properly attribute your paraphrased information.
6. Give yourself a pat on the back! Paraphrasing is an important part of the research and writing process.

8. Spacing

MLA research paper format requires that the entire research paper or MLA format essay includes double-spaced lines. Double-spaced lines should be found in between the written body of the work, in the heading, and also on the MLA reference page.

While it may seem tempting to place a few extra lines between the heading, title, and beginning of the paper, lines should all be double spaced.

9. Font and Font Size

In an MLA paper, it is acceptable to use any font type that is easy to read. Many source types, such as books and articles, use fonts that are easy to read, so if you're seeking an appropriate font style, look at other sources for guidance. Two of the most commonly used fonts are Arial and Times New Roman.

It is important for the reader to be able to distinguish the difference between italicized and regular font, so if you choose a font style different than Arial or Times New Roman, make sure the difference between the two type styles is evident.

The use of a 12-point font size is recommended as this is the default size for many word processing programs. It is acceptable to use another standard size, such as 11-point or 11.5-point.

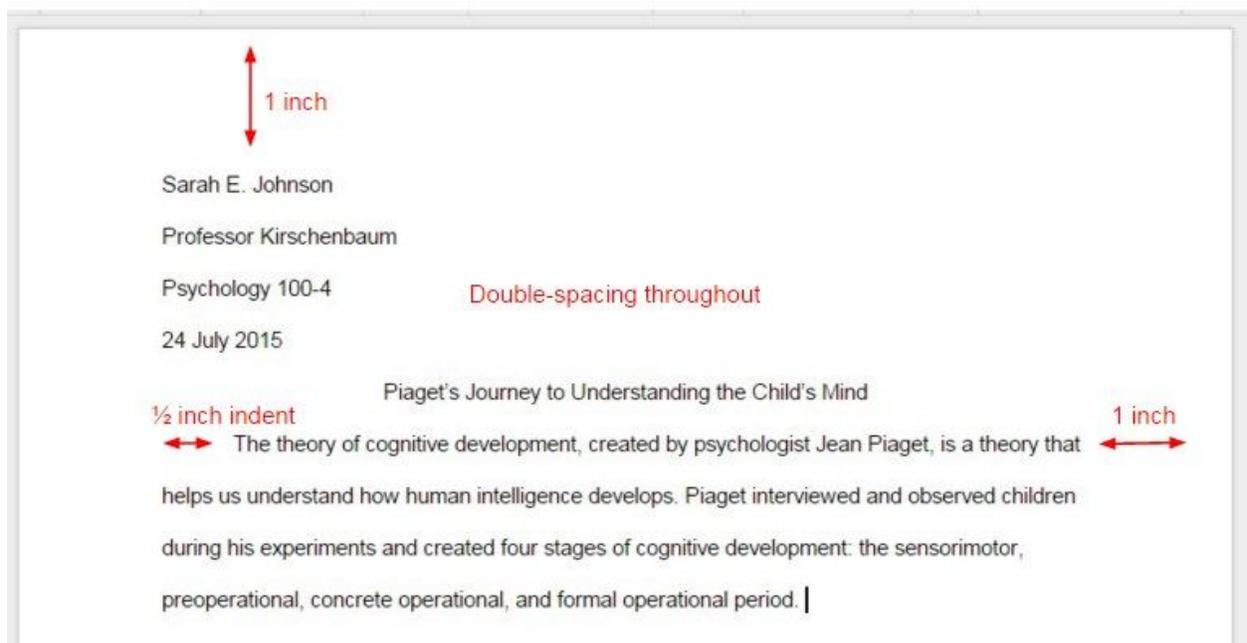
General guidelines:

Use white 8 ½ x 11" paper.

1. Make 1 inch margins on the top, bottom, and sides
2. The first word in every paragraph should be indented one half inch.
3. Indent set-off quotations one inch from the left margin
4. Use any type of font that is easy to read, such as Times New Roman. Make sure that italics look different from the regular typeface.
5. Use 12 point size
6. Double space the entire research paper, even the works cited page.
7. Leave one space after periods and other punctuation marks, unless your instructor tells you to make two spaces.
8. You can either create a title page using EasyBib's Title Page creator or omit the title page completely and use a header.

To create a header, follow these steps:

- Begin one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin.
- Type your name, your instructor's name, the course number, and the date on separate lines, using double spaces between each.
- Double space once more and center the title. Do NOT underline, bold, or type the title in all capital letters. Only italicize words that would normally be italicized in the text. Example: Character Development in *The Great Gatsby*
- Do not place a period after the title or after any headings
- Double space between the title and first lines of the text



10. Punctuation

Here are a few guidelines to keep in mind in relation to punctuation marks.

Commas: Use commas when it makes sense for individuals to pause while reading or to help with understanding.

Concluding Sentences: When closing out a sentence with the use of a punctuation mark, begin the following sentence after one space, not two spaces.

Quotes: When including a quote in your paper or assignment, place the period outside of the parentheses, at the end of the entire sentence.

Here is an example of MLA format:

“One good thing about music, when it hits you feel no pain” (Marley).

Notice that the period is on the outside of the parentheses, not at the end of the quote itself.

If you’re looking for additional help with your punctuation or grammar, check out our [plagiarism checker!](#)

11. Abbreviations

Abbreviations are commonly used in many source types including websites, blog posts, books, and journal articles. It is acceptable to use abbreviations in all of these sources. When it comes to school and research assignments however, the Modern Language Association prefers abbreviations to rarely be used. Spelling out abbreviations into their full words and meaning is recommended. This ensures understanding and avoids any confusion. Instead of coming across choppy abbreviations, readers can follow the natural flow of the language in the paper.

There are times when you may feel it is perfectly acceptable to use an abbreviation rather than its typed out counterpart in a paper.

When including abbreviations, do not place periods in between capital letters.

Examples:

- Human Immunodeficiency Virus can be abbreviated to HIV, not H.I.V.
- United States should be US, not U.S.
- Digital video disc should be DVD, not D.V.D.

For lower case abbreviations, it is acceptable to include periods between the letters.

The abbreviation, "For example" = e.g.

If there is a mix of lower case and upper case letters, do not use periods if the majority of the letters are upper case.

Examples:

- PhD
- EdD

Months

Type out entire month names when being used in the body of a research paper or assignment. Example:

*She rented out the beach house from **May** through **September**.*

When it comes to references, MLA bibliography format requires months longer than four letters to be abbreviated.

MLA Format Example:

- July = July
- November = Nov.

For more information on bibliographies, see our MLA format [Works Cited List](#) page.

Other abbreviations that are perfectly acceptable to use in a bibliography in MLA format (not the body of a project) include:

- p. or pp. for page and page numbers
- ch. for chapter
- ed. for edition
- trans. for translation or translated
- vol. for volume

- no. for number
- rev. for revised

Again, these abbreviations should only be used in the final page of a project, the MLA reference page. They should not be used in the body of a project.

12. Numbers

Use of Numerals

If the project calls for frequent use of numbers (such as a scientific study or statistics), use numerals that precede measurements.

Example:

- 247 milligrams
- 5 pounds

Other items to keep in mind:

In divisions, use numbers, ex: In page 5 of the study

In the next section, you'll find instructions for using arabic and roman numerals in a project.

Arabic Numbers

When including a number in a paper, spell out the number if it can be written as one word (such as *six*) or two words (such as *sixty two*). For fractions, decimals, or longer numbers, type them out using digits. For larger numbers, write the number itself.

Here are a few examples:

- one
- 2 ½
- three
- 8 ½
- 17.953

- eighteen
- twenty seven
- forty four
- one hundred
- 101
- 247
- 5,306

If the number comes before a unit of measurement or label, type the number using digits.

- 4 pounds
- 8 tablespoons
- 3 years
- 9 chapters
- 3 July 2018
- 25 King Street
- 5 a.m.
- 5 o'clock

MLA Format for Outlines

The Modern Language Association does not have any requirements regarding the structure of an MLA format outline. If your teacher asks you to create an MLA outline, we recommend using roman numerals, capital and lowercase letters, and numbers.

Here is an example of a recommended outline structure:

Resources to Use for a Research Project:

I. Databases

A. Library funded resources

1. Databases only accessible in the library
 - a. Genealogy databases
2. Databases accessible from home

B. State funded resources

II. Websites

A. Trustworthy sites

III. Periodicals

A. Newspapers

1. The New York Times

B. Magazines

C. Journals

In addition to outlines, use roman numerals for suffixes

- King George IV
- Ramses III

More on Numbers

Starting a sentence with a number is generally frowned upon. Try modifying the sentence so that the number, or number word, is found elsewhere.

Instead of:

225 children were found in the warehouse, some malnourished and diseased.

Use the sentence:

A total of 225 children were found in the warehouse, some malnourished and diseased.

If modifying the sentence is not possible or does not work well with the flow of the assignment or paper, type out the written number:

Two hundred twenty five children were found in the warehouse, some malnourished and diseased.

Do not include any ISBN numbers in your paper.

13. Images, Tables, & Musical Scores

Photographs, data sets, tables, graphs, and other images are often added into projects or papers to promote or aid understanding. They provide meaningful visuals for the reader. If the illustration or visual image does not enhance the quality of the paper, do not include it in the project.

Tables and illustrations should be placed as close as possible to the text that they most closely refer to.

Images

For an image to be significant and easily identifiable, place it as close as possible to the text in the project where it is discussed.

It is not acceptable to simply place an image in a project without including identifiable information. All images must include information about its origin.

Here are the directions to properly attribute an image:

1. Create a label for the image or illustration and place it directly beneath the image. Begin the label with the abbreviation "Fig.," which is short for figure.
2. Assign an Arabic number. The image closest to the beginning of the project should be labeled as Fig. 1. The next image in the project should be Fig. 2. and so on.
3. Provide a caption. The label and caption should appear underneath the illustration.
4. *If the table or illustration's caption gives complete information about the source and the source isn't cited in the text, there is no need to include the citation in the works cited page.

In the text of the project or paper, place a parentheses at the end of the line where the figure is discussed, and include the label.

Example 1:

Sarah's tattoo design was filled with two of her favorite flowers; lilies and daffodils along a thinly curved vine (fig. 1).

1. Create a caption for the image. The caption should be a brief explanation, or title of the contents of the image. Place the caption directly next to the label.
2. Immediately following the caption, it is acceptable to include the attribution information. If the image is not discussed further in the rest of the paper or project, it is acceptable to include the MLA bibliography format citation below the image and omitted from the bibliography or MLA format works cited page.

(Image)

Fig. 1. Sarah's Tattoo; barneyWILLIAMSable, *Deviant Art*, 2011, barneywilliamsable.deviantart.com/art/Sarah-s-Tattoo-design-193048938.

Example 2:

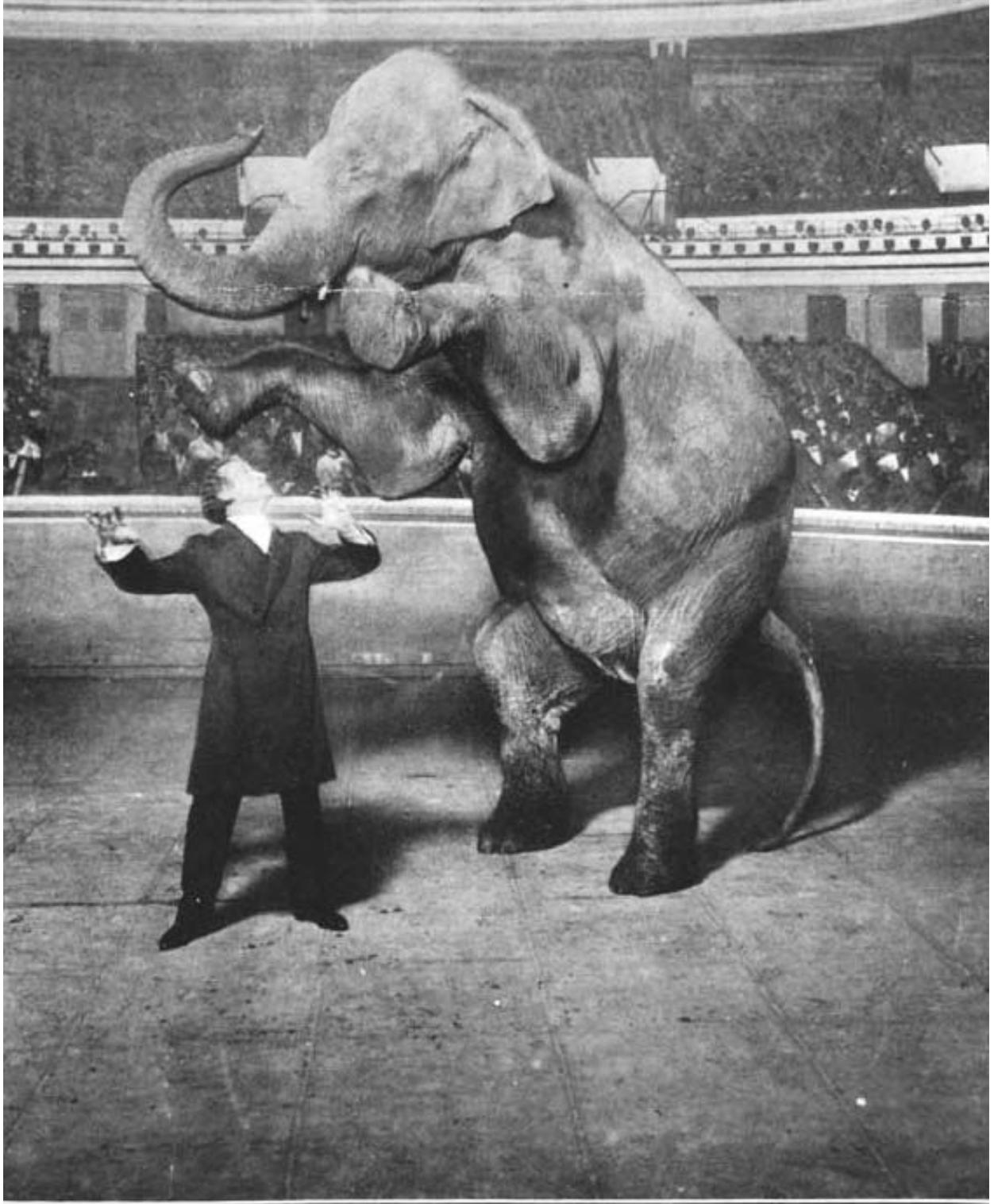


Photo by White Studio.

Fig. 1. White Studio. "Houdini and Jennie, the Elephant, Performing at the Hippodrome, New York." *Library of Congress*, www.loc.gov/item/96518833/.

Still wondering, "What is MLA format?" or need help with MLA citing format? There is [further good information here](#), including how to create an MLA format citation for images.

Tables

When adding a table or data set into a project, do not place the label "fig." below the information. Instead, above the data set, include the label, "Table." Label tables with "Table," give it an Arabic numeral, and title it. This information should be located above the table, flush left, on separate lines.

The table's title should be written in title case form (the first letter of each word is capitalized, except for small, insignificant words).

Underneath the table, provide the source and any notes. Notes should be labeled with a letter, rather than a numeral, so the reader is able to differentiate between the notes of the text and the notes of the table.

Use double spacing throughout.

In MLA format, the first table seen in the project is labeled as Table 1. The second table in the project is Table 2, and so on.

Create a title for the table and place it below the label.

Example 1:

Table 4

International Scholars from India Enrolled at Yale University:

Year

India

South Korea

2012-2013	191	126
2013-2014	200	123
2014-2015	197	116
2015-2016	210	120

Source: "International Scholars Academic Year 2015-2016." *Yale University*, Office of International Students and Scholars, yale.app.box.com/v/scholar-2015-2016.

a. The numbers reflect students who are enrolled full-time.

The information included above and below any images or table should be double spaced, similar to the rest of the project or paper.

Example 2:

Table 1

Caffeine Content of Drinks

Drink	Caffeine milligrams/fluid ounce
Coffee (Brewed)	20.4
Coca-Cola Classic	2.8
5-Hour Energy	100
Red Bull	9.5
Snapple Tea	2.6
Tea (Black)	5.2

Source: Kallmyer, Ted. *Caffeine Informer*. 2018, www.caffeineinformer.com/.

Musical Scores

Musical scores need to be labeled as well. When including a musical score in a project, do not label it as a figure or table. Instead, label musical scores with Ex. which is short for example. This label should be placed below the musical score.

Next to the abbreviation Ex., assign it an Arabic numeral. The first musical score in the project should be labeled as Ex. 1. The second musical score found in an assignment should be labeled as Ex. 2., and so on.

If possible, provide a caption. The label and caption should appear below the musical illustration.

If the information below the sheet music includes enough information about the source, it is not necessary to include the full reference at the end of the assignment.

Here is an MLA format example of a possible label and caption:

Ex. 4. Scott Joplin, *The Entertainer*, piano, C major.

Another example:

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TWINKLE, TWINKLE, LITTLE STAR.

JANE TAYLOR.



Twink - le, twink - le lit - tle star.
When the glo - rious sun has set,
When the gol - den sun doth rise.

How we won - der what you are; Up a - bove the
And the grass with dew is wet, Then you show your
Fills with shin - ing light the skies. Then you fade a -

world so high. Like a dia - mond in the sky.
lit - tle light. Twin - kle twin - kle all the night.
way from sight. Shine no more 'till comes the night.

Ex. 1. Mildred J. Hill, *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, 1896.

Here's [more](#) on tables and illustrations.

14. Lists

It's appropriate to add lists into an MLA format essay as long as the proper rules are followed.

Lists created using MLA essay format look different than a grocery list or any other type of vertical listing of items. Items in a list are formatted in horizontal order, rather than the traditional vertical style.

Here is an example of how a list may look in a research project or assignment:

William Shakespeare wrote numerous plays, many of which were considered tragedies: *Romeo & Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Julius Caesar, and King Lear.*

Notice the items are listed horizontally, not vertically. This is important to keep in mind when including lists in a project.

Place a colon between the introductory sentence and the list. There are also times when a colon is not included. Do not place a colon before the first list item if the list is part of the sentence.

Here is an example of how a list may look in a research project or assignment when the list is part of the sentence.

Many of William Shakespeare's were tragedies. Some of his most popular tragedies include *Romeo & Juliet, Hamlet, Macbeth, Othello, Julius Caesar, and King Lear.*

15. Works Cited MLA Format

EasyBib.com has a full, comprehensive guide to creating a proper reference page, but here are a few items to keep in mind when developing this portion of a project:

1. The list of citations should be the very last page of a research project or essay
2. The top of the page should include the running head and the final page number
3. All entries should be placed in alphabetical order by the first item in the MLA format citation

4. The entire page should be double spaced

For more detailed information, make sure to check out EasyBib.com's guide to MLA format works cited pages.

16. MLA Format Citing

The majority of this guide focuses on MLA formatting in regards to MLA paper format rules and guidelines. If you're seeking information related to the proper development of an MLA format citation, refer to our individual pages and posts on various types of citations. EasyBib.com's MLA citation guide pages provide the rules and structures needed to develop MLA format citing, or how to do MLA format. EasyBib.com's MLA citation pages also feature instructions related to creating a reference for an MLA format website.

Check out this helpful page for [more on PDFs](#), MLA format book, MLA format for websites, and other source types. Also, check out EasyBib.com's [MLA citation website](#) page. If you're including information from online resources in your assignment, here's a helpful page on what a [DOI](#) is.

If you're looking for an MLA format generator, head to EasyBib's homepage. Our MLA formatter will help you create citations quickly and easily!

17. Binding

Some professors or instructors will provide guidance on how to secure hard copies of projects. If your instructor does not provide you with any expectations or guidance, a simple staple in the top left corner should suffice. If a stapler is not available, some instructors allow paper or binder clips.

Do not fold the top left corner down to secure the pages together. The page could easily unfold, causing a mess of papers. While binders and plastic holders are cute, in reality, they add bulk to a professor or instructor who may like to take the papers home for grading purposes. Keep the binding simple and clean. Staples work best, and binder and paper clips are the next best option.

As always, follow any instructions your professor or teacher may provide. The guidelines found here are simply recommendations.

18. Edits and Proofreading

Editing and proofreading your assignment prior to submission is an incredibly important step in the research process. Editing involves checking the paper for the following items:

1. **Spelling:** Are all words spelled correctly? Review all proper names, places, and other unique words to ensure correct spelling. When finished, run the project through a spell checker. Many word processing programs, such as Microsoft Word and Google Drive, provide a free spell checking feature. While spell checks are beneficial, they do not always spot every mistake, so make sure you take the time to read through the assignment carefully. If you're still not sure if your project contains proper spelling, ask a friend to read through it. They may find a mistake you missed!
2. **Grammar:** Check your assignment to make sure you've included proper word usage. There are numerous grammar checkers available to review your project prior to submission. Again, take the time to review any recommendations from these programs prior to accepting the suggestions and revisions.
3. **Punctuation:** Check to make sure the end of every sentence has an ending punctuation mark. Also make sure commas, hyphens, colons, and other punctuation marks are placed in the appropriate places.
4. **Attribution:** Do all quotes and paraphrases include an MLA format citation? Did you create an in-text citation for each individual piece of information?

19. Submission

Follow your instructor's guidelines for submitting your assignment. Your instructor may ask you to submit a hard copy, or submit it electronically via email or through a course management system.

20. Sample Paper

See below for an MLA format template

(Begin the MLA header one inch from the top and left margins. The MLA format heading and the entire paper should be double spaced.)

Eli Yaffarabe

Professor Rapheor

GOVT 322

28 Aug 2018

Privatization of Prisons in Texas

The privatization of governmental services has increased dramatically in the past decade as local, state, and federal agencies have searched for ways to cut costs while still meeting their mandated responsibility to provide various public services. This privatizing trend has particularly affected the criminal justice system. Since the early 1990s, privatized correctional facilities have increased significantly, nationally and statewide. This policy has far-ranging consequences not only within the criminal justice system, but as an instructive example for government officials when considering the costs and benefits of privatization as a public policy option. By 2001, thirty states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico had privately-operated correctional facilities (Austin and Coventry 4). This movement has incited considerable debate and controversy, mainly because prison privatization calls for giving the private sector direct control over the lives of a captive human population.

Surprisingly, there has been little objective and concrete analysis of the privatization of prisons in the United States. This is probably for two reasons: first, ideological arguments on the matter have pushed out substantive research, and second, because this trend has only recently accelerated in the U.S. and mainly on a state level. However, case studies and statistics at the state level are more accessible. With capacity for over 30,000 prisoners in 43 facilities, the state of Texas has privatized more of its prison system than any state in the nation (McDonald and Patten Jr. iv).

Yaffarabe 2

Public policy concerning the criminal justice system has become more daunting and important in the last decade. The problems in the system are twofold: an overcrowding prison population, mainly due to "three strikes" legislation and reducing early parole; and the costs of operating prisons with this growing population (Austin and Coventry). According to the most recent U.S. Department of Justice survey, slightly over 2.2 million people were

incarcerated in correctional facilities in this country in 2003. In comparison, in 1993, 1.37 million people were imprisoned in this country (Beck and Harrison 1).

At the same time, the growth of privately operated correctional facilities has increased significantly in this country. Private prisons now hold 95,522 inmates in this country, which is 6.5 percent of total prisoners (Beck and Harrison 5). In Texas, 16,570 inmates (10 percent of its prison population) are held in private facilities, about 10,000 more than the next highest state. Furthermore, six states had at least 25 percent of their prison population housed in private prisons, led by New Mexico (44%), Alaska (31%), and Montana (29%). These current statistics show that while state governments have been forced to manage and operate overcrowded and over-capacity prisons at considerable costs, many have turned to the private sector to operate prisons (McDonald and Patten Jr.). According to the General Accounting Office, prison operating costs have grown steadily since 1980, increasing almost 550 percent since 1980 based on inflation-adjusted dollars (Austin and Coventry 1).

Yaffarabe 3

Prison privatization started in the early 1980s, ostensibly to ease the burden on taxpayers by offering financial relief to private companies to run state prisons. Thomas Beasley founded Corrections Corporation of America in 1983, "the nation's leader in the construction and management of private prisons" (Darling). That year, Corrections Corporation of America set up the first privately-operated prison in Tennessee. Since then, the number of private correctional facility firms has grown to 14 (Austin and Coventry 3). The privatization of prisons occurs in two ways. First, state government can contract out (or outsource) specific services in a correctional facility to a private company after a bidding process. Second, and more radically, private companies build their own privately-managed prisons and contract with state governments to house their inmates. This latter approach, giving private correctional facility firms wide latitude over inmates, is taken in the Texas criminal justice system. In fact, many of these privately operated facilities "have no relationship at all with the state governments in these states, other than an obligation to pay corporate income taxes" (McDonald and Patten Jr. v).

(Due to its length, the remainder of this sample paper is omitted).

Works Cited Page

Austin, James, and Garry Coventry. *Emerging Issues on Privatized Prisons*. Bureau of Justice Assistance, Feb. 2001, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/bja/181249.pdf.

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McDonald, Douglas, and Carl Patten Jr. *Governments' Management of Private Prisons*. Abt Associates, 15 Sept. 2003, www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/203968.pdf.

Darling, Michael. "Pitt News: University of Pittsburgh Shouldn't Lend Its Name to Prison Privatization." *CorpWatch*, 15 Nov. 2004, corpwatch.org/article/pitt-news-univeristy-pittsburgh-shouldnt-lend-its-name-prison-privatization.

Need another sample paper to peek at? Check out one of our recent blog posts, added in its entirety below. You'll find a link to a sample paper, along with our colorful and clearly labeled visual aid towards the bottom of this page. Take the guesswork out of properly formatting your paper and check out our helpful visual resources below.

If you've been wondering how to produce a research paper that is strong in both formatting and writing, you've come to the right place. The example research paper below is one that

was written in college for a course on the Inklings. The Inklings were a group of writers in England before WWII, including C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien.

The abbreviated MLA paper below ([linked here without annotations](#)) is about J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and how the author used myth, story, and song to link all of his works together. Tolkien is famous for creating a fantasy universe called Middle-earth, which readers can't truly understand until they read all of the books about Middle-earth (*The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*).

Since we're here to learn how to format an essay, we've pointed out some important things about the paper to help you write a correctly formatted essay.

For starters, the essay is in MLA format. That means it follows the style manual of the Modern Language Association, which tells you how to format the paper itself and every source you cite. You'll also see notes like how long a paragraph should be, how to use commas properly, and how to correctly punctuate a title.

Pay special attention to the works cited page. We only used one type of source (books), but both citations are correct according to the 8th edition of MLA, published in 2016. When you're writing your own paper, you need to make sure you always use the most recent edition of the style manual. Whether you need MLA, APA, or Chicago style, look up the latest edition before turning in a paper. You can use this model to write essays for any class using MLA format.

Model MLA Paper: A Visual Formatting Guide

This is a **header**. In MLA, you don't need a title page, but it is recommended to have a 4-line header with your name, teacher, class, and date.

Jane Doe
Dr. S.
English 4900
16 October 2016

Doe 1

Create an original **title** for your project and place it in the center of the page.

The Unity of Story in Tolkien's Works

Double space the whole paper. This is standard for all style manuals, unless you are instructed otherwise.

Story in the form of myth, legend, and song serves to unify all elements of Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*, *The Hobbit*, and *The Lord of the Rings*. Even though each story hinges on a previous one, connecting each situation with all situations. The legend, and song within the stories to connect them and hint at a continuity in the written pages.

These titles are in *italics* because they are books. **Long works** like books, magazines, and newspapers are always in *italics*. **Shorter works** like short stories, songs, and poems are denoted by quotation marks ("Title"), without italics.

The Hobbit is the first story having to do with the Ring, thus bringing its adventurous tale into the unifying mix of Tolkien's works. Many key characters are introduced, such as Bilbo Baggins, Gollum, and Gandalf. In this work, song is used to connect Bilbo to Gollum when they play a game of riddles and discover that they know many of the same ones (*The Hobbit* 76-77). In this way, Tolkien introduces the saga of the Ring, unifying this book with *The Lord of the Rings*. Song is also used to introduce the spiders in Mirkwood related to Ungoliath, from *The Silmarillion*, and later to Shelob, from *The Lord of the Rings*, when Bilbo sings to escape them (158-59). The myths of the ancient past are ushered in with the dwarves, who sing a dirge to explain the history of their feud with the *The Silmarillion*. Thus song and music are used to connect the different works.

In-text citations usually include the author (last name) and location of the quote or information that's being used.
Example: (Tolkien 76-77).

In this case, the author's name, Tolkien, was mentioned earlier in the paragraph, so it does not need to be included in the first in-text citation. Since more than one Tolkien work was mentioned, we included the title (*The Hobbit* 76-77).

When citing the same work again (158-159), only the page numbers are needed. The only reason to include *The Hobbit* again is if a different work is referenced between the citations.

The Lord of the Rings starts

Set a **1 inch** margin around the entire paper.

Include your **last name** followed by the **page number** in the upper right hand corner. It should be a **½ inch** from the top.

Pro Tip: Use your software's "insert page number" feature rather than typing it into the body of the essay.

0.5"
Doc 2 1"

1" 1" in *The Hobbit* but quickly turns into a story previously written. This book contains the myth of Beren and Luthien from the past through Frodo and the entire Fellowship. Middle-earth thus far unite in this story along into its next age.

Pro Tip: If you tend to write short sentences (and paragraphs) and struggle to make them longer, try **combining clauses**. This paragraph is long is because there are complex sentences, or sentences with more than one clause.

For example, the topic sentence here contains a semicolon, which is a great way to combine two clauses with similar thoughts into one sentence.

You should aim for **6-10 sentences** per paragraph. This paragraph is ideal at 7 sentences.

However, the tale does not seem to halt with the end of the book; rather, it continues beyond the written pages. Sam says it best when he realizes Frodo is holding light from the legend of Eärendil's silmaril: "Why, to think of it, we're in the same tale still! It's going on. Don't the great tales never end?" (*Two Towers* 697). This scene underscores the unifying element of story throughout all three works in a powerful way. Frodo's reply is that the great stories do not end as tales, but go on, people entering and leaving as they fulfill their role. The story in this book stops after Aragorn becomes king, Frodo and Sam clean up the Shire, and men begin to rule the known world. Yet by Frodo and Sam's definition, the tale does not end; it is unified with all the other tales that are connected to this one. This is precisely the point of using story to unify these works.

Indent each new paragraph by a **½ inch** from the left margin.

0.5" These three works are all part of each other. Each song, myth, and legend told by a character unifies that scene with all the similar scenes before it in Middle-earth. In this way, Tolkien has used story as a vehicle to unify his works and express the beat of his heart to create a world in which legend does not end with the turn of a page, but continues on in an interconnected legacy lasting for all of time.

This comma appears at the end of an introductory phrase. This type of **comma is commonly missed**. To make sure you include it, look for sentences that begin with prepositions (like "in" here) or gerunds (like "being" or "having"). The comma will go right before the main subject of the sentence, in this case Tolkien.

1" 1"

Title your bibliography in MLA as
"Works Cited."

Doe 3

Works Cited

Hanging indent 0.5" ←

Drout, Michael D.C., and Hilary Wynne. "Tom Shippey's J.R.R. Tolkien: Author of the Century and a Look Back at Tolkien Criticism since 1982." *Envoi*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2001, pp. 101-167. *ResearchGate*, www.researchgate.net/profile/Hilary_Wynne2/publication/282942606_Tom_Shippey's_'JRR_Tolkien_Author_of_the_Century'_and_aLook_Back_at_Tolkien_Criticism_since_1982/links/56234dac08aea35f2682f284.pdf.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. Houghton Mifflin, 1996.

---. *The Two Towers*. Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

This is a Works Cited entry. It is set to have a **hanging indent** in case the citation goes longer than one line.

MLA Formatting: 7th or 8th edition?

If you use a web citation tool like EasyBib, you may see an option to choose MLA 7 or MLA 8.

MLA 8 is the latest edition, and MLA 7, the previous edition, is still used by many teachers. MLA 7 has slightly different rules, so make sure to ask your teacher which edition to use.

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Don't forget to use EasyBib.com's MLA format generator to develop your citations. Our MLA format machine follows the Modern Language Association's guidelines for MLA format citing.

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