Introduction

What is MLA?

MLA style guide is a set of rules and guidelines for formatting essays. MLA tells you how to arrange everything on your page so your work looks neat and consistent. MLA has rules and guidelines for everything, like how big to make your margins; how to format your headings, titles and page numbers; even how many spaces you put after a period.

MLA also tells you how to give credit for a quote or information that you used from another source. This is called a citation. I will instruct you how to use citations in a section below.

Why is MLA important?

- The first reason is the most practical: It is the format you'll be using on every paper for the rest of high school. You will need to know how to use it to do well a lot of your classes going forward.
- If you go to college, you will be required to follow a style guide, probably MLA, APA or Chicago style. These style guides follow different rules, but no matter what style guide you are required to use, the more practice you have following the rules of a style, the better your grades will be in college.
- If you work for a company or even a church or ministry, you'll probably have to follow a style guide for printed material. For example, everything IHOPKC prints, mails or puts on their website has to follow a style guide, so it's not just for people interested in going to college.
- The MLA style guide (and Chicago and APA) teaches you to give credit to other people for their ideas. It holds you accountable, and it trains you to be honest. This is not only an important professional and ethical standard; it's a godly standard.
- The MLA style guide (and Chicago and APA) teaches you to think critically about other people's writing instead of accepting everything they say automatically.
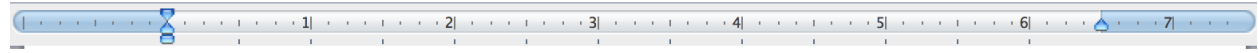
General Rules and Guidelines

Every essay you write should follow the rules listed below. Make a habit of checking this list before handing in your essay.

- All writing assignments must be **typed** on a computer using a word processor application like **Microsoft Word or Pages** (Mac users). If you do not have one of these programs on your computer, use **Google Documents**. Do not use a basic text editor; it doesn't have the necessary features.
- Print your papers out on standard, **white 8.5 x 11-inch paper**.
- **Double-space** your paper.
- I require **Times New Roman 12 pt** font. Not every teacher will, but it's a good habit to use this font.
- Leave one space after periods and other punctuation marks, not two.
- **Indent every paragraph**. Indent using the **Tab key**. Do not press the space bar five times or any other number of times.
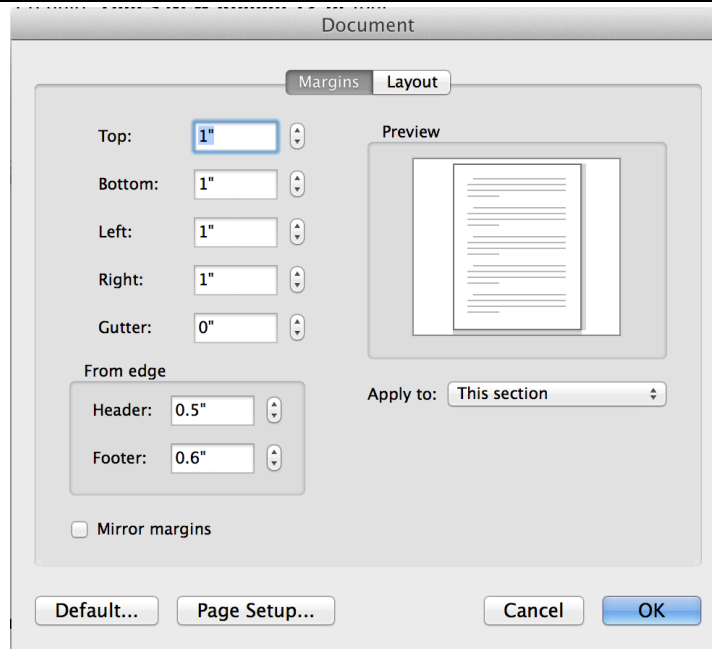
- The **titles of novels** must be capitalized (which should be obvious) and **italicized**. Do not simply write the title of a book without any punctuation, do not put the title in quotes, and do not underline the title.
- The margins of the page must be set to **1 inch** on all sides. I have included instructions below.
- **Your last name and page number** must be included in a header at the top right of **each page.** I have included instructions below.

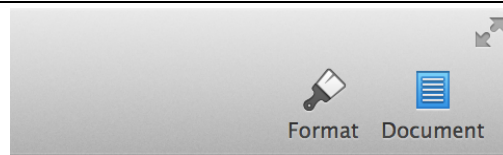| How to change the margins in Microsoft Word |
|---|
| 1) Click anywhere on the ruler at the top of your page. It looks like this: |
| |
| 2) A menu will come up. If the margins aren't already set to 1", manually change them. That's it! |
| |

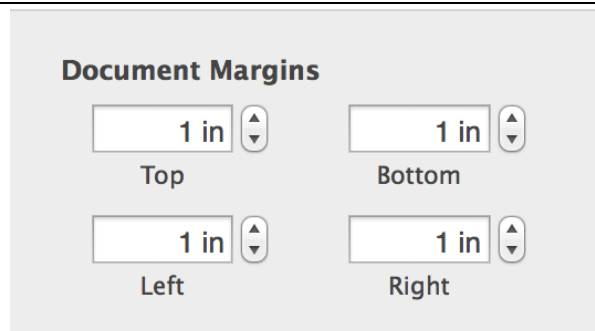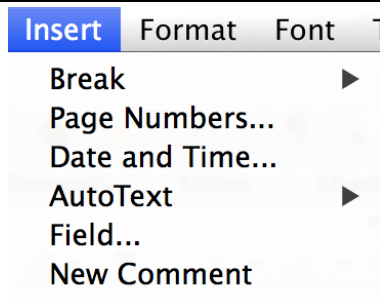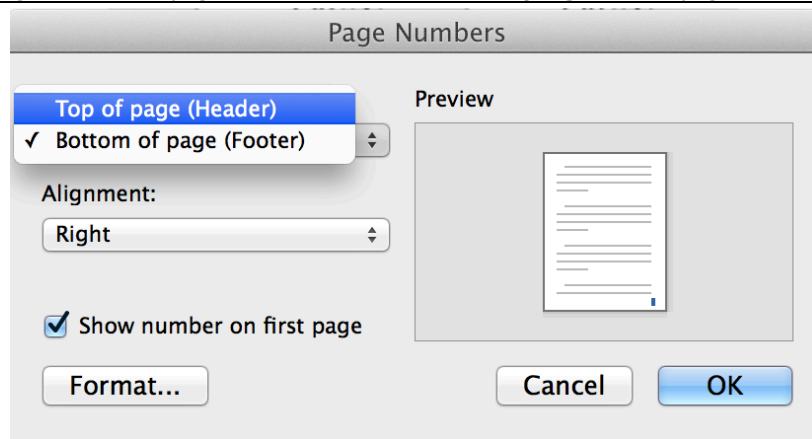| How to change the margins in Pages |
|---|
| 1) Click on the "Document" icon in the top right corner of the screen. It looks like this: |
| |
| 2) A menu will come up. If the margins aren't already set to 1", manually change them. That's it! |
| |

| How to Insert Last Name and Page Number in Microsoft Word |
|---|
| 1) In the menu bar at the top of the screen, select Insert>Page Numbers… |
| Insert Format Font T

Break ▶
Page Numbers…
Date and Time…
AutoText ▶
Field…
New Comment |
| 2) Change the settings so that the page number is located in the **top right** of the page. Click OK when finished. |
| Page Numbers

Top of page (Header)
✓ Bottom of page (Footer)

Alignment:
Right

☑ Show number on first page

Format… Preview Cancel OK |
| 3) Now double click in the top of your page, and you'll be able to edit the header. |
| 4) Then double click directly over the page number. It should look like this when you do:

1
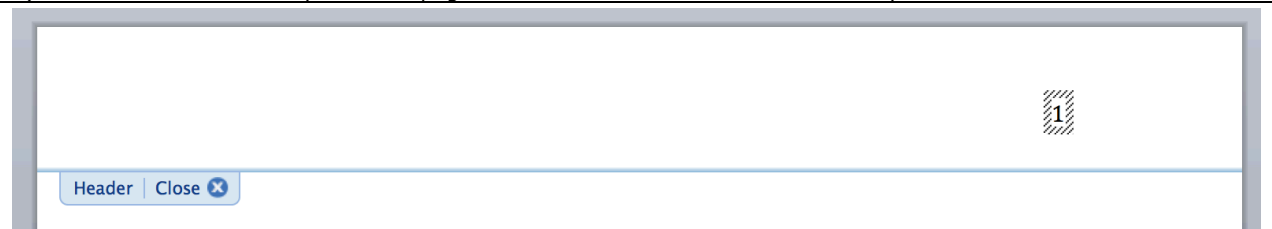
Header │ Close ⊗ |
| 5) You can now edit the page number. You do not want to change the number itself, so click on the left of the number and type your last name followed by a space. It should look like this:

Bryson 1
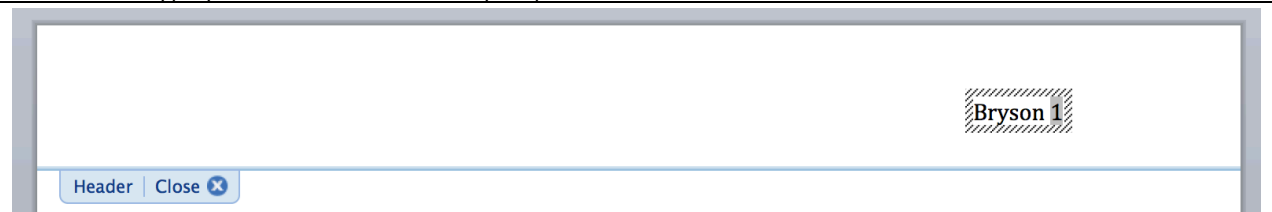
Header │ Close ⊗ |
| 6) Double click anywhere on the page below the header and you're done! |

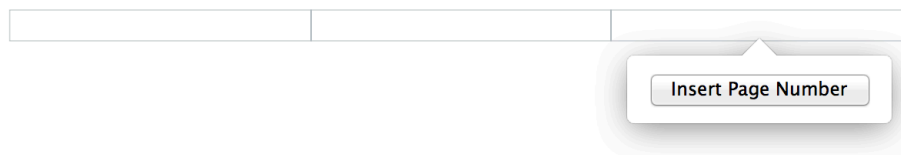| **How to Insert Last Name and Page Number in Pages** |
|---|
| 1) Click on the top of the document you're working on. Three empty rectangles will appear on the top of the page. It should look like this: |
| 2) Click in the right-hand rectangle. We want the page number to be on the top right of the page. A little menu will pop up that reads "Insert Page Number." It should look like this:

 Insert Page Number |
| 3) Click on "Insert Page Number" and another menu will pop up. Select the first option. It should look like this:
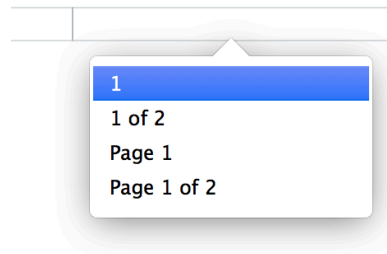
 1
 1 of 2
 Page 1
 Page 1 of 2 |
| 4) The page number will appear on the right side of the box. Click to the left of the number and type your last name followed by a space. It should look like this:
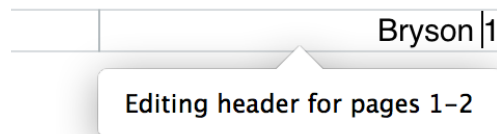
 Bryson 1
 Editing header for pages 1–2 |
| 5) Click anywhere on the page below the header and you're done! |

Heading Your Paper

You head a paper in MLA format the same way you have been all year:

Student's First and Last Name
Teacher's Name
Class Name
Day, Month, Year

Then you hit Enter/Return **once and once only**.

Type the title of your paper. Make sure the title is centered. You do not put your title in bold print or quotation marks and you do not underline or italicize it.

Then you hit Enter/Return once and once only and begin typing your essay/story/poem.

If you attempt to skip multiple lines between your heading and your title and then again between your title and your paper in order to fill space because you put off writing your paper until the middle of the night before it's due or something like that, I will notice. You will lose credit. Don't try it.

I have included an example below of a properly formatted heading, title and first line of a paper.

Primrose 1

Archibald Philip Primrose

Mr. Bryson

English 1 (or 2)

10/19/2014

Evidence of Bacon Consumption in Ancient Egypt

For decades – yea, even centuries – scholars have disputed whether or not ancient

Egyptians had access to bacon. Not only did they have access to it, I would argue that no

civilization could have become as advanced as Egypt without it. Renowned scholar H.P.

Citations

What Is a Citation?

A citation is a quote or a reference to a book or another source you used in your essay. Citations allow us to give credit to the people for their ideas. Whenever you have to look something up for your essay because you didn't already know the information, you need to include a citation. Citations are by far the most important part of MLA format.

Why Do Citations Matter?

The truth is it's really easy to cheat. Some cheating is obvious, like copying the answers to a test. Some cheating is less obvious, like reading a good idea in a book and including it in your essay. This is an example of **plagiarism**, which is when you use someone's words or ideas as if they were your own. Most people who plagiarize do it on accident. They read something interesting, and a few days later they forget where they read it, and they include it in a paper they've written. The problem is, your teachers, professors or bosses may not care if you did it on purpose or on accident. The consequences are the same.

Learning to include citations for every idea you borrow keeps you out of trouble. It keeps you from getting an F or getting suspended, expelled or fired.

What Happens If I Don't Cite Sources?

I'm going to make this as clear as I can in advance: if you use someone else's words or ideas without citing where you got your information in one of my essays, **you will receive a zero for your assignment**. No exceptions. This includes writing a paper about a book we're reading and describing the events of the book without providing a page number. This also includes turning in a paper without a works cited page (which I will explain below).

So How Do I Know When to Cite?

You cite every time you quote someone else, but you also cite when you paraphrase someone or use their idea in your own words. If you're ever in doubt, just cite the source to play it safe.

The only real exception is areas of general knowledge. Everyone knows that the earth revolves around the sun. You don't need to cite Copernicus because it's general knowledge.

Ask yourself this question if you're in doubt: Did I know this information before I wrote this paper (or read this book)? If your answer is "no" then you need to include a citation.

How Do I Cite a Source?

There are two necessary parts to every citation:

1) **The in-text citation**. This is included in your essay whenever you use information from a source. If you quote or paraphrase someone, you need to tell the reader right away so they don't think it was your idea. Basically, you just need to tell them who said it and where. I explain how to do this below.

2) **A Works Cited page**. This is basically a bibliography. This is at the end of the essay, and it provides a list of every source you used in your paper.

In-text Citations

The **author's name and the page number** where you got your information must be provided in your essay *in the same sentence as the quote/information you're using*.

There are two ways to do this.

Use the Author's Name in the Sentence

If you do this, you include the page number where you got the information from at the end of the sentence in parentheses.

> **Example:**

> As Shakespeare said, "Brevity is the soul of wit" (79).

Notice a few things

If you're in my history classes, this is the exact format you've been using all year for citations.
The author's name, Shakespeare, is mentioned in the sentence.
The page number is in parentheses. Notice that it is *after* the quotation marks but *before* the period.

Include the Author's Name in Parentheses

If you decide not to mention the author's name in the sentence (maybe it ruins the flow of your paragraph or it sounds clumsy), you need to include both the author's name and the page number in the parentheses.

> **Example:**

> As Polonius says to the king in *Hamlet*, "Brevity is the soul of wit" (Shakespeare 79).

What If I Don't Directly Quote a Source?

The same rules apply. Even if you put something in your own words, you still need to include the author's name and the page number. You can still do this in two different ways, like I showed you above.

Examples:

As Shakespeare observed in *Hamlet*, brief speech is the essence of wittiness (79).

or

As it was observed in *Hamlet*, brief speech is the essence of wittiness (Shakespeare 79).

What If I Use the Same Source Multiple Times?

If you cite from the same source more than once in a row, **and it's obvious from the context that you're still talking about the same book**, you only need to give the author's name the first time. It's understood that every citation after that is from the same source.

All you have to do is include the page number in parentheses.

Example:

"To be or not to be. That is the question" (84).

Since you've already quoted *Hamlet* above, you don't need to include Shakespeare's name again.

If you cite one book, then cite another book, then go back to the first book, you need to mention the author by name again.

In-text Citations for the Bible

The first time you cite the Bible, include the following information in parentheses: the translation of the Bible you're using (italicized), the book of the Bible (not italicized), and the chapter and verse.

Example:

Isaiah saw the seraphim, each with "six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew" (*English Standard Version*, Is. 6:2).

If you cite the same translation again, you only need to include the book of the Bible, chapter and verse in parentheses.

In-text Citations for Websites

Citing websites can be confusing and intimidating since there aren't page numbers or even authors on many websites, but it's actually quite easy. There are always exceptions, but in general, you only need to include the following information in parentheses:

> The author of the article (if available), the title of the article (if available) or the name of the website.

> **Example:**
> George Washington Carver spend one year in slavery before the end of the Civil War (Hutchins, "George Washington Carver: Advocate for Southern Farmers")

Works Cited Page

What Is a Works Cited Page?

A works cited page is a bibliography. It is a page at the end of your essay with a list of the sources you used in your essay.

You include one entry for every source you cited in your essay. Each entry includes the author's first and last name, the title of your source, and the publication information.

Why Is a Works Cited Page Important?

It's not enough to include an in-text citation in your essay. The in-text citation lets your reader know that an idea isn't yours, but it doesn't show them that you've used the information correctly. If a teacher, professor, or boss isn't sure that you've quoted someone else accurately, they can look at the works cited page to find the exact source you used and check for themselves.

Is the Works Cited Page Mandatory?

Yes. If you have even one in-text citation in your essay, you have to have a works cited page. If you do not include a works cited, you will not receive credit for your paper. I will return it to you and ask you to do it again.

How Does a Works Cited Page Work?

There are different formats for different types of sources: books, newspapers, magazines, websites, etc. I will include the major ones below. All you have to do is copy the examples below with the information that applies to the book you're citing. It's easy.

The idea behind all these different formats is the same: your teacher or professor should be able to find the exact print of the book you quoted, turn to the page you cited and find the information you used to make sure you actually did the research. The same goes for websites and other sources.

General Rules

1) If you used any information from any source, the Works Cited page is required.

2) The Works Cited page must be on a separate page at the end of your essay.

3) It must have the same margins, font, spacing, last name/page number as the rest of your essay.

4) The page must have the words "Works Cited" centered at the top of the page, no bold, underline, italics or quotes.

5) Do not skip lines between sources.

6) Indent all lines after the first for each source (see examples below).

7) List page numbers of sources.

8) Sources must be listed alphabetically by author's last name.

For now I will give you the format for the most common sources you will use: books and websites. Refer to these examples when you're writing your essay. If you need to format for sources not included in my list, I have also provided a list of websites you can use to find all the information you need.

Books with One Author

Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Book*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium

   of Publication.

Example

White, T.H. *The Once and Future King*. New York: Penguin, 2011. Print.

Books with Two or Three Authors

The first name appears in last name, first name format; subsequent author names appear in first name last name format.

First author's last name, first name and second author's first name last name. *Title of Book*. City

of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Example

Caner, Ergun Mehmet, and Emir Fethi Caner. *Unveiling Islam.* Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002.

Print.

Books with More Than Three Authors

First author's last name, first name, et al. *Title of Book*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of

Publication. Medium of Publication.

Example

McGregor, Maureen, et al. *World History*. 3rd ed. Greenville: BJU Press, 2007. Print.

Books with No Author (like The Bible)

Title of Book/Bible Translation. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of

Publication.

Example

The Holy Bible, English Standard Version. Wheaton: Crossway, 2003. Print.

Article in an Encyclopedia/Dictionary Entry

"Title of Article." Title of Encyclopedia or Dictionary. Edition. Year of Publication. Medium of

Publication.

Example

"Hugger-mugger." The Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary. 1971. Print.

Websites

There are countless types of resources on an endless variety of websites, and they each have a slightly different citation format, but they all follow the basic format included below. Still, it's up to you to look up the correct format for your web source.

Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). Name of Site. Version number. Name of

institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource

creation (if available). Medium of publication. Date of access.

Example

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008.

Web. 28 July 2014.

Internet Resources

It will take you some time to learn these rules. The good news is, all of this information and more is available

online. If you ever forget a rule or if you lose this packet (Like that would ever happen. Ha!), go to any of the

websites listed below.

Purdue Owl

https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/11/

Great place to start. All of the rules are explained with plenty of examples.

Williams College Libraries

http://library.williams.edu/citing/styles/mla.php

> Also a great place to start. Thorough explanation of rules in a simpler layout than Purdue. Also includes
>
> APA, Chicago and other style guides.

University of Washington

http://www.lib.washington.edu/help/guides/44mla.pdf

> PDF guide to Works Cited pages. I recommend downloading this for future reference.

Google

https://www.google.com/

This should be your first stop if you are lost.

Just google "MLA rules" plus whatever you need to know more about.

> **Examples:**
>
> MLA rules in-text citation for websites
>
> MLA rules margins
>
> MLA rules works cited entry for encyclopedias