Top 10 MLA Basics

**Use this as a quick reference guide only. Use the MLA Handbook, 7th Edition, as your authoritative guide.**

---


---

1) **Font** (MLA p. 116; SMH p. 494)
   - 12 point, legible font (Times New Roman is a good choice)

2) **Margins** (MLA p. 116; SMH p. 308)
   - 1” on left, right, top and bottom

3) **Justification/Spacing** (MLA p. 116; SMH p. 308)
   - Left-justified
   - The entire paper is double-spaced, including block quotes and the Works Cited page
   - Do not use the default settings; reset your paper to 0 pt. spacing and check the box “Don’t add space between paragraphs of the same style” (located on the paragraph dialog box on Microsoft Word)

4) **First page of the paper and page headings** (MLA pp. 116-117; SMH p. 308)
   - In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Double-space text.
   - Double space again and center the title. Do not underline, italicize, or place your title in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case (standard capitalization), not in all capital letters.
   - Page numbers and the author’s last name are located in the upper right-hand corner of the page (flush with right margin, ½” from top)

---

Smith 1

Steven Smith
Professor John Bean
English 1164
12 October 2013

Your Title Goes Here
5) **Tables and Illustrations** (MLA pp. 118 – 120)

- Tables (columns/rows of numbers or words) are labeled Table, given an Arabic numeral and captioned in the same format as a title; label and caption are flush left ABOVE the table. The source of the table is immediately below the table.
- All other visual material (pie/bar/line charts; line/bar graphs; photos, maps, drawings, etc.) should be labeled Figure, assigned an Arabic numeral and given a title or caption. The label and title or caption appear directly BELOW the illustration followed by the source.
- If you provide source information with your illustrations, you do not need to provide this information on the Works Cited page.

Fig. 1. Modern Plant Breeding.

**OR if the source is included on the Works Cited page:**
Fig. 1. Modern Plant Breeding (Bren 29).

6) **Quotations** (MLA pp. 92 – 105; SMH pp. 309, 740 - 746)

- Quotation punctuation: periods and commas go inside the quotation marks, unless followed by a parenthetical citation. Then the period goes after the citation.
  “Hello,” he said. “I am a tree” (Smith 27).
- Long quotations (more than 4 lines within the body of the text): indent 1” from left side, double space, no quotation marks, punctuation after the quote, before the citation.

7) **Numbers** (MLA pp. 81 – 85; SMH pp. 768 - 770)

- Use words:
  - With numbers written in one or two words (hyphenate *twenty-one* through *ninety-nine*)
  - When the number begins the sentence (try to avoid this and reword the sentence)
  - Common fractions (i.e. one-fifth of the class, two-thirds majority)
  - Spell out centuries in lower case letters
- Use numbers:
  - Numbers that cannot be written in one or two words
  - When grouping/comparing numbers
  - When writing time, date, ages, scores, points and money sums
    (i.e. 4 of 20 responses, 3 out of 15 persons responded)
  - With abbreviations or symbols, in addresses, in dates, in decimal fractions

Treat ordinal numbers and same as cardinal numbers
8) **Electronic sources** (MLA pp. 181 – 193; SMH pp.332 – 341)

- URLs do not need to be included for citations to online materials unless the URL is the only way for the reader to find the web site.
- Sources accessed via an online database must include the database information.
- Abbreviations are required where needed: n. p. for no publisher, n. d. for no date, and n. pag. for no pagination.

**A page on a website example:**

**An online journal example:**

**An article from a journal found using an online database example:**

9) **Citation** (MLA pp. 213 – 232; SMH pp. 301 - 306)

- **Simple citation**: include author(s) last name and page number. Punctuation follows the end parenthesis.
  - Example: Wordsworth extensively explored the role of emotion in the creative process (263).
- **After a quote**: put in parentheses after last quotation mark; include page number
  - Example: Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).
- **No known author**: use a shortened title of the work instead of an author name. Place the title in quotation marks if it's a short work (e.g. articles) or italicize it if it's a longer work (e.g. plays, books, television shows, entire websites) and provide a page number.
  - Example: We see so many global warming hotspots in North America likely because this region has “more readily accessible climatic data and more comprehensive programs to monitor and study environmental change . . .” (“Impact of Global Warming” 6).
- **Multiple authors**: For a source with four or more authors, you may either provide the first author's last name followed by et al. or list all the last names.
  - Example: Legal experts counter Smith, Yang, and Moore's argument by noting that the current spike in gun violence in America compels law makers to adjust gun laws (Jones et al. 4).
- **Indirect sources**: An indirect source is a source cited in another source. Use "qtd. in" to indicate the source you actually consulted.
  - Example: Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as "social service centers, and they don't do that well" (qtd. in Weisman 259).
10) Works Cited (MLA pp. 123 – 212; SMH pp. 306 – 308)

- Begin your Works Cited page on a separate page at the end of your research paper.
- Label the page Works Cited (do not italicize the words Works Cited or put them in quotation marks) and center the words Works Cited at the top of the page.
- Entries are in alphabetical order.
- First line is left justified, second line is indented (“hanging” indent, located on the Paragraph dialog box in Microsoft Word).
- Double spaced, alphabetical order.
- Each entry must include a label indicating the format of the item, like Print, Web, etc.
- Titles should be italicized, not underlined.
- Volume and issue numbers are included in all citations to journal articles, whether or not the journal is paginated continuously or issue-by-issue.

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

Journal article example:

Correct spelling and grammar are always important!!