

English 1A – Composition
Spring 2007, San José State University
Section 41: MW 07:30-08:45, SH 239

MLA Document Formatting Guidelines

“MLA” stands for the Modern Language Association, and its formatting and style system is used throughout the humanities. Other disciplines follow different formatting and style systems, such as the American Psychological Association (APA) system used in the social sciences. In this course, as well as English 1B and other courses in the liberal arts and humanities you might take during your college career, you must follow the MLA format.

You will learn about the MLA citation format next semester in English 1B, as you embark on research assignments and use secondary sources. In this course, you simply need to know the basics of MLA document formatting, although we will discuss basic citations at some point during the semester. A supplementary handout will be provided at that time.

For out-of-class assignments, including essays and extra-credit:

- Do not use a title page, report cover, or anything of that sort.
- Use black ink on white paper.
- The font should be Times New Roman (12pt).
- Your page margins should be 1” on all four sides.
 - In Microsoft Word, go to File->Page Setup and change the margins in your new document to 1” on all sides, as the default will give you 1.25” margins on the left and the right.
- Your text should be double-spaced. Do not add extra space between paragraphs.
 - In Microsoft Word, adjust your spacing by going to Format -> Paragraph.

In a typical MLA document, the first page of your paper should include, at the top left, four lines containing:

1. Your name
2. Instructor Name
3. Class Name (and section, if appropriate)
4. Date (inverted)

For instance:

Jane Doe

Ms. J. Meloni

English 1A (41)

29 January 2007

In addition to this information, you must include your last name and page number in the document header information of every page (including the first page). This information should be flush right. For example:

Doe 1

To put this information in the document header using Microsoft Word:

1. Go to View->Header and Footer. Your cursor will appear in a box at the top labeled "Header".
2. Right-align the text in this box, either by clicking the right-align icon on the toolbar or by selecting Format->Paragraph->Alignment and selecting "Right."
3. When your cursor is right-aligned in the header box, type your last name and press the space bar.
4. In the "Header" dialog box, click on page number icon to insert the page number.
5. Click the "Close" button in the "Header" dialog box to return to your document.

Regarding essay titles: use them! Your essays must have a meaningful title. "Essay #2" is not a meaningful title, but "The Story of How I Overslept and Still Made it to Class" sure is.

After your double-spaced name, instructor name, course name, and essay due date, begin typing your title on the next line. This line, and only this line, should be centered.

Additional information about the title:

- Do not underline your title.
- Do not put your title in quotation marks.
- Do not use all capital letters.
- Do use the title case.
- Do use underlining or italics if you are referring to another work, just as you would in your text.

On the next line after your title, begin typing your first paragraph. The first line of every paragraph should be indented by one tab stop (0.5"). Continue on until you have crafted a beautiful essay.

