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)

Steven Smith
Professor John Bean
English 1164
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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.
- 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.

![Table Illustration](image)

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.
     - 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.
     - 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.
     - 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!!**