

# MLA Format

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## FORMAT: TEXT PAGES

Even if it is written in lipstick on a mirror, good writing is good writing. Correctness of format—of such things as typing and layout—is *the last thing you should worry about* when you are trying to produce good writing. But this is not to say that I ignore format when I evaluate your essays for this class—that you do not have to worry about format at all. *Just worry about it last.*

One of the objectives of this course is to prepare you for future college writing. The truth is that, justly or not, many of the teachers you will write for in the course of your academic career will care a great deal about how closely you adhere to conventions of style (a concern that

translates directly into grades). More to the point, in all college courses after this one you will be held responsible for knowing how to manage these considerations competently.

Below you will find a brief outline of the MLA (Modern Language Association) style specifications for college writing. These are the ones that just about everybody will expect you to observe nowadays.

*Here is one additional requirement, this one peculiar to this class:*

**PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT ESSAYS IN FOLDERS.  
SIMPLY STAPLE THE PAGES TOGETHER IN THE UPPER LEFT CORNER.**

EVERYTHING in your *essay* should be typed in upper and lower case (NOT ALL CAPS) and DOUBLE SPACED. Everything: the heading, the title, the text, block quotations, and entries on the Works Cited page (if you do research).

DO NOT SKIP LINES between any of these or between paragraphs.

The heading, your text, block quotations, and entries on the Works Cited page—EVERYTHING EXCEPT THE TITLE—should be ALIGNED FLUSH LEFT, ragged right.

Give a TITLE to every essay you submit. Align CENTERED.

Place the title below the heading and above the text of your essay. Capitalize each word (except articles, conjunctions, and prepositions), but don't type the title in all capitals.

Indent the first line of every paragraph 1/2 inch.

Quotations of 4 lines or more should be set off as "BLOCK" QUOTATIONS indented 1 inch from the left margin; do not indent from the right margin.

Be sure to consult the MLA handbook for proper CITATION FORMAT.

Use 1-INCH MARGINS around all 4 sides of your text—top, bottom, and sides.

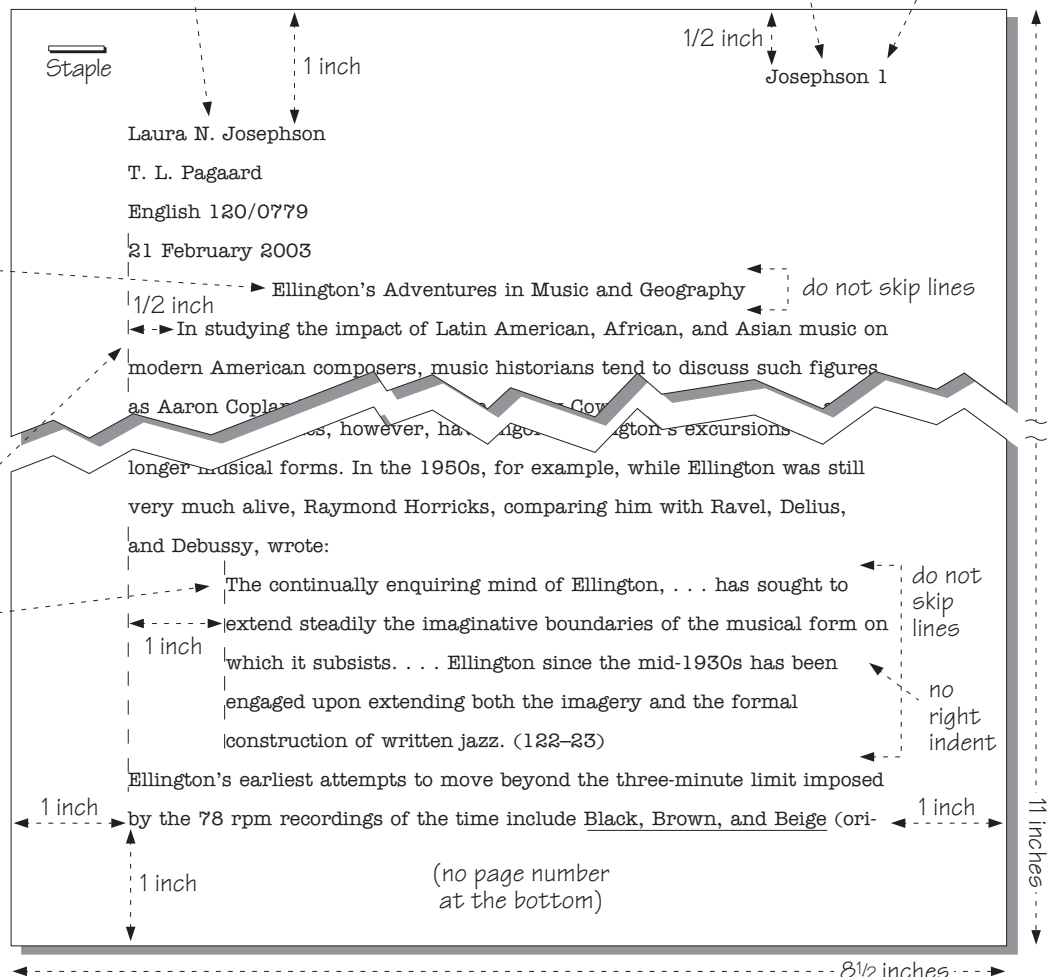
The FIRST PAGE of the essay should feature a HEADING. It should include:

- (1) your full name
- (2) your teacher's name (as shown)
- (3) the name and section number of your English class (as shown)
- (4) the date you submit the essay

DO NOT USE A SEPARATE TITLE PAGE.

Set a "HEADER" to print—automatically—in the upper right corner of every page of your essay, including the first page and Works Cited (if you do research). Align it flush right. The header should include:

- (1) your last name
- (2) the page number



Use 11-POINT TYPE in a standard SERIF face. Use the SAME SIZE type throughout, including in your title. Use only Roman (plain) for your basic text and italics ONLY as an equivalent of underlining. NEVER use bold anywhere.



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## YOUR ANNOTATED WORKS CITED PAGE

The “Works Cited” pages you submit with essays written for this course will include one important element in addition to those specified in the *MLA Handbook*: ANNOTATION.

*What this means is that you must provide a thorough and detailed summary of the sources you cite.* (1) Each summary must demonstrate a clear understanding not only of the material you actually cite but of the entire article, essay, book chapter, etc. that is its original context. (2) Explain briefly in your concluding sentence(s) *how the source as a whole relates to your argument*—that is, *how you use it*. (3) Each summary

must be at least *50 words* and *no longer than 75 words long*. (4) I will apply the same rigorous standard of academic honesty (read: *Do not plagiarize!*) here that I apply to the rest of your essay. It goes without saying that these summaries must be *completely original*, written by you in your own words.

**Note about your formal research paper:** You will remember that you are required to cite at least six secondary sources in your paper. You are welcome, though, to use more. If you do use *more* than six, *you need only annotate six sources altogether*. Additional annotation is optional.

*Here is a sample annotated Works Cited entry:*

Bloom, Harold. “The Canonical Novel: Dickens’s Bleak House, George Eliot’s Middlemarch.” *The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1994. 310–331.

Bloom’s book is a comprehensive analysis of the Western literary tradition. He argues against using ideology as a basis for literary criticism. In his chapter on Dickens and Eliot he discusses the importance of enjoying novels for their aesthetic qualities rather than for their possible value as political statements. I accept Bloom’s thesis since it supports my position that Flannery O’Connor was right in emphasizing individual experience and rejecting a political agenda in her writing.

*Standard MLA  
Works Cited  
Entry*

*Annotation*