MLA TERM PAPER FORMAT

Basics

- Use 12-point type in Times New Roman (or a similar plain font) for everything in the paper.
- Double-space the entire paper, including block quotations and the works-cited list.
- Indent each paragraph, leaving no extra space between paragraphs.

Page Numbering

Every page must be numbered at the top right. Page numbers, along with your family name, appear in the header space (inside the upper margin, about half an inch from the top of the page).

Click on “Insert” and then “Page Number.” Select the option which places the page number at the top right; then type in your surname, separating it from the number by one space.

Opening Page

- In the header space at the right, insert page number 1 and add your surname. Close the header space.
- At the upper left, type your full name, your teacher’s name, the course and its number, and the paper’s due date—double-spaced. Leave one blank space below the date. Note that the date is given as day, month, year with no punctuation. The name of the month is written in full.
- Centre your title, double-spacing it if it is long. Leave one blank space below it.
- Indent, and type the text of the paper—double-spaced—adding citations where required.

Citations

In-text citations (in parentheses) have completely replaced the older practice of footnoting. In preparing your citations, see the Skills Centre’s handout sheet E1.1 or consult the MLA Handbook. Note that all research information—whether quoted or summarized in your own words—must be cited.

A typical citation consists of an author’s surname and a page number, but not all sources can be identified that way. Citations differ in content, but are always based on whatever comes first in the works-cited entry—sometimes a title in quotation marks or in italics. In citations, long titles must be shortened. (See handout E1.1 for MLA citation models and instructions.)
A Regular Page, Showing Citations and Quotations

- Subheadings are not used unless required by the teacher. Simply begin a new paragraph to make each new point.

- When you finish summarizing or paraphrasing research information, add a citation immediately after it. The period or comma (if any) follows the citation.

- A brief quotation (less than four lines) is given in quotation marks in the body of the paper with a citation following directly. The period or comma (if any) follows the citation.

- Quotations of more than four lines are set off in block form, without quotation marks. They are indented twice the usual distance from the margin (2 tabs). In this case, the citation follows the closing punctuation.

Works-Cited Page

- This page is numbered like all the others—in the header space at the upper right.

- The heading—Works Cited—appears at the top in the centre, as shown. Capitalize the W and C; do not italicize it, underline it, enlarge it, or use bold type.

- Sources are arranged in alphabetical order by first letter, ignoring “A,” “An,” or “The” in titles. Don’t separate sources by type; arrange them all in one list.

- The first line of each entry begins at the margin; any following lines are indented. (Use the ‘Hanging Indent’ feature to position these lines properly.)

- Entries are double-spaced with a single blank space between each one.

- Long URLs must be broken to avoid awkward gaps in the entry. Break them after a dash, dot, or slash.

To prepare a works-cited entry for each of your sources, see the Skills Centre handout sheets E1.3 – E1.8, or consult the current edition of the MLA Handbook. The format is different for different types of sources—books, articles, database items, Web site material, etc. Certain standard abbreviations must be used, and the punctuation requires care.