Formatting a Research Paper - Adapted From the MLA Style Center and Academictips.org

If your instructor has specific requirements for the format of your research paper, check them before preparing your final draft. When you submit your paper, be sure to keep a secure copy.

Margins

Except for the running head (see below), leave margins of one inch at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text. If you plan to submit a printout on paper larger than 8½ by 11 inches, do not print the text in an area greater than 6½ by 9 inches.

How to Set the Margins in Word 365:

1. Click on PAGE LAYOUT.
2. Click on the Margins button.
3. Click on Normal Top: 1”, Bottom: 1”, Left: 1”, Right: 1”.

Text Formatting

Always choose an easily readable typeface (e.g., Times New Roman) in which the regular type style contrasts clearly with the italic, and set it to a standard size (e.g., 12 points). Do not justify the lines of text at the right margin; turn off any automatic hyphenation feature in your writing program. Double-space the entire research paper, including quotations, notes, and the list of works cited. Indent the first line of a paragraph half an inch from the left margin. Indent set-off quotations half an inch as well (for examples, see 76–80 in the MLA Handbook). Leave one space after a period or other concluding punctuation mark, unless your instructor prefers two spaces.
How to Set the Font and Size:

1. **When you create a new document, the default font is “Calibri (Body)” and font size 11.**

   ![Font and size setup in Microsoft Word](image1)

   - Wrong default font and size

2. Click on the drop-down arrow (on the right side of the font) and change the font to **Times New Roman**.

3. Click on the font size arrow and change the font size to **12**.

   ![Correct font and size](image2)

How to Setup Line Spacing to Double Spaced:

1. **Click on the Line Spacing icon => then click on 2.**

   ![Line spacing setup in Microsoft Word](image3)
**Heading and Title**

Beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name, your instructor’s name, the course number, and the date on separate lines, double-spacing the lines. On a new, double-spaced line, center the title (fig. 1). Do not italicize or underline your title, put it in quotation marks or boldface, or type it in all capital letters. Follow the rules for capitalization in the *MLA Handbook* (67–68), and italicize only the words that you would italicize in the text.

Local Television Coverage of International News Events

The Attitude toward Violence in *A Clockwork Orange*

The Use of the Words *Fair* and *Foul* in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*

Romanticism in England and the *Scapigliatura* in Italy

Do not use a period after your title or after any heading in the paper (e.g., *Works Cited*). Begin your text on a new, double-spaced line after the title, indenting the first line of the paragraph half an inch from the left margin.

![Fig. 1. The top of the first page of a research paper.](image)

A research paper does not need a title page. If your teacher requires a title page in lieu of or in addition to the header, format it according to the instructions you are given.
Running Head with Page Numbers

Number all pages consecutively throughout the research paper in the upper right-hand corner, half an inch from the top and flush with the right margin. Type your last name, followed by a space, before the page number (fig. 2). Do not use the abbreviation p. before the page number or add a period, a hyphen, or any other mark or symbol. Your writing program will probably allow you to create a running head of this kind that appears automatically on every page. Some teachers prefer that no running head appear on the first page. Follow your teacher’s preference.

Fig. 2. The running head of a research paper.

How To Create a Header in Word 365:
1. Click on Insert.
2. Click on Page Numbers.
3. Click on the 3rd box on the first row (this would create the header and automatic page numbering on the top right).
4. Type your LastName and press the Spacebar key on the computer keyboard once.
5. Highlight both your last name and page number => click on Home => set the font to Times New Roman and font size 12.
6. Click anywhere in the shaded area to close the Header. The header does not appear but it will show when you print your paper.

Placement of the List of Works Cited

The list of works cited appears at the end of the paper, after any endnotes. Begin the list on a new page. The list contains the same running head as the main text. The page numbering in the running head continues uninterrupted throughout. For example, if the text of your research paper (including any endnotes) ends on page 10, the works-cited list begins on page 11. Center the title, Works Cited, an inch from the top of the page (fig. 3). (If the list contains only one entry, make the heading Work Cited.) Double-space between the title and the first entry. Begin each entry flush with the left margin; if an entry runs more than one line, indent the subsequent line or lines half an inch from the left margin. This format is sometimes called hanging indentation, and you can set your writing program to create it automatically for a group of paragraphs. Hanging indentation makes alphabetical lists easier to use. Double-space the entire list. Continue it on as many pages as necessary.
Fig. 3. The top of the first page of a works-cited list.

How to Setup the Works Cited Page:
Follow this how-to when you are ready to work on your Works Cited page. The Works Cited page has the following characteristics:

- A heading “Works Cited” centered one inch below the top edge of a new page. Do not bold or underline this heading.
- No indent on the first line of each entry. If an entry runs more than one line, indent the subsequent line or lines 1/2 inch from the left margin.
- Alphabetize entries in your list of works cited by the author’s last name, using the letter-by-letter system.

1. Immediately after typing the final line of your paper, click on Insert => click on the Page Break button (to begin a new page).
2. Click on Home => The font and size on the new page apparently got reset to the default values, change the font to Times New Roman and size 12.
3. Click on the align center icon so that the text is centered.
4. Type Works Cited (do not underline, boldface, italicize, or enclose the title in quotation marks).
5. Press the Enter key once to begin a new line.
6. Click on the “align left” icon so that the text is aligned left.
7. Now type your sources.
8. Set the Hanging Indent. You can do it manually by creating a new line after the first line, then press the Tab key on the second/subsequence line.

Tables and Illustrations

Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the parts of the text to which they relate. A table is usually labeled Table, given an arabic numeral, and titled. Type both label and title flush left on separate lines above the table, and capitalize them as titles (do not use all capital letters). Give the source of the table and any notes immediately below the table in a caption. To avoid
confusion between notes to the text and notes to the table, designate notes to the table with lowercase letters rather than with numerals. Double-space throughout; use dividing lines as needed (fig. 4).

Fig. 4. A table in a research paper.

Any other type of illustrative visual material—for example, a photograph, map, line drawing, graph, or chart—should be labeled Figure (usually abbreviated Fig.), assigned an arabic numeral, and given a caption: “Fig. 1. Mary Cassatt, Mother and Child, Wichita Art Museum.” A label and caption ordinarily appear directly below the illustration and have the same one-inch margins as the text of the paper (fig. 5). If the caption of a table or illustration provides complete information about the source and the source is not cited in the text, no entry for the source in the works-cited list is necessary.

Fig. 5. A figure in a research paper.
Works Cited


“The MLA Style Center.” Formatting a Research Paper – The MLA Style Center, style.mla.org/formatting-papers/.