Rancho Buena Vista High School

Formatting Guide for Teachers and Students based on the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, Eighth Edition*

*Keep this guide until you graduate!
Available for download at http://www.rbvhs.org/

Name:

Table of Contents

RBVHS Guide to
Modern Language Association (MLA) Documentation
8th Edition

What is the Purpose of this Packet?

The Modern Language Association (MLA) has established specific guidelines that instruct how to format a paper and cite your sources so that the audience knows which ideas belong to you and which belong to others. High schools across the country, and others in the world, use MLA as their primary formatting requirement. The purpose of this packet is to inform you of the requirements and provide you with examples of the correct format for all of your MLA style essays and research papers throughout high school.

How Will This Packet Help Me?

Enclosed you will find directions for how to set the margins, font, and size (using Google Docs) before beginning papers and presentations; what types of titles and headings are expected in papers and where to put them; what information you need to collect from a source while looking at a print source or searching the internet; how to incorporate those sources—either directly or through paraphrase—into your written work; how to create a Works Cited page (giving credit to the sources you visited and borrowed information from); and examples of what correctly formatted work should look like.

Does Anyone Really Use MLA?

Actually, yes! MLA style is used predominantly by professionals in the field of the humanities (art, literature, and foreign language) for research and presentation. It is generally used in high schools and at the university undergraduate level in a variety of subjects. Though MLA is widely recognized and used, be sure to pay attention to the specific style and formatting instructions of your individual teacher, as there are other language guidelines specific to other disciplines.

Why and When Should I Use MLA?

Knowing how to set up your papers and presentations will save you time and give instructors and readers a neat, easy-to-follow presentation of your work. Having everyone follow a format, such as MLA, shifts the focus of assessment to your individual ideas, instead of their presentation. Following guidelines for format will also allow *you* to focus more on your assignment and the ideas within it, rather than worry about what it will look like visually. Use your MLA heading and title guidelines for all hand-written assignments, and other guidelines any time you write a paper (unless otherwise instructed by your teacher).

Are There Other Formatting Guidelines?

Yes. Another universally accepted format for professionals in the field of science, social sciences and graduate studies/research is APA, established by the American Psychological Association. Generally speaking, high schools do not use APA format. In addition, there are other formats which are required for journalism or business writing. Again, be sure to pay attention to the specific directions of your instructor.

Is MLA relevant to the Common Core Standards?

Absolutely! The Common Core standards for Language expect students to develop their knowledge of the language and formatting used in the most common citation style guides.
- CCR L. 9-10.3—"Write and edit work so that it conforms to the guidelines in a style manual (e.g. MLA Handbook…) appropriate for the discipline and writing type.

Formatting Your Papers for MLA Style Using Google Docs
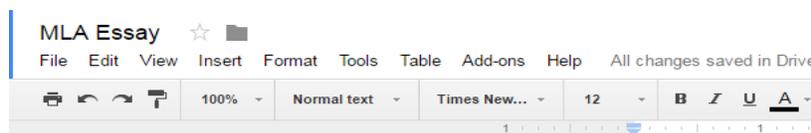
Font and Size
12pt size is standard; use Times New Roman or Arial font.

Using menu bar
1. *Format*
2. Font size
3. Increase font size

Using tool bar from left to right
1. *Normal Text*
2. Choose Times New Roman or *Arial*.
3. Size *12*

Note: Google Docs documents often default to 11-point font size. This is too small for most people to read easily. To set your default font and size, highlight some text with the format you want to adopt as your default, open the styles drop-down menu, and click the arrow next to **Normal text**. In the resulting menu, select **Options> Save as my default styles**.

Paragraphs and Spacing
Use the "tab" button when typing or ½" indentation when hand-writing for each new paragraph. Double-space all formal writing assignments <u>all the way through</u>. Use one space after periods or other punctuation marks. Left align your text (do not justify). Do not add additional spaces between paragraphs (click *Enter* once).

Using menu bar
1. *Format*
2. *Line Spacing> Double*
3. *Align> Left*
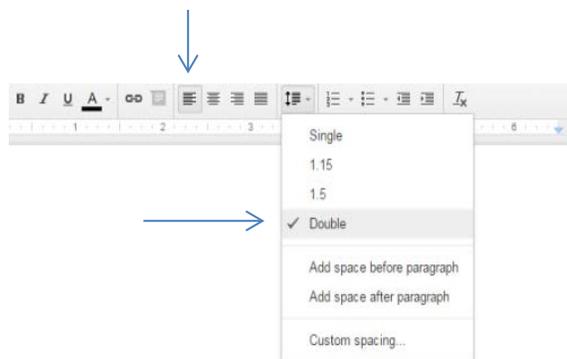
Using toolbar from left to right
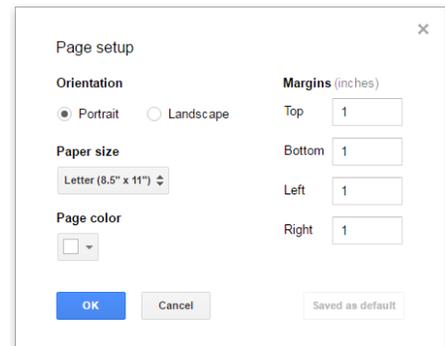1. Choose *Left Align* button
2. Choose *Line Spacing> Double*

Formatting Your Papers for MLA Style Using Microsoft Word
(continued)

Margins
Set margins to 1" on top, bottom, right, and left. Use standard, white, 8.5" x 11" paper.

Using menu bar
1. *File*
2. *Page Setup*
3. Select *Portrait*
4. Insert *1* in each margin box
5. Click *OK* to save changes

Header
The header consists of your last name and page number in the top right corner, ½" from the top, with one space, but no comma between them. This should be on *every* page, beginning with the first. There is no footer.

Using menu bar
1. *Insert*
2. *Header*
3. A new editing window will open up, allowing you to edit the top and bottom margins of your paper.
   Click *Enter* once, then right align your text. Double check that the same font and size is maintained (see above).
   a. Type your last name. *Space.*
   b. *Insert*
   c. *Page number* Four boxes will appear. Choose the box in the upper left. The correct page number will now automatically appear on all pages of your document.
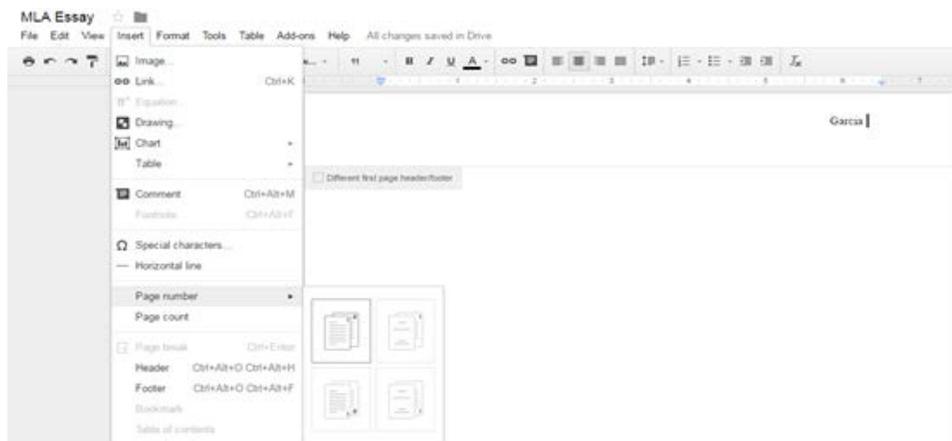
Formatting Your Papers for MLA Style Using Microsoft Word
(continued)

MLA Heading
The MLA heading is written in the top left corner of the first page only. It consists of four parts, each part written on a separate line, also double spaced, if typing. Make sure the heading is placed in the body of your paper, not in the header.

Student Name (First and Last)

Teacher Name

Name of Class, Per (ex: Algebra II, Per 4)

Due Date (Day Month Year)—no commas between

Title
Even when hand-writing assignments, a title is helpful. It should be centered, with the first letter of each important word capitalized, one line below the MLA heading and one line above the beginning of your paper. DO NOT bold, italicize, or increase the font of your title.

Using menu bar
1. *Format*
2. *Align> Center*

Using tool bar from left to right
1. Choose *Center* button. Do <u>not</u> use the space bar or try to align on your own!

*Your home computer may have a word processing program different than the ones here. Be sure to save your work in a format that is compatible with where you will print your paper! If you're not sure what this means, ask your teacher or library staff.

Formatting Your Papers for MLA Style Using Microsoft Word
EXAMPLE PAGE

1"

½"

Last Name 1

Student's Name

Teacher's Name

Double-space

Name of Class, Period
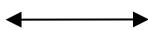
Due Date (Day Month Year)

Indent ½"

Guidelines for Papers at Rancho Buena Vista High School

All assignments should be neatly written in blue or black ink or word-processed using

a standard 12-point font. All assignments should use upper and lower case letters
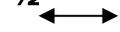
1"

appropriately. Word-processed documents should be double-spaced beginning with the MLA

heading; this includes block-indented quotations that comprise more than four lines of type.

Indent ½"

If and only if a quotation runs more than four lines typed, set it apart from your text on

a new line and indent one inch from your left margin, or a total of 2" from the left edge of the

page. Do not put quotation marks around the quotation, and do not indent on the right margin

1"

further. Introduce your quote with a colon (:) and still include the in-text citation (as seen in

the next paragraph) at the end of the quoted material.

Indent ½"

If a quotation does not run more than four lines typed, you will use what is called a

direct, parenthetical, or in-text citation. For example, writing about a thesis statement, you

might state that it should be "descriptive but not too explanatory" (Clark 56). Another way to

do this is to include the author's name in your own narrative by saying: author James Clark

claims a thesis statement should be "descriptive but not too explanatory" (56).