Your Name

Mr. Instructor

Class 101

24 July 2018

How to Format an MLA-Style Document

Formatting a Modern Language Association (MLA)-style document is required for academic writing in many college courses. MLA provides guidelines for citing sources in the text of a document and on a Works Cited page. Typically, courses in the humanities use MLA because of its emphasis on authorship and authority. Courses in English, art, film, foreign language, music, religion, and philosophy customarily require MLA because it is the standard of scholarly work in those disciplines. For citation help, consult your English course handbook, the *MLA Handbook*, or Purdue OWL. This how-to guide focuses on formatting only.

There are several elements of an MLA-style document that are required for proper formatting. Essays written in MLA do not typically require a cover page, but some instructors may want one. Follow instructors' directions regarding this requirement. The basic characteristics of an MLA document include double-spaced lines throughout the essay with paragraphs indented half an inch, size 12 Times New Roman font, and a double-spaced Works Cited page with a hanging indent. Other elements include the use of a header on the first page of the essay, not on the optional cover page, and on each subsequent page that displays the writer's last name and a page number.
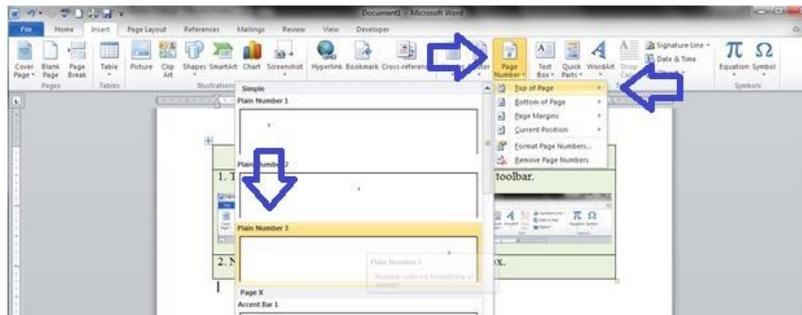
This handout provides click-by-click instructions on setting up an MLA-style essay using Microsoft Word. Consider saving a document as an MLA template so that you can simply open the template and modify it for each MLA-style essay you write to save time and ensure accuracy.

If you need assistance, come by the Gaston College Writing Center. We are located on the Dallas

Campus in RCB 236 and on the Lincoln Campus in LC 202. Any of our coaches can assist you

with this task and will be happy to do so. For now, open the Microsoft Word program on your

computer, and follow the instructions to format your document in MLA style.

1. To create the header, click on the **Insert** tab on the toolbar.

2. Next, as shown below, click **Page Number** in the **Header and Footer** box. Choose **Top**

   of Page in the drop-down menu, and then select **Plain Number 3**.

3. Click inside the header and type your last name before the page number and hit the

   spacebar one time. Select all the text inside the header and set the font to Times New

   Roman, size 12. Click **Close Header and Footer** or simply double-click in the body of
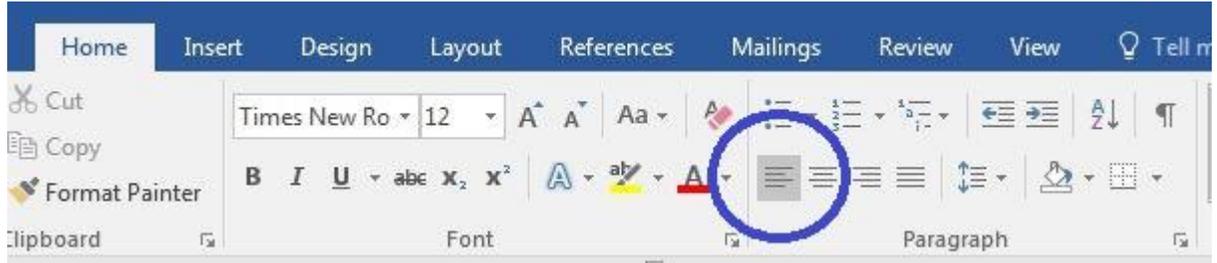
   the document.

4. You may now navigate inside the document to begin typing the first page of the essay. Make sure to set the font to Times New Roman, size 12, before you begin typing. You have already set it for the header, but the program treats the body of the document separately and needs this setting to be applied a second time. Next, set the document's double spacing prior to typing the essay itself. Click the tiny arrow to the right of the word **Paragraph** under the **Home** tab on the toolbar, as shown below.

5. The screen below will appear. Set the **Spacing** to **Double** using the drop-down menu. Make sure to check **Do not add space between paragraphs of the same style**, and set the **Spacing** to **0 pt** in the drop-down menu beside the words **Before** and **After**. Click **OK**.
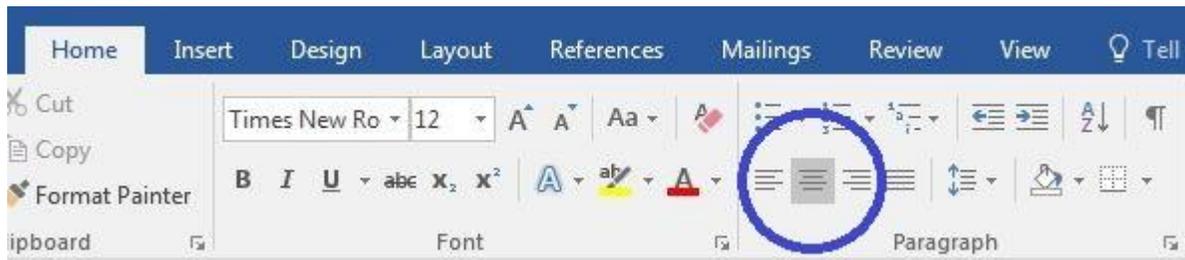
6. Under the **Home** tab, click the **Left Align** icon in the **Paragraph** box on the toolbar.
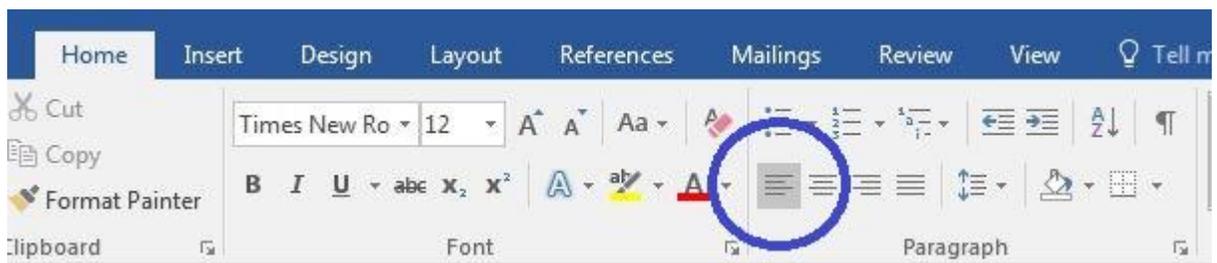

7. Next, type your first and last name. Press **Enter** one time. Type your instructor's name, and press **Enter** one time. Type the class name and course number (ex: ENG 111), and press **Enter**. Next, type the date using the European format of day, month, and year with no commas separating them (ex: 4 April 2018). Press **Enter** one time. For an example of these instructions, see the first page of this handout.

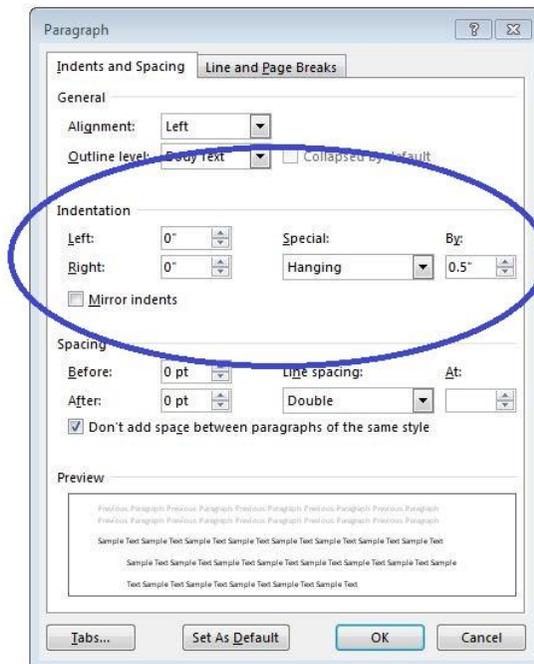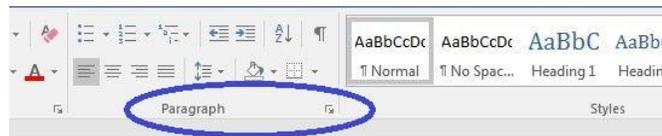8. Under the **Home** tab, click the **Center Alignment** icon in the **Paragraph** box.

9. Type the title of your essay, capitalizing the first letter of every word except conjunctions, prepositions, and articles. Press **Enter** one time.

10. Again, click the **Left Alignment** icon on the toolbar.

11. Press the **Tab** key one time to indent the first paragraph of your essay a half inch. Begin typing your introductory paragraph. Repeat this process of using **Tab** every time you begin a new paragraph.

12. To create a Works Cited page, which should be the last page of the document following the essay's conclusion, you can use the **Ctrl + Enter** shortcut to create a page break. The spacing will already be correct; all you need to do is set a **Hanging Indent** to indent the second and subsequent lines of each Works Cited page entry. After typing the phrase "Works Cited," centered at the top of the final page, press **Enter**. Then, click on the tiny arrow to the right of the word **Paragraph** on the toolbar under the **Home** tab. As shown below, under **Indentation**, select the drop-down box under **Special** and click **Hanging**. Click **OK**. Please see the final page of this handout for an example Works Cited page.

Works Cited

Hawthorne, Nathaniel. "Rappaccini's Daughter." *The Bedford Anthology of American Literature,*

    vol. 1, edited by Susan Belasco and Linck Johnson, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2014, pp. 1139-

    1160.

Lunsford, Andrea A. *The Everyday Writer with Exercises.* Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016.

O'Conner, Flannery. "A Good Man Is Hard to Find." *The Bedford Anthology of American*

    Literature, vol. 2, edited by Susan Belasco and Linck Johnson, Bedford/St. Martin's,

    2014, pp. 1340-1351.

Sweeney, Gerard M. "O'Connor's Wise Blood." *The Explicator*, vol. 56, no. 2, 1998, pp. 108-

    109. *ProQuest*,

    https://login.proxy071.nclive.org/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/216775

    069?accountid=11048.