

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.

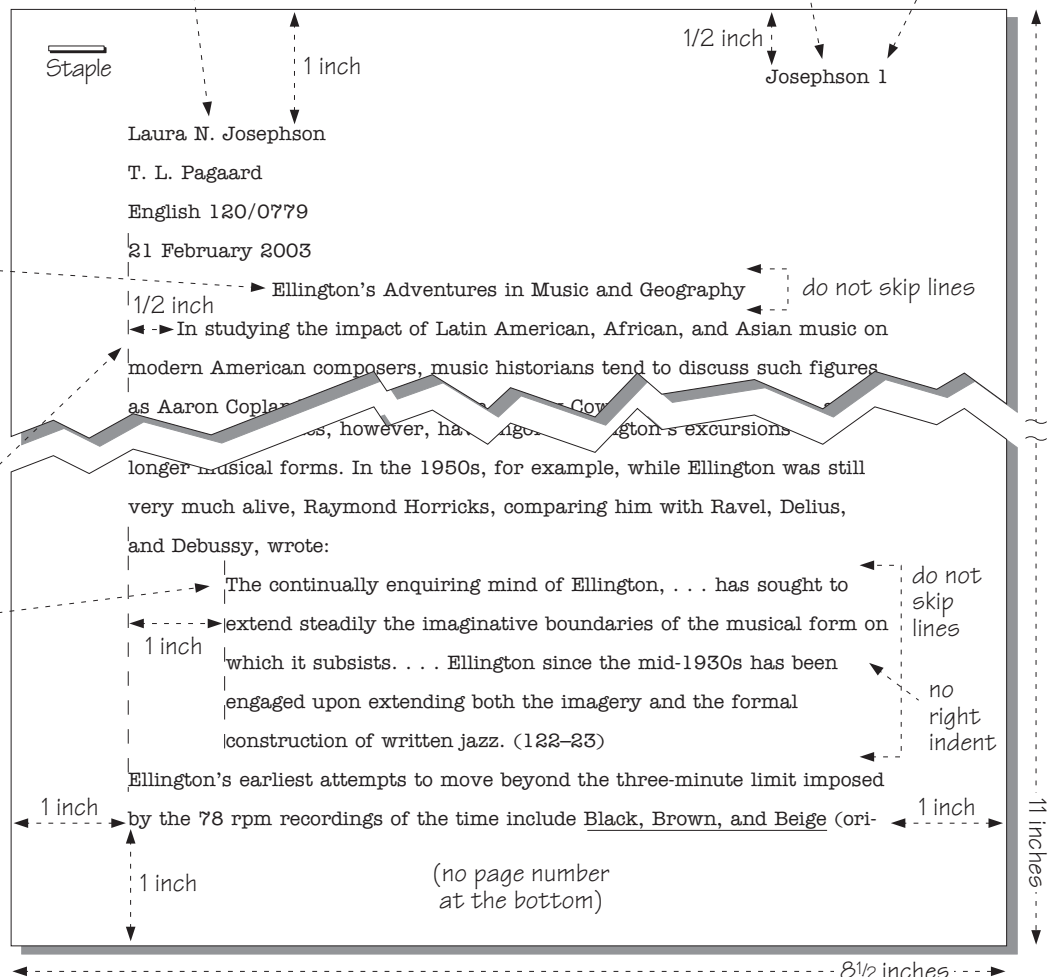
The FIRST PAGE of the essay should feature a HEADING. It should include:

- (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.

FORMAT: WORKS CITED

Here is a graphic representation of the MLA style specifications for your bibliography—entitled “Works Cited” in your research paper.

Consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (Gibaldi and Achtert) for more specific details.

Like EVERYTHING in your *essay*, your bibliography should be typed in upper and lower case (NOT ALL CAPS) and DOUBLE SPACED. Everything: the words “Works Cited” and all entries.

The words “Works Cited” should appear on the first page of your bibliography, centered 1 inch from the top of the page. On all other bibliography pages, begin typing entries here.

Use the same HEADER that appears on all of the other pages of your essay, numbering continuously.

DO NOT SKIP LINES after “Works Cited” or between entries.

EVERYTHING except “Works Cited” should be ALIGNED FLUSH LEFT, ragged right.

Within each entry, EVERY LINE EXCEPT THE FIRST should be INDENTED 5 SPACES.

An article

A recording

Multiple entries by one author

A book

A reference book

An original Web site

A Web reprint of an article (features original print data)

Use 1-INCH MARGINS around all 4 sides of your text—top, bottom, and sides. (Place the header in the upper right corner 1/2 inch from the top of the page.)

ANATOMY OF A WORKS CITED ENTRY

The author’s name, last name first. Alphabetize entries according to the first author’s last name. In citing a work by two or more authors, list them in the order printed in the source, listing all authors after the first in normal name order—that is, first name first.

The title of the book in which the article was printed—underlined. Treat the titles of periodical publications in the same fashion.

The city of publication. Give only the first if more than one are listed in the source.

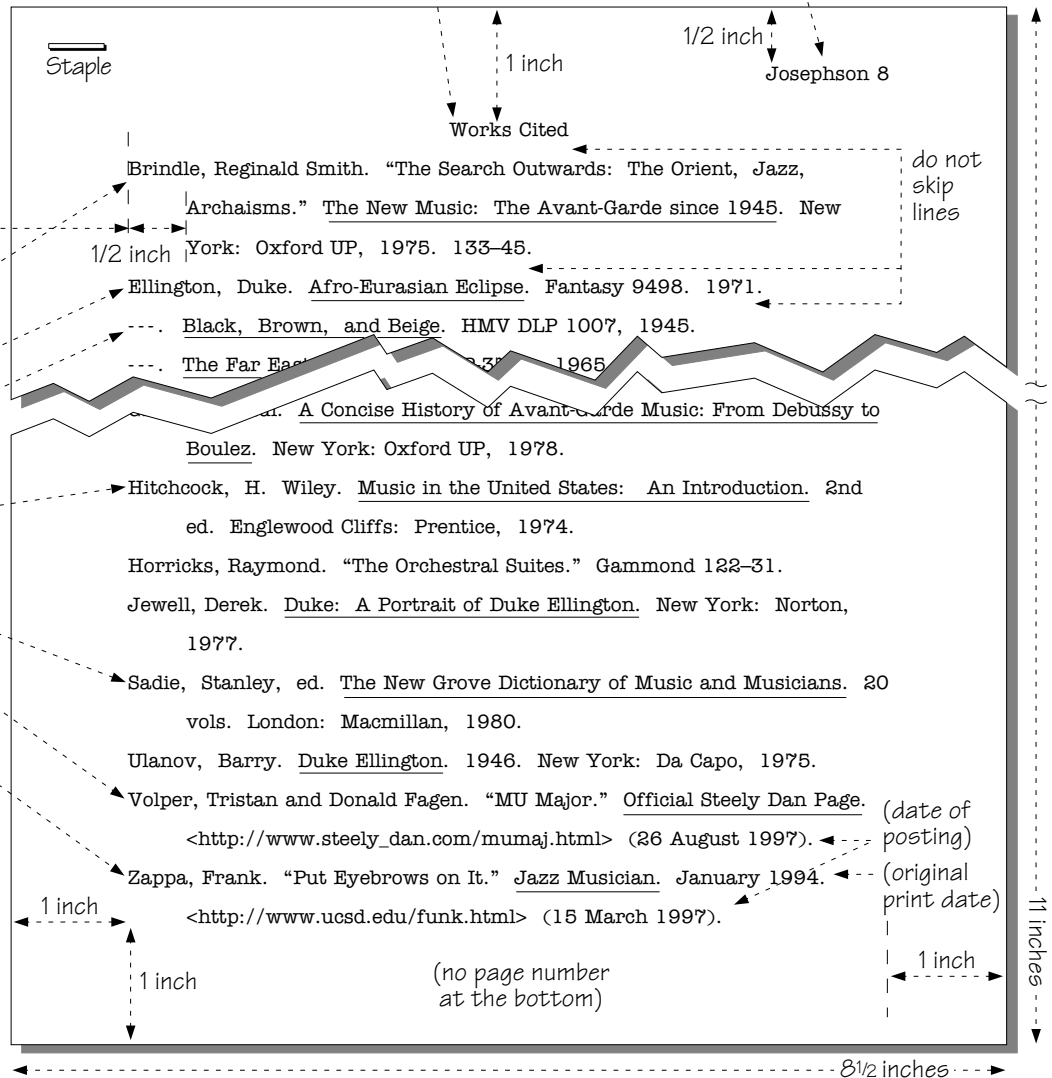
The publisher.

The year of publication—list month, quarter, etc. for periodicals.

The title of the article or book chapter—in quotation marks.

Page numbers (inclusive) of the article. This does not refer to the pages you use, but to the entire article.

★ If you have questions about how to cite a type of source not shown here, consult the MLA handbook or <http://webster.commnet.edu/mla.htm>



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.

You must provide a synopsis of the sources you cite: (1) Each of these 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 *how the source as a whole relates to your argument*—that is, *how you use it*. (3) Each summary must be at least *fifty words* and *no longer than seventy-five 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: These summaries must be *completely original*, written by you in your own words.

Our formal research assignment features an explicit research requirement, of course, but I encourage you to engage outside sources in all your writing. When you do, please document this engagement using MLA conventions (as explained in “*Using sources*” and on the *back of the evaluation sheet*). *Annotate every entry in your Works Cited list.*

Here’s 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