

First & Last Name

Teacher

Class, Period

Date

Last Name 1

Header

← Heading

Formatting Your Essays (MLA)

When you attend college you will find that most professors require that your essays look a specific way on the page just as your prospective bosses will one day require your reports, drawings or memos be formatted according to your firm's or business' standards. One of the first steps in formatting your paper is checking your margins. They should be one-inch margins at the top, bottom, left, and right. Many word processors are preset with the top and bottom margins set correctly, but you may have to change your left and right margins. Most teachers are well aware that students often change their margins in order to meet a page requirement, so make sure you have all four margins set at one inch. Use one side of the page only.

You should also make sure that you have both a **header** and a **heading**. The **heading** is what you see in the upper left hand corner of this example. It should include your full name, your teacher's name, the name of the class and period (English 10 or AP Language, per. 6), and the date that you **submitted** your paper (not the due date). The heading always appears in the upper left hand corner of the first page of your paper, unless you have a title page (research paper only). The **header**, however, should appear in the upper right half corner of every page of your essay. It should include only your last name and the page number of the document. It is not necessary for you to manually type in this information on every page as your word processing program will do it automatically for you if you program it to do so. Refer to your instruction manual if you need further assistance on how to construct a header. I can show you what to do in Microsoft Word. The header will appear **one half inch** from the top of the page.

You should also be aware of several small details when formatting your essay, such as it needs to be double-spaced as this page is. Furthermore, you must remember to include a title for your paper. **Use only Times New Roman font size 12 and black ink.**

When you finish typing a paragraph, you should hit the return or enter key, then hit the tab key to begin the next paragraph. Most word processors have the tab key set to indent one half inch, the correct indentation.

In the case of quoting material longer than four lines, you will find it necessary to block the section. Such a section begins one inch over from your regular margin (two inches from the edge of the paper). You may have to refer to the manual of your word processing program to understand how to block a section.

When you are done typing in the blocked section, hit the return key or enter key to finish the second part of your paragraph.

The purpose of these formatting guidelines is not only to prepare you for the strict formatting requirements you will encounter later in your academic and business career, but also to establish consistent standards for all students. These format requirements reflect MLA requirements as well as those of English departments in most colleges and universities and will be strictly enforced. If your paper does not meet these formatting guidelines, it will be returned ungraded.

Adapted from "Formatting Your Essays" by the University of Notre Dame English Department.