# Jumpstart Your Modern Language Association (MLA) Style!

MLA style was first developed in the 1930's for use by instructors and students in the humanities. It evolved over time to emphasize readability by standardizing academic writing and making in-text citations easier to read.

## MLA Paper Format

For an MLA paper, the format should include:

- 12 pt. font size, double-spaced, and in a legible font (e.g. Times New Roman).
- There should be 1-inch margins on all sides of the paper.
- Page numbers should be included in the top right-hand corner, along with the student's last name (see fig. 1).
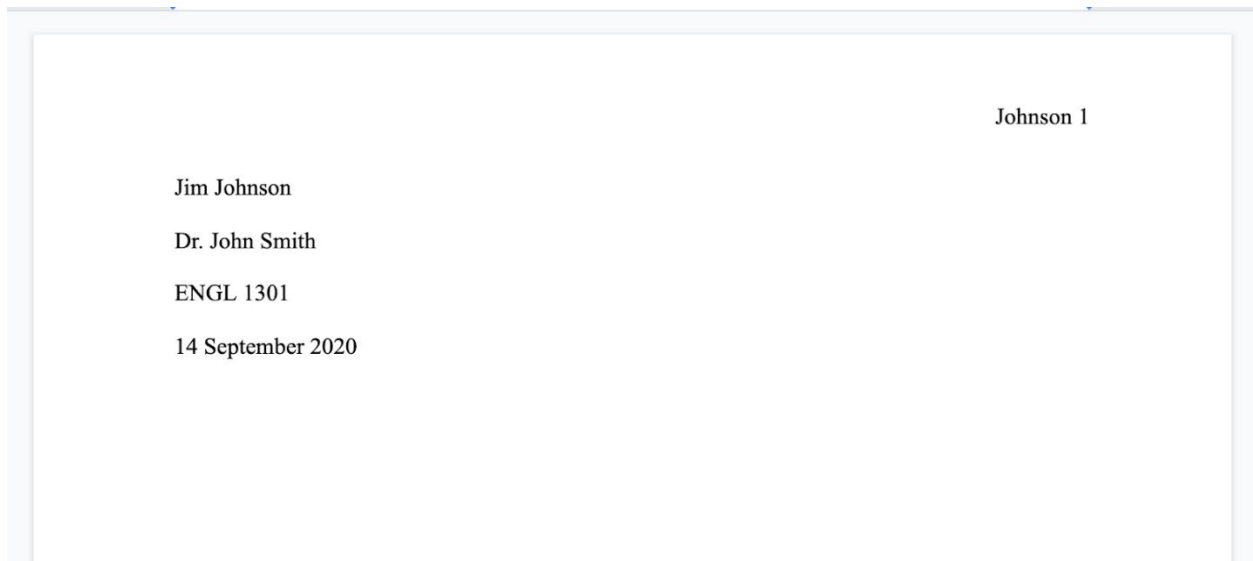- There is no requirement for an abstract when writing in MLA.

Johnson 1

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ENGL 1301

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*Fig. 1 Properly formatted MLA header*

## Title Page

- A title page is not required for MLA unless your professor requests one.
- If it's required, it goes in the upper left-hand corner of the text and should be double spaced. Include your name, your professor's name, the title of the course, and the date.
- You include your last name and the page number in the top right-hand corner of the document. To do so in Microsoft Word, simply:
    1. Go to **INSERT**
    2. Locate the **HEADER AND FOOTER** section
    3. Click on **PAGE NUMBERS**
    4. Place your cursor to the left of the page number and type your last name in the same format as the text on the left-hand side (see fig. 2).
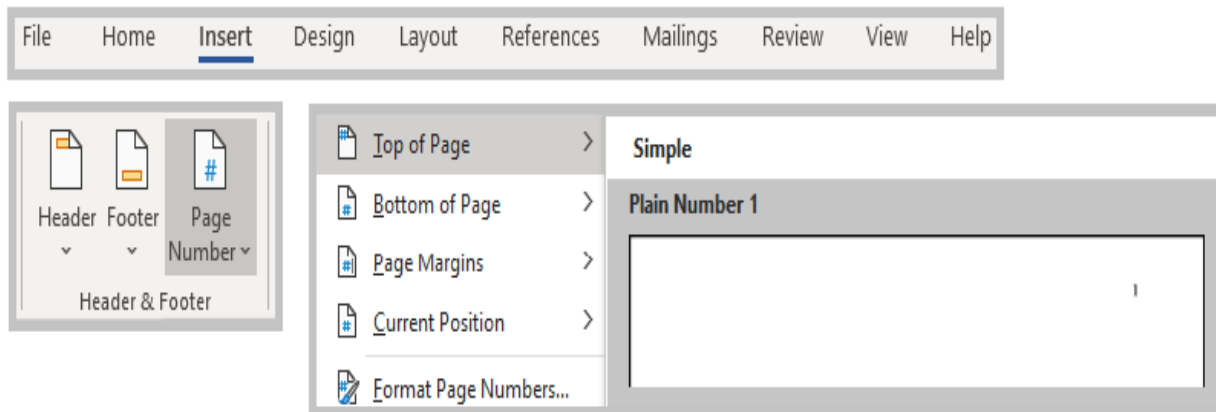
*Fig. 2 The highlighted icons are the options that need to be clicked for the above steps.*

## MLA Heading Format

MLA typically does not use headings in student writing, unless otherwise instructed by their teacher. The heading formats are as follows:

Numbered:

1. First level
   1.1 First sublevel
   1.2 Second sublevel
2. Second level
3. Third level

Formatted, unnumbered:

**Level 1 Heading: Bold, flush left**
*Level 2 Heading: Italics, flush left*
**Level 3 Heading: Centered, bold**
*Level 4 Heading: Centered, italics*
Level 5 Heading: underlined, flush left



*Fig. 3 Heading formats*

## MLA In-Text Citation Format

- When writing in MLA format, the correct way to properly write an in-text citation is the author-page style.
- To do so, you should write the author's last name either directly in the sentence or in the parenthetical citation following it.

- When paraphrasing, the author's last name and the page number should still be cited. However, there should be no quotations around the sentence being cited.

> *Direct Quote, Author-Page Style:* Reed stated that the tree was a metaphor for "life and how everything can both die and be reborn" (177).
> *Direct Quote, Author-Page Parenthetical*: In his writings, the tree is commonly seen as a metaphor for "life and how everything can both die and be reborn" (Reed 177).
> *Paraphrase, Author-Page Style:* Reed's use of various elements in nature frequently made connections between human circumstances and their connection to the world (170).

- When citing a source that has **two authors**, then you can list both author's last names either directly in the sentence or in the parenthetical citation following it.

> Sanders and Barnes wrote that the evolving "sequence of events after the car crash further traumatized the victim" (13).
> The authors frequently reference the impact of trauma on victims, citing the long-term consequences of untreated symptoms (Sanders and Barnes 17).

- For **three or more authors**, you need to only list the first author's last name and follow that with et al. for the other author's names.

> Miller et al. write that "Nintendo Switch sales have skyrocketed following the tightening of lockdown restrictions" (93).
> In game stores across the country, as more people are forced to stay home, this has caused many of them to turn to video games (Miller et al. 94).

## MLA Resources
For more in-depth information on MLA formatting, citations, etc., *the MLA Handbook 8th Edition* and Purdue Owl MLA provide explanations and examples.

The MLA Handbook is available at the University Library and the University Writing Center.

Purdue Owl MLA:
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html

## Works Cited
The works cited page should begin on a new page. The easiest way to do this is to insert a page break after the final word of your concluding paragraph. The title of the works cited page will be centered, but all entries will be left-aligned and formatted with a hanging indent. For information on how to format the entries, see fig. 5 and 6.
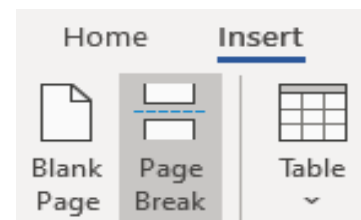
*Fig. 4 Page Break*

Common Sources
- *Book*

Author Last Name, First Name. *Title of Book*. Edition (if applicable), Publisher,
   Publication Date, page range (if applicable).
- *Periodical*

Author Last Name, First Name. "Title of Article." *Title of Periodical*, vol. no., issue no.,
   Publication Date, page range.
- *Page on a Website*

Author (individual or organization). "Title of Page." *Publishing Organization*, URL. (Date of
   access is not required, but recommended for sites subject to frequent change.)
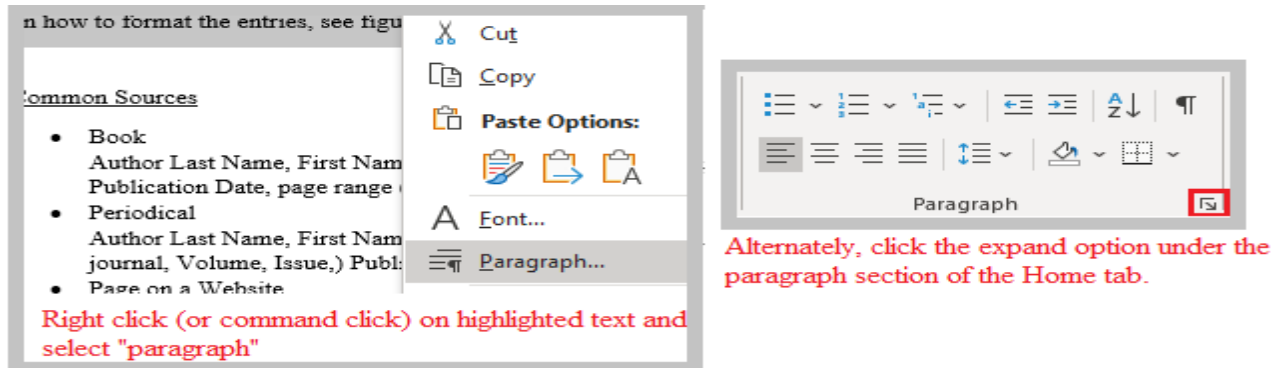


*Fig. 5 Examples of works cited with answers to frequently asked questions.*

Uncommon Sources
- *Personal Interview*

   For first-person information, write the name of the person being spoken with, the
   descriptor (i.e. personal communication), and the date of the interview.
   ex. Johnson, Larry. Personal interview. 14 September 2020.
- *Film*

   When citing a film, you should list it by the title and include the name of the director, the
   names of the primary performers in the film, the film studio, and the release year.
   ex. *Coraline*. Directed by Henry Selick, performances by Dakota Fanning, Teri Hatcher,
      Wybie Lovat and Keith David, Focus Features, 2009.
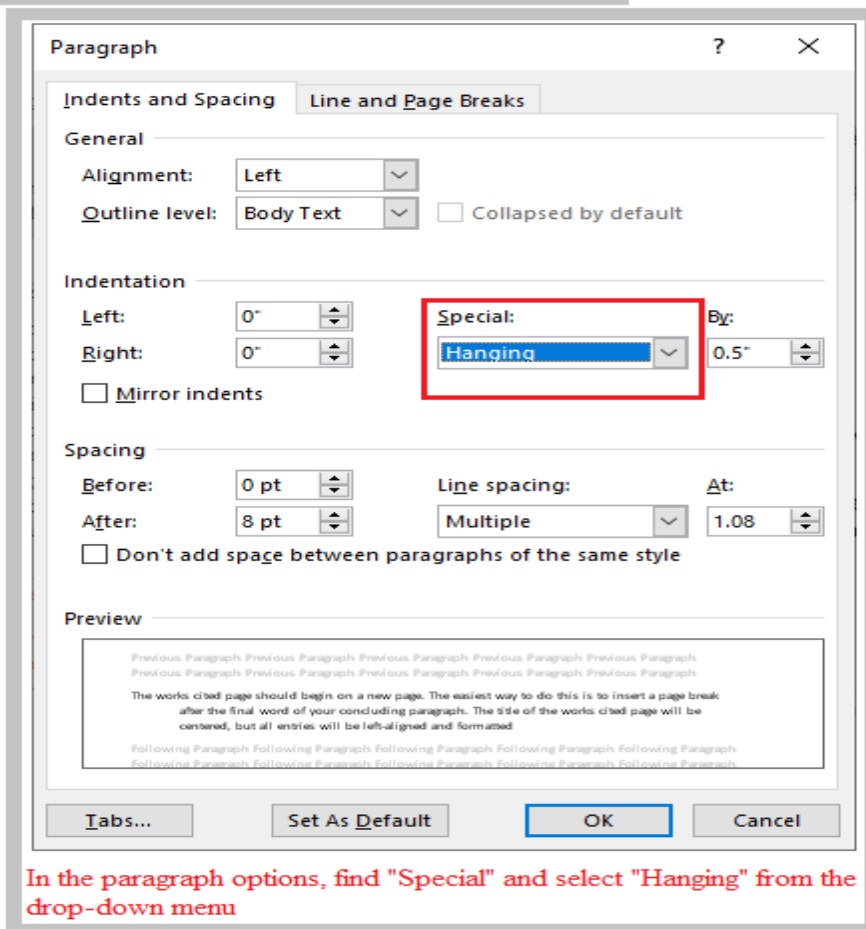
Formatting a Hanging Indent



*Fig. 6 How to format hanging indent in Microsoft Word*