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Professor Shakespeare

English 100

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Modern Language Association: Document Formatting

Although the content of the paper is most important, you should not disregard the importance of appearance. When following MLA guidelines, the first page of your assignment should resemble this handout. The heading at the upper left side of the page should be 1 inch from the top and continue as follows: name, name of instructor, class, and date. The header at the upper right side of the page should be ½ an inch from the top, must show your last name and the page number, and should follow on each subsequent page. Be sure that the top, bottom, left, and right margins are 1 inch wide.

The title of the essay must be centered, with the first word and all other appropriate words capitalized (usually short words like the, a, for, on, etc., are not capitalized). The title should not be underlined, italicized, bolded, in all capital letters, or in quotation marks. The entire document must be double-spaced; therefore, do not add extra spaces between any portions of the header, title, or paragraphs. Each paragraph should begin with a ½ inch indentation. The text should be only left justified (not both left and right). Also, all pages should be single-sided.

Although word processors supply an array of fancy fonts, limit your choices to either Courier New or Times New Roman. The size of the characters should be 12 points, but no larger. If you want a smaller size, do not go below 10 points. Any adjustments of the margins, font styles, font size, or line spacing to make your paper longer are not appropriate.

Remember to use an adequate quality of printing for the document. A document which is printed in economic mode, colored ink, or contains excessive horizontal bands or bleeding between characters and lines is not only difficult to read but also looks unprofessional.

When incorporating quotations, one thing to remember is that they should *always* be accurate. But as far as appearances go, any quotation less than four lines should be incorporated into the regular formatting of the text. Block quotations, however, need to be set off from the regular text for improved readability:

If a quotation runs to more than four lines in your paper, set it off from your text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch [. . .] from the margin, and typing it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a quotation displayed in this way, though sometimes the context may require a different mark of punctuation or none at all. (Gibaldi 81-2)

Aside from the indentation of the quote, notice the absence of quotation marks and the placement of the parenthetical citation *after* the period.

This handout serves only as a general guide, not as a final word on document formatting. For further information regarding any aspect of using MLA guidelines, or for a more detailed explanation of what is covered here, please consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. These texts and others are available for reference at the Writer's Resource Lab.

Source:
Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 5th ed. Modern Language Association of America: New York, 1999.

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