# MLA FORMATTING: GOOGLE DOCS

Many instructors want you to format your papers according to MLA guidelines, and it can be hard to remember how to do all of these things until you've done them multiple times. You can use this guide and the list below as a checklist to follow as you format your essays in Google Docs.

## Your paper is in MLA format if it:

- ☐ has 1 inch margins on all sides
- ☐ is typed in a legible (easily readable) font—like Times New Roman, Calibri, or Cambria
- ☐ is entirely in font size 12
- ☐ is double-spaced throughout the entire document
- ☐ begins every paragraph with an indentation
- ☐ includes a header with your last name/surname and page numbers on the right side
- ☐ begins the first page with your name, the class information & date on the left side
- ☐ has a title centered on the first page before the essay begins
- ☐ includes a Works Cited page at the end of the essay with alphabetized MLA citations

You have two options available to you when it comes to writing an MLA formatted paper in Google Docs. One is to format your paper yourself in a blank Google Doc, using the steps you will find on this handout. The other is to use a template provided by Google Docs which has all the correct MLA formatting already set up for you. The template makes things very easy! But it's also good to learn how to do some of the formatting yourself.

**To access the template from your Edmonds CC gmail account (@edmail.edcc.edu), you need to be logged in to your Edmail account**. Go to Google Docs and instead of clicking to start a Blank document, look above to where it says **Template Gallery**. Click on **Template Gallery**, make sure that **General** is selected, and in the **Education** section, find the **MLA Report template**. Click on that and a new Google Doc will open; the new Doc will have information already typed that you will then replace with your own text, keeping the same formatting.

The first addition you will have to make is typing your own last name/surname in the header, which you can do by clicking next to the page number, placing your cursor in front of the page number, and typing your last name/surname with one space after it before the page number. When you're finished, click anywhere outside the header and it will be set and saved.

The template document has a lot of Latin text to show different formatting options for papers with sections and subsections. If your paper is meant to have sections, these will be useful. If not, ignore all of the formatting the template shows in the "body" of the paper after the first introductory paragraph. Skip down to the Works Cited and use that as a guide for your citations. **You will probably still want to refer to the Hanging Indents section of this handout to format your citations properly**.

## Margins

Google Docs defaults to setting 1 inch margins on all sides of a document. Unless you've changed your default settings before, every Google Doc you begin should have the correct margins. But, you can check this by clicking on **File** in the menu bar, and then clicking on **Page setup** from the menu that pops up (it's near the bottom). This will open a dialog box with information about the file's margins. If you see anything other than **1** in any of the boxes under Margins, change them all to 1.

## Font and Size

The traditional font used in MLA formatted papers is Times New Roman and sometimes instructors will require this font. But if there are no font requirements, you can feel free to use any font that is easy to read and not overly large, like Calibri, Cambria, or others. Google Docs defaults to a font called Arial, in size 11. Always submit your papers in a font that is size 12, no larger and no smaller. Teachers can tell if you've enlarged your font size to meet page requirements! Change the font and size of your text from the formatting bar above the document itself.

## Line Spacing

MLA formatting requires the text of your paper to be double-spaced. The default when you begin typing is usually single-spacing. You can change the spacing before you begin typing, or you can change it after you have typed everything up by highlighting all of the text and *then* completing the steps listed here.

**To change line spacing in Google Docs, you have two options**:
1. In the bar above the document, find the **Line spacing** button: ⭲≡
Click the button and choose **Double** as your spacing.

2. Click **Format** on the menu bar, select **Line spacing**, and choose **Double**.

## Indented Paragraphs

The first line of every paragraph of your essay should be indented. You should do this by hitting the **Tab** key on the keyboard (located on the left side) once at the beginning of the paragraph. Do not indent by hitting the space bar multiple times—that's what the Tab key is for!

## Header and Page Numbers

In an MLA formatted paper, the header contains your last name/surname and the page numbers for your essay, all aligned to the right side of the document. Putting this information in the header means that it will be on the top of every single page in the document and the page numbers will automatically update for you.

To quickly open the header, simply click at the very top of the document and the header should open up. You can also open the header by clicking on **Insert** in the menu bar, choosing **Header & page number**, and then clicking on **Header**.

Now that the header is open, type your last name/surname with a single space afterwards and move the text to the right side of the document by finding the **Right align** button above the document and clicking it:

You may also align text to the right by clicking **Format** on the menu bar, then choosing **Align & indent**, and then clicking on **Right**.

Once your last name/surname is on the right side of the screen, you can insert the page number. To do so, make sure that your cursor (the blinking straight line on the screen where you type) is still positioned after your name and the space you added after your name. Click on **Insert** on the menu bar, then select **Header & page number**, then **Page number**, and then choose the first option of the four presented, which shows sequential page numbers in the right corner of the paper. The page number will now appear next to your name and every new page added to the document will automatically update with the correct page number. Click outside of the header and your changes will be saved.

## Your Name and Class Information

After the information in the header, the first thing you will type in your document will be four lines giving basic information about you and the course. This should all be on the left side of the paper and double-spaced. Google Docs automatically begins every document with text justified to the left, so begin by typing your full name on the first line and hitting Enter. Next, type the full name of your instructor and then hit Enter. Next, type the Course name and number (e.g. English 101) and then hit Enter. Finally, type the date, with the day first, month next, and then the year (e.g. 28 February 2019). Hit Enter one more time. On the next line, you will type your paper's title.

## Paper Title

Every paper needs a title, and the title will follow on the next line after you are finished with the course information. The title should be centered by clicking the **Center** button above the document:

Title your paper creatively and specifically! Your title should represent the topic(s) discussed in your essay. You should not just call your paper something like "Essay 1."

## Works Cited

Your Works Cited includes all of the sources you have summarized, paraphrased, and quoted from in your essay, listed in alphabetical order. This page needs to go at the end of the essay and begin a new page. When you have reached the end of your essay, hit Enter until you arrive on a new page. Then, type Works Cited and center the text.

Your actual Works Cited entries should be left-justified and double-spaced. After you've centered the Works Cited heading, when you move on to the next line and begin typing up your

citations, make sure you change the text justification back to being aligned to the left by clicking the **Align Text Left** button above the document: ☰

## Hanging Indents

Your citations need to have what is called a **Hanging Indent**, where the text starts out left-justified but the second line of the citation is indented. You can highlight and format each citation individually, or type them all up, highlight them all, and then change the indentation.

Once the citation you wish to indent is highlighted, click on **Format** in the menu bar, then put your cursor on **Align & indent**. When the list of choices pops up to the right of your cursor, choose **Indentation options** at the bottom of the list.

The Indentation options dialog box will now be open on your screen. Toward the bottom, notice where it says **Special indent**. There is a drop-down box that will say **None**—click on the box and select **Hanging**. Once Hanging has been selected, click the blue box that says **Apply**.

Now you should see that your citation has a hanging indent. Here's an example of what your citation should look like:

Author's Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article in Quotation Marks." *Title of Magazine in Italics*,

      1 Mar. 2019, www.URLofArticle.com.

Firstname Lastname

Instructor's Name

Course Number

Date

## Title of Your Paper