

Essay Formatting, MLA

ESSAY CONTENT ORDER

- **text of paper** (no title page)
- **figures** (embedded in the text, close to the text the figure refers to)
- **tables** (embedded in the text, close to the text the table refers to)
- **works cited list**
- **other appendices** (rarely used: explanatory notes; research notes; supplemental material)

HEADING

In the upper left corner of your essay's first page—not in the header, type a four-line heading, double-spaced Times New Roman 12, that includes:

Your Name

Your instructor's name [optional, according to your instructor's directions]

The name of the course [and class period]

The date

[The assignment, according to your instructor's preference]

PAGE NUMBERING

Page numbering appears at the top right of each page of the essay, including the works cited page and is preceded by the essay writer's last name (e.g., Webb 1). Make sure to add one typed space between your last name and the page number. Use "Insert—Page Number" in Word and type your last name and a space before the number; Word will place your page numbering within the header.

HEADERS

Although MLA 8 style does not require using headers in your essays, in a long essay, or in one with many subdivisions, headers can help show the organization of your essay. Use them according to your instructor's preference. If you do use headers, choose a style of formatting that does not overwhelm your essay's title, which should be more prominent than the subtitles of your headers. One common style is shown in this guide, in non-boldface upper case (usually one size smaller than your text, such as TNR 10 or 11), positioned flush with the left margin.

TEXT

Type your essay in Times New Roman 12 and double space the entire essay, including your works cited page. Your pages should have one-inch left and right margins, as well as at top and bottom. Set your word processing program to not add extra spacing between paragraphs (in Word: Page Layout, Spacing or Paragraph formatting). The text should be evenly double spaced throughout the essay with no additional spacing between paragraphs.

However, if formatting your essay for Web posting and viewing (not a printed paper essay, you may use website style: paragraphing signaled by additional spacing between paragraphs and not indentation.

INDENTING PARAGRAPHS

Indent new paragraphs one tab space (1/2"). If you use a direct quotation of more than 4 lines (or 3, if poetry), use block formatting, in which the entire quotation is indented 1/2" (use the ruler bar or the paragraph settings window). Do not use quotation marks before and after a block quotation, and do not indent the first line. Generally, use a colon to introduce a block quote. Indent another 5 spaces for any paragraph breaks within a block quote. The paragraph below is an example of a block quotation, described in the *Norton Field Guide to Writing* text:

The block quotation usually is introduced with a full sentence that gives the source and ends with a colon to introduce the quotation. Because the block formatting shows the text is a long quotation, no quotation marks are used. The quotation ends with a period, followed by the page number(s), if applicable. (571)

WORKS CITED LIST

Following your discussion type a works cited page on which you list every source cited (referred to) in your essay (except sources of any tables or figures; these are sourced in a caption below the material). At the top of the page, type Work[s] Cited. Use a hanging indent and double spacing to type your list of sources cited in your essay. (See the website page on Citations for formatting help.)

TABLES AND FIGURES

NOTE: Cite the source material in a note below a Table or Figure and do not repeat the citation on the Works Cited page.

Example:

Note. (for a Table) / *Figure 1.* Short-term memory test involving pictures. Reprinted [or adapted] from *Short-term Memory Loss* (p. 73), by K. M. Pike, 2008, New York, NY: Mackerlin Press. Copyright 2008 by the Association for Memory Research. Reprinted with permission. [Cite the copyright information only if reprint permission was necessary to obtain; most sources follow “fair-use” laws (your use is limited and not for profit).]

TABLES

In MLA style, a *table* presents information in tabs—rows and columns. Tables should be used to help your reader visualize information in your essay. The material presented should be discussed in your essay, not just appear in your table. In discussing the findings or conclusions from the data, refer to the table in your text. (See table 1.) Position tables in your text, near the information the table helps illustrate. Double- or triple-space before and after the table; be consistent. Label your tables in sequence: Table 1, Table 2, etc.

Type the word Table and the table number above the table, flush left (not in italics). Below the Table #, type a descriptive title of what the table is illustrating. Below the table, type the word Source: (followed by a comma) and cite the source of the table, using the same formatting as you would for a works cited page entry.

Any information regarding abbreviations or symbols used in a table and source information is placed in a note below the caption (*Note.*).

SAMPLE TABLE FORMAT

Table 1

Comparison of Boys and Girls by Height and Weight

Variable	Average height	Average weight	Average behavior incident	Average truancy
Boys (<i>n</i> = 60)	5 ft 1 in	120 lbs	14	6 days
Girls (<i>n</i> = 62)	5 ft 2 in	105 lbs	4	0.5 days

Source: Utah State Bureau on Health Statistics, *Juvenile Height and Weight 2010: Health Factors in School Truancy*, Utah State Interagency Forum on Health-Related Statistics, Mar. 2010,

FIGURES

In MLA style, a *figure* is any representation of information that does not use rows and columns (e.g., a line graph, pie chart, map, drawing, or photograph). Figures are embedded in the text of your essay, close to the information the figure is illustrating. Figures are not required to be placed flush with the left margin, but always maintain the one-inch page margin. Figures are

numbered in sequence, with each figure on its own page. Figures are labeled and described similarly to tables.

As with tables, discuss the information presented in the figure in the text of your essay, and refer to the figure (See fig. 1).

Beneath the figure, create a caption in which you label the figure (Fig. 1 or Figure 1) and type a descriptive title of the figure's content and cite the source of your figure. If you created the image yourself, do not cite yourself, but cite the source of any information it contains (From . . .).

SAMPLE FIGURE

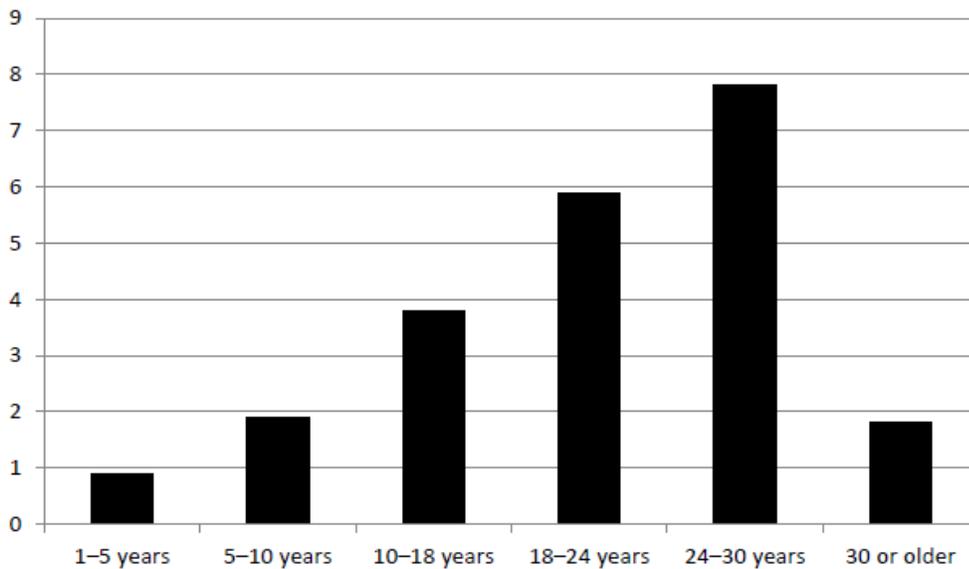


Fig. 1. Bar graph showing hours of television watched per week by age group. Thompson, George

B., "Impact of Television on Teenagers," *Journal of Television*, vol. 4, no. 2, p. 145.