MLA Format Basics

Different instructors may ask you to format your papers in a variety of ways; however, one of the most common styles—particularly in English departments—is the MLA (or Modern Language Association) style. MLA also has a set of rules regarding how to cite sources, but for this activity we will focus just on what your paper should look like overall.

To begin, get a copy of the MLA handout available all around the WRC. (Ask a lab aide for assistance if you have difficulty.) It shows the first page of a sample 1A research paper entitled “Effective Use of the Internet as a Research Tool.”

Now, using the handout for reference, answer the following questions:

1. How wide should the margins be on all four sides?

2. What four items should you include on the upper left-hand side (in order)?
   a.
   b.
   c.
   d.

3. What two items of information should you include in the upper right-hand side within the header (i.e. the upper margin)?
   a.
   b.

4. How do you place that information inside the header, especially “b”? (You may need to ask a lab aide to show you how.)

5. True or False: The title of the paper should be centered and in bold letters.

6. What four words did not get capitalized in the title? Why do you think they are lowercase?

Continued on reverse side...
7. True or False: Only the body paragraphs of the essay are double-spaced.

8. True or False: The same font and font size are used throughout the paper.

9. Name three differences between how long quotations and short quotations are formatted.
   a. 
   b. 
   c. 

10. Write down 2 more observations and/or questions about MLA format here:
    a. 
    b. 

Finally, check your answers with a WRC instructor/tutor. Also, ask the following questions and record the answers here:

11. What fonts and font sizes are acceptable?

12. Why does formatting matter?

Are you ready to put this into practice? Good, since you will probably be required to use this format for all your out-of-class writing in your English class. It will soon be second nature to you!

Attach a confirmation sheet or get a signature below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor/Tutor Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
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SLO: Eng 60 A/B, 50.1A