How to Format Your Research Paper

This table describes how to format your research paper using either the MLA or APA guidelines. Be sure to follow any additional instructions that your teacher provides.

	MLA Guidelines	APA Guidelines
Paper	Standard size (8.5 x 11" in the U.S.)	
Page Margins	1" on all sides (top, bottom, left, right)	1" on all sides (top, bottom, left, right)
Font	12-pt. easily readable (e.g., Times Roman)	12-pt. Times Roman or Courier. For figures, however, use a sans serif font such as Arial.
Spacing	Double-spaced throughout, including captions and bibliography	Double-spaced
Alignment of Text	Flush left (with an uneven right margin)	Flush left (with an uneven right margin)
Paragraph Indentation	1/2" (or five spaces)	5–7 spaces
End of Sentence	Leave one space after a period unless your teacher prefers two.	Leave one space after a period unless your teacher prefers two.
Page Numbers	On every page, in the upper right margin, 1/2" from the top and flush with the right margin put your last name followed by the page number.	On every page (except Figures), in the upper right margin, 1/2" from the top and flush with the right margin, two or three words of the paper title (this is called the *running head*) appear five spaces to the left of the page number, beginning with the title page.
Title Page	Only if your teacher requests one. Instead, on the first page, upper left corner place on separate lines, double-spaced: • Your name • Teacher's name • Course name or number • Date Underneath, center the title using regular title capitalization rules and no underline. Start the report immediately below the title.	The title page is always the first page. On the line below the page number, the running head is typed flush left (all uppercase) following the words "Running head:" Below the running head, the following are centered on their own lines, using upper and lower case: • Paper title • Your name • Your school
Section Headings		Top level headings should be centered on the page, using upper and lower case. Second level headings should be flush left, italicized, using upper and lower case.

	MLA Guidelines	APA Guidelines
Tables & Illustrations	Place tables and illustrations as close as possible to the text they refer to. A table is labeled *Table* and given a number (e.g., Table 1). The table label and caption or title appear above the table, capitalized like a title, flush left. Sources and notes appear below the table, flush left. Photos, graphs, charts or diagrams should be labeled *Figure* (usually abbreviate *Fig.*), and assigned a number (e.g., Fig. 1). The label, title, and source (if any) appear underneath the figure, flush left, in a continuous block of text rather than one element per line.	Unless your teacher tells you otherwise, tables and illustrations appear at the end of the paper. Each table begins on a separate page with the label Table 1 (etc.) typed flush left on the first line below the page number. Double-space and type the table title flush left (italicized using uppercase and lowercase letters). Figures Captions appear on the last numbered page of the paper. In this case the label *Figure 1* (etc.) is italicized and the caption itself is not. The caption uses regular sentence capitalization. The figures themselves follow, one per page.
Order of Major Sections		Each of these sections (if present) begins on a new page: - Title page - Abstract - Body - References - Appendixes - Footnotes - Tables - Figure Captions - Figures
Binding	Most teachers prefer a simple paper clip or staple. Follow your teacher's request.	
Additional Information	The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) MLA Style Guide can be found at: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/.	The Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) APA Style Guide can be found at: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/.