“How to” Set Up Microsoft Word 2010 for Writing a Research Paper

This “how to” document provides guidance and step-by-step instructions describing how to set up (1) an MLA style header, (2) double spacing, (3) ½” first line indents for paragraphs, (4) proper spacing between paragraphs, (5) proper technique for numbering pages in Microsoft Word, (6) setting up a Works Cited page at the end of your document.

This tutorial applies to both Microsoft Office 2010 and Office 2007. This tutorial does not apply directly to Microsoft Office 2008 or 2011 for Apple Macintosh computers, but the procedure – when translated to those versions of Office – still applies.

NOTE: This “how to” document is in no way intended to serve as a formal requirements document describing how to format a research paper in any scholarly format (MLA, APA, etc.). Also, your instructor may give you specific formatting instructions to use in addition or instead of MLA/APA format... always follow the instructions you are provided.

Let’s get started! Open up Microsoft Word on your computer.

Here’s an example of an MLA document page header:

```
Smart 1

Pat Smart
Professor IM. Sage
English 111-78B
August 14, 2000

Using Modern Language Association Format for Academic Essays:
A Sample for Students

Modern Language Association (MLA) formats are standard for papers in courses in the humanities, including English composition and literature courses. Among the required features are double-spacing throughout, ½-inch (5 space) paragraph indents, no extra space between paragraphs, 1-inch margins, and a last name header with page number at the right margin. For word processed work, automatic headers and pagination are required. Additionally, set left justification and use Times New Roman or a similar “book” font with a 12-point size unless otherwise assigned or permitted. The Help files of your word processor, accessible through the upper menu bar, provide directions for setting these features.
```
“How to” Set Up Microsoft Word 2010 for Writing a Research Paper

To get started, make sure your cursor is on the left side of the screen to start typing your header.

- Type your first and last names and then hit the Enter key to start a new line.
- Type your instructor’s name. Hit the Enter key.
- Type the name of the class; for example, ENG 101. Hit the Enter key.
- Type the date. Hit the Enter key.

Now you’re ready to type in a title for your paper. Titles are centered across the text.

- Make sure you’re on a new line.
- To center text, make sure you are on the Home tab. In the Paragraph group of the Home ribbon, click on the button for Align Center (see below).

- Now that your cursor is centered, type in the title for your paper. For example, this paper is called How to Set Up a Microsoft Word 2010 for Writing a Research Paper. When your title is completely typed, hit the Enter key to start a new line.
- You now need to make the body of your paper is aligned left again. Click on the button for Align Left (see above).

To set double-spacing, first line indents, and proper spacing between paragraphs... correctly!
Select all of the document text using the <Ctrl-A> key sequence. Press and hold the Control key, and tap the A key. This will select all of the document text.

Click on the Home tab. In the Paragraph group of the Home ribbon, click on the Dialog Launch Button in the lower-right hand corner of the Paragraph group.

“How to” Set up a Microsoft Word 2010 document for an MLA research paper
Jefferson Community and Technical College
Adapted from a handout produced by Indiana University at Kokomo 6/8/2011
“How to” Set Up Microsoft Word 2010 for Writing a Research Paper

This will display the Paragraph dialog box, as shown below...

- In the Indentation group, click the Special: drop-down list and choose “First Line”. Set the By: field to 0.5” for ½ inch indent.
- In the Spacing group set both Spacing Before: and Spacing After: to “0 pt”, set Line Spacing: to “Double”.
- Click OK to apply the settings.

Now you’re ready to add the page number!

Always, always... use Word’s “Insert page number” feature for correct and automatic page numbering as described above. Never, never... hand type the page numbers into the header, manually adding page numbers will only lead to a page numbering nightmare.

Go to the Insert tab. In the Header & Footer group of the Home ribbon, click on Page Number.
“How to” Set Up Microsoft Word 2010 for Writing a Research Paper

You will then need to choose Top of Page from the menu that pops up, and then select Plain Number 3.

![Image of menu options]

Now you need to add your last name in front of the number. Your screen should look like this:

![Image of header with last name added]

Your cursor should be directly in front of the number. Type your last name then ADD A SPACE.

Next, you’ll format the header: Select all of the text in the header, including the page number, to format it. You can do this by holding down the CNTRL key and tapping the A key (CNTRL+A). Then right click with your mouse to call up the menu, and choose the last option, Font. Format it as Times New Roman, font size = 12.

Now find the words Close Header and Footer. Click on the red box shown in the circle above.

“How to” Set up a Microsoft Word 2010 document for an MLA research paper
Jefferson Community and Technical College
Adapted from a handout produced by Indiana University at Kokomo 6/8/2011
“How to” Set Up Microsoft Word 2010 for Writing a Research Paper

Now, it’s time for your Works Cited page.

Works Cited pages always begin on a separate page from their paper. The easiest way to do this is to add a Page Break. To do this:

- Go to the Insert tab.
- Click on the Page Break icon. It’s on the far left-hand side of the ribbon.
- You should be at the top of a blank page.

The next step is to add a title.

- Type in your title, Works Cited.
- Highlight the text, Works Cited, and go to the Home tab. Apply the Align Center button to text.
- Place the cursor at end of line and hit the Enter key.

Now you’re ready to start typing your citations.

- First, apply the Align Left button to the text.
- Type in or paste in your first citation. When you’re finished typing, highlight the text.
- Click on the Home tab. In the Paragraph group of the Home ribbon, click on the Dialog Launch Button in the lower-right hand corner of the Paragraph group.

This will display the Paragraph dialog box, as shown below...

- In the Indentation group, click the Special: drop-down list and choose “Hanging”. Set the By: field to 0.5” for ½ inch indent.
- In the Spacing group set both Spacing Before: and Spacing After: to “0pt”, set Line Spacing: to “Double”.
- Click OK to apply the settings.

The next page has an example of a correctly formatted Works Cited page.
When you have finished typing in each of your citations, it should look like this:

**Works Cited**


**Last steps:**

- Alphabetize your citations by the first word of the first entry – whether that’s the last name of the author of the first significant word of the article.
  - What is meant by significant word? Well, skip the words “A” or “An” or “The” at the beginning of the article or book and go with the next word. For example, if the name of an article that doesn’t have an author is “The Endurance of Frankenstein,” organize it under E for Endurance.

- Spellcheck your document.

- Proofread.

- Submit!