

English Department School Style and Formatting Guide

The English Department endorses the MLA (Modern Language Association) system for the submission of all written work.

Each Middle School student should have a copy of *A Pocket Style Manual*, by Diana Hacker (5th edition) and should refer to this for answers to questions about style, clarity, grammar, punctuation, mechanics, usage, etc. Please refer to the detailed MLA guidelines described in the manual when writing a formal essay or research paper.

Additionally, please follow the MLA guidelines described on pages 148-150 for the proper **format** for the submission of written work. These guidelines are listed below.

- The first page should contain a heading. This includes the student's name, the instructor's name, the course title, and the date on separate lines against the left margin.

Example:

Harry Potter

Professor Snape

Potions 7R

30 September 2012

- Your title should be on the next line, centered. Your title should be engaging and informative; it should do more than state your topic or repeat the title of the novel you are discussing.
- The page number--preceded by your last name--should be placed in the upper right corner of each page, approximately ½" below the top edge of the paper.

Example:

Potter 1

- Use one inch margins on all sides of the page.
- Align text to the left.
- Double space throughout the paper.
- Do not add extra spaces above or below the title or between paragraphs.
- Indent the first line of each paragraph five spaces from the left margin.
- Use Times New Roman font, 12 pt.
- Use *italics* for the titles of books, magazines, newspapers, long poems, plays, films, television programs, electronic databases, and websites. A complete list of titles that should be italicized can be found on page 85 in the manual. (Note: In handwritten

material, underlining is used in place of italics.)

- Titles of shorter works, such as short stories, essays, songs, and short poems, are enclosed within quotation marks. Again, for precise guidelines, refer to p. 86 in the manual.
- MLA format for citation and documentation is required. Please refer to pages 119-148 for specifics.
- To see a sample first page created using MLA style go to
www.dianahacker.com/pdfs/Hacker-Daly-MLA-Title.pdf
- To see a sample MLA research paper, go to page 151-154 of the manual.

Additionally, the English Department would like students to keep these **common conventions** in mind when writing a formal essay.

- Write in complete sentences (eliminate fragments and run-on sentences).
- Avoid using clichés and slang.
- Avoid repetition.
- Do not shift verb tenses (the literary convention is to describe fictional events in the present tense).
- Most analytical essays are written in third person, however, judicious use of first person is acceptable.
- Avoid using contractions in formal writing.