

Your Name <----- heading

Inst. Lydia Ferguson<----- heading

ENGL 1100-## (replace ## with your section #) <----- heading

Day Month Year <----- heading

Sample MLA Essay<----- Title (Centered)

This is where the essay should begin. As per the guidelines, the margins are one inch on all sides. Notice that the left margin is nicely lined up exactly one inch from the side of the paper, while the right margin is ragged, and does not line up neatly. Having the right edge ragged makes the essay easier to read. The entire paper is also double-spaced. Now look at the title. The title is an important part of the paper. It is relevant to the topic being addressed. The title of a student essay should not have quotation marks around it, and should not be bold, italicized, in all capital letters, or underlined. It is in the same font and font size as the rest of the paper.

Here is a new paragraph. See how there is no extra space between the paragraphs? The overall language of the essay is formal - no first or second person, and no contractions are used. The use of third person maintains a formal tone, and the lack of contractions prevents mixing up words like it's and its, or they're, their, and there.

The font here is one required for the course. It is 12 point Times New Roman, a serif font that is clear and easy to read—especially when reading longer papers. Using the wrong font and/or font size will throw off the bottom margins of the paper. Using the proper size and proper font ensures that the essay lines up perfectly along the margins of this document. Otherwise, it will not fit.

At the top right is the *header* for the essay. A proper header does not throw off the margins of the paper. Manually typing in the header usually leads to incorrect margins. To manually insert a header, the top margin would have to be changed to half an inch, rather than a

full inch! The placement of the header would also have to be altered every time something changed in the essay. Please note the difference between heading and header: *headings* go on the first page only, and contain the student's name, instructor's name, the class and section, and the date, whereas MLA style *headers* continuously paginate the essay and contain only the student's last name and the page number.

Another item of note is that a full page of text generally has 24-27 lines. Adjusting the font/font size will alter this. Notice that none of the paragraphs here are just one sentence in length. In fact, the shortest paragraph here is three full sentences long. While one-sentence paragraphs are acceptable in fiction and other types of creative writing, essays typically require paragraphs of greater length and complexity. The sentences also vary in length; they are not all short or all long.

If this paper involved research, MLA style in-text citations would be required. So here is a quotation from "Kubla Khan," a well-known poem by one of the great Romantic poets: "And all should cry, Beware! Beware!/His flashing eyes, his floating hair!/Weave a circle round him thrice,/And close your eyes with holy dread" (Coleridge 884). The quotation has quotation marks to indicate that it has been taken word for word from the source, and an in-text citation has been provided at the end of the sentence. The citation directs the reader to the *Works Cited* page of the sample essay, where there is further information about original source. Turn to that page now and look at it. Note the formatting; there is still a header on it and is paginated in sequence. Below that, centered, are the words Works Cited, without any punctuation. Even though there is only one source, it is still called Works Cited. Note the spacing of the entry. The second line is indented. If there were more than one entry, those entries would be alphabetized by the last names of the authors. Pay particular attention to the punctuation of the entry. Note that the entry is not numbered.

Works Cited

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Kubla Khan: Or, a Vision in a Dream." *The Compact Bedford Introduction to Literature*. Ed. Michael Meyer. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford-St. Martin's, 2003. 883-4. Print.