Model MLA Paper: A Visual Formatting Guide

This is a header. In MLA, you don’t need a title page, but it is recommended to have a 4-line header with your name, teacher, class, and date.

Create an original title for your project and place it in the center of the page.

Double space the whole paper. This is standard for all style manuals, unless you are instructed otherwise.

These titles are in italics because they are books. Long works like books, magazines, and newspapers are always in italics. Shorter works like short stories, songs, and poems are denoted by quotation marks (“Title”), without italics.

In-text citations usually include the author (last name) and location of the quote or information that’s being used.
Example: (Tolkien 76-77).

In this case, the author’s name, Tolkien, was mentioned earlier in the paragraph, so it does not need to be included in the first in-text citation. Since more than one Tolkein work was mentioned, we included the title (The Hobbit 76-77).

When citing the same work again (158-159), only the page numbers are needed. The only reason to include The Hobbit again is if a different work is referenced between the citations.
Include your last name followed by the page number in the upper right hand corner. It should be a ½ inch from the top.

Pro Tip: Use your software’s “insert page number” feature rather than typing it into the body of the essay.

Pro Tip: If you tend to write short sentences (and paragraphs) and struggle to make them longer, try combining clauses. This paragraph is long because there are complex sentences, or sentences with more than one clause.

For example, the topic sentence here contains a semicolon, which is a great way to combine two clauses with similar thoughts into one sentence.

However, the tale does not seem to halt with the end of the book; rather, it continues beyond the written pages. Sam says it best when he realizes Frodo is holding light from the legend of Êarendil’s silmaril: “Why, to think of it, we’re in the same tale still! It’s going on.

Don’t the great tales never end?” (Two Towers 697). This scene underscores the unifying element of story throughout all three works in a powerful way. Frodo’s reply is that the great stories do not end as tales, but go on, people entering and leaving as they fulfill their role. The story in this book stops after Aragorn becomes king, Frodo and Sam clean up the Shire, and men begin to rule the known world. Yet by Frodo and Sam’s definition, the tale does not end; it is unified with all the other tales that are connected to this one. This is precisely the point of using story to unify these works.

These three works are all part of each other. Each song, myth, and legend told by a character unifies that scene with all the similar scenes before it in Middle-earth. In this way, Tolkien has used story as a vehicle to unify his works and express the beat of his heart to create a world in which legend does not end with the turn of a page, but continues on in an interconnected legacy lasting for all of time.

This comma appears at the end of an introductory phrase. This type of comma is commonly missed. To make sure you include it, look for sentences that begin with prepositions (like “in” here) or gerunds (like “being” or “having). The comma will go right before the main subject of the sentence, in this case Tolkien.

You should aim for 6-10 sentences per paragraph. This paragraph is ideal at 7 sentences.

Indent each new paragraph by a ½ inch from the left margin.