

MLA, APA, AND CHICAGO COMPARISON

TOPIC	MLA*	APA**	Chicago (CMS)***
Verb Tense	Although the manual does not explicitly state a preferred tense, typically you should use present tense when discussing literature: i.e. “Shakespeare writes...”	Use past tense or present perfect tense for literature reviews and descriptions of procedures if the discussions are of past events; use past tense to describe results; use present tense to discuss implications of results and present conclusions (65–66)	Use present tense to refer to “timeless facts” and to describe fictional works’ plots (236)
Thesis Statement	Your thesis statement should be a coherent idea that conveys your topic and your point of view; formally the handbook stipulates that your thesis should answer whatever central question or problem you have raised; however, the handbook also encourages using the writing experience to reassess what you are trying to say, and in turn, revise your thesis (42)	<p>Empirical Study: Statement which offers the author’s / researcher’s hypothesis (10)</p> <p>Literature Review: Statement which identifies relations, contradictions, gaps, etc. between published research results (10)</p> <p>Theoretical Article: Statement which expands, refines, or presents a new theory (10)</p> <p>Methodological Article: Statement which presents new methodological approaches or offers modifications of existing methods (10)</p> <p>Case Study: Statement which offers a solution to an established problem (11)</p>	The Chicago manual does not offer specific guidelines for constructing a thesis statement, but your thesis statement should indicate the main idea or claim of your paper, both introducing your topic of discussion and making some sort of arguable statement about that topic (from <i>Easy Writer</i> pg. 330) ¹
Headings	Double space between the end of one section and the heading label for the next, and between the heading and the section that follows; do not follow heading with punctuation; headings need not be bolded or italicized (117)	Up to five levels: 1) Centered, boldface, uppercase and lowercase headings 2) Left-aligned, boldface, uppercase and lowercase heading 3) Indented, boldface, lowercase heading with period 4) Indented, boldface, italicized, lowercase heading with period 5) Indented, italicized, lowercase heading with period (62–63)	Set headings flush-left on a new line; each level of heading must be differentiated by type style and size; do not use full capitals (61)
Title Page	No title page required; on page one of the paper, type your name, your instructor’s name, the course number, and the date on separate lines flush left and double-spaced; beneath that, type the title, centered in regular font (116–117)	Title page required: recommended title length < 12 words, upper and lower case letters, centered, upper half of page (23); include author’s name and institutional affiliation (23); include author note (23); running head also included (229); title page is page 1, noted in the page header (229)	Title page should include full title of work with subtitle (if any), the name of the author (author’s affiliations typically not included), editor, or translator, and the name and location of the publisher; do not include date of publication and do not include a page number on this page (10)
Page Numbers	Number all pages consecutively in upper right-hand corner of page, one half inch from the top and flush right; precede page numbers with your last name (117)	Number all pages consecutively starting with title page using Arabic numerals (229); include page number in running head: short version of title, followed by 5 spaces and page #, maximum of 50 characters including spaces and punctuation (229)	Each page of manuscript must be numbered consecutively (66–67)
Margins	One inch on all sides; do not justify right margin (116)	One inch on all sides; lines should be flush-left; maximum line length is 6.5 inches (229)	All text should be flush-left; margins of at least 1 inch on all four sides of text (60)
Line Spacing	Double-space (116)	Double-space (229)	Double-space (59)
Paragraph Indentation	Indent the first word of a paragraph ½ inch from left margin; indent set-off quotations 1 inch from left margin (116)	Indent first line of every paragraph and first line of every footnote ½ inch (5 spaces) from left margin (229)	Indent the first line of each paragraph using your computer TAB key (60)

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Ellipsis and Brackets	Use spaced ellipsis points to indicate you have omitted material; use three points to omit material within a single sentence or to connect the middle of one sentence with the middle of a different sentence; use four points if you are connecting material from the middle of one sentence to the beginning of another or if you are omitting full sentences (97–99) When ellipsis points appear in the original work, place them in square brackets (100); also use square brackets within quoted material to provide supplementary information to the reader (101)	Use three spaced ellipsis points to indicate you have omitted material; use four points to indicate omissions between two sentences (172–173) Use brackets to enclose material inserted in a quotation by some person other than the original author (173)	Use three spaced ellipsis points to omit material considered irrelevant to the argument being made (637); do not use ellipses at the beginning or end of a quotation (638); other punctuation appearing in original text may be used before or after three ellipsis points (638) Use brackets within quoted material to enclose information added by someone other than the original writer (338); use square brackets for parentheses within parentheses (338)
Bibliography Page	The bibliography page should begin on a new page and should be titled Works Cited with the words centered on the page; double space reference entries and use a hanging indent; alphabetize entries by author last name (230–231)	The reference list should begin on a new page and should be titled References, with the word centered on the page; double space reference entries and use a hanging indent; alphabetize entries by author last name (37)	Full bibliography pages are not required but are recommended (684); the bibliography should be an alphabetical list of all sources used for research (685); it should follow the end of the paper and begin on a new page (685); acceptable titles include “Bibliography,” “Works Cited,” or “Literature Cited” (687)
Capitalizing Titles	Rules for capitalization are the same for titles mentioned in the body of the paper and those in the reference list: capitalize the first, last, and all the principle words (86)	When mentioning books and articles within the body of your paper, capitalize all major words; when citing books and articles in your reference list, capitalize only the first word or proper nouns (101)	For titles mentioned in the body of the paper, those in the footnotes, and those in the reference list, capitalize according to headline style: capitalize the first, last, and all the principle words (448)
In-text Citations	When quoting, provide the author and the page number; they may be separated or cited together (214–218): Townsend notes “...” (613). OR “...” (Townsend 613).	When quoting, provide the author, year, and specific page number or paragraph number; date can follow author in an introductory phrase, or all citation elements can be at the end of the sentence (170–171): Robbins (2003) notes.... (p. 541). OR “...” (Robbins, 2003, p. 541).	When quoting, use superscript numbers following the quotation to indicate a footnote or endnote (665); a note should list the author, title, and publication facts (661); footnotes appear at the foot of the page (671); endnotes are grouped at the end, following the text and any appendices and preceding the bibliography (673)
In-text Emphasis	Authors of research (128)	Dates of Research (174)	Author or date, depending on subject matter
Long Quotes	Quotations of four lines or more should be set off on a new line, indented 1 inch, double-spaced, without quotation marks; a colon typically introduces long quotes; cite source (typically by indicating page number) at end of quote after final punctuation, no punctuation following page number (94)	Quotations of 40 words or more should be set off as block quotations on a new line, indented ½ inch from the left margin, without quotation marks, double-spaced (however, many Naropa departments prefer single-spacing) (171); cite source at end of quote after final punctuation, no punctuation following citation (171)	Quotations of 100 words or more (at least 6–8 lines) should be set off as block quotations (623); indent these quotations from the left margin using the Tab key, do not further indent the first line of the quotation (627); do not use quotation marks except in cases when material <i>within</i> the block quote requires them (631)
Citing an Indirect Source	Provide original source in signal phrase, list indirect source in works cited, and include indirect source in parenthetical citation preceded by the abbreviation “qtd. in” (226)	Provide original source in signal phrase, list indirect source in reference list, and include indirect source in the parenthetical citation preceded by “as cited in” (178)	CMS prefers not to use indirect sources, but if the original source is unavailable, cite both the original and the indirect source using the phrase “quoted in” (764)

* Information in this column retrieved from: Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2009. Print.

** Information in this column retrieved from: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. (2010) Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

*** Unless otherwise noted, information in this column retrieved from: The University of Chicago Press Staff, ed. *The Chicago Manual of Style*. 16th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010.

¹ Lunsford, Andrea A., Paul Kei Matsuda, and Christine M. Tardy. *Easy Writer: A Pocket Reference*, 4th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2010. Print.