Hanging Indents: Using Microsoft Word to Format Your Documentation

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In the body of a research paper, you document information sources (books, articles, motion pictures, etc.) with a brief citation. The brief citation points the reader to the longer documentation entry at the end of the paper. The longer entry tells the reader from what source you, the writer, got your information. In MLA style papers, the longer entries at the end of the paper are labeled, Works Cited. In an APA style paper, they are titled, References.

Both types of documentation (Works Cited or References) involve hanging indentation. The hanging indent helps the reader know when one entry ends and another begins. For example:

References


To set a hanging indent in Microsoft Word...
PARAGRAPH SETTINGS IN MICROSOFT WORD

From the *Home* tab, click the down arrow (image below) to access the paragraph settings.

![Paragraph settings in Microsoft Word](image)

The *Paragraph* dialog box looks like this (image right).

In all of your college papers, be they MLA or APA style, the line spacing should be *double* and you should have told Microsoft to *not* add any extra space between paragraphs. These are things which you can set from the start of your paper using the *Spacing* settings of the *Paragraph* dialog box (image just below).

![Paragraph spacing settings](image)

When you are ready to create your *References* or *Works Cited* list, use the *Indentation* settings of the *Paragraph* dialog box—simply choose “Hanging.”

![Paragraph indentation settings](image)

Once that is set, as the text wraps from one line to the next, it will be indented an extra half an inch. When you have finished typing the entry for one information source, simply hit the enter key—the curser will move down but will not move an extra half inch to the right, it will be flush left, ready to start the next entry.