

# MMSTC/MLA Formatting Rules

## *For Research Papers and Lab Reports*

### Units of Measurement:

- Be consistent in capitalization (10 mL or 10 ml).
- Put a space between number and unit (20 g). Use no space if using a symbol (20°C)
- Consistently put quantity after or before, inside parentheses ( ). Avoid 2 sets of numbers appearing together or running into each other. Ex. 25 ml beaker (20) or (20) 25 ml beaker.
- Celsius, Fahrenheit (capitalize). Abbreviate (°C or °F).

### Specific Capitalization and Italics:

- Capitalize proper nouns (Petri dish, [brand names] Ziploc baggies, Sharpie marker).
- In pH, the p is always lower case, even in a title.
- Organisms: Capitalize the genus, use lower case for species. Italicize both (*Escherichia coli*). Abbreviation (**only use after complete name is used in section**, capitalize genus letter, **italicize both**) (*E. coli*).
- *t* test: The *t* is always *italicized* and lower case (NO hyphen between *t* and test [two-sample *t* test])
- P-value, *t* distribution,  $\alpha$  level (use the special symbol)
- Capitalize specific figures in text (As seen in Figure 1, the design is...) (The data shown in Table 26 is not consistent...)
- Design of Experiment = DOE

### Table Labeling:

- Label each table as “Table # (assigned sequential numbers, no punctuation) above the table. Directly under Table #, single-spaced, add a descriptive title (Use Title Capitalization).
- In paragraph form (indented, standard capitalization, double-spaced), include an anchor for each table that explains what the table represents.
- Center the column headings both vertically and horizontally and include correct units of measure in parentheses (units and/or symbols [%]). **Bold table headings.**
- In the data table, words are left-aligned and numbers are right-aligned, **EXCEPT** trial numbers are centered.
- Use uniform decimals in a column or follow significant figures rules.

Table 1

Populations Lab

<b>Day of Observations</b>	<b>Number of Organisms Observed</b>	<b>Weight (g)</b>

Anchors explain the content of figures and tables, as seen in Table 1. Anchors are indented and double-spaced. There should be no unnecessary or extra space in tables.

Figure Labeling:

- Label each figure as “Figure #. Title (assign sequential numbers, use title capitalization) below the figure.
- Use consistent arrows and size 10-12 font to label image.
- Anchor the figure in the text below. Use standard capitalization and paragraph form (Indent).

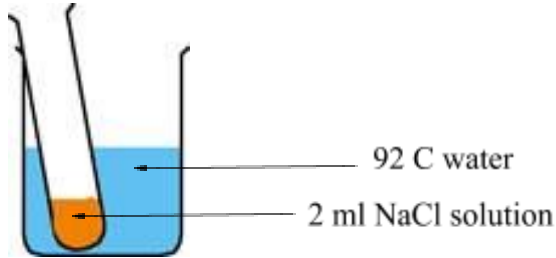


Figure 1. Test Tube Setup

Again, all figures and tables need anchors, in paragraph form, double-spaced. Explain the significance of this image. Refer to tables and figures as proper nouns, like Figure 1. Notice also, in Figure 1, the labels are a nice size font (10-12 pt), so your teachers can actually read the information!

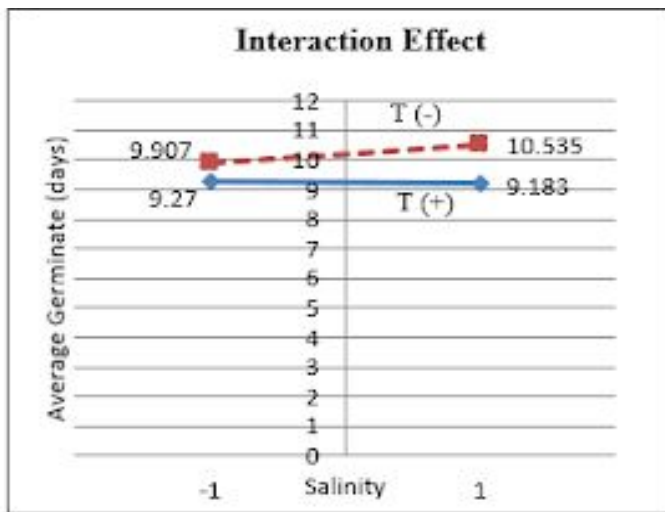


Figure 2. Interaction Effect of Salinity and Temperature

Again, always include anchors that explain the data. Label endpoints and segments. It is ok to abbreviate. Use a different color or style of line to distinguish between different information being graphed.

### What to ALWAYS do or use in writing research papers or lab reports:

- Third-person (The experiment resulted in...The research results were conclusive with...) (No I, you, we, or any other such pronouns). Exception: In procedures, use 2nd person present tense (“You” is understood). Do not use pronouns like you, I, your, our, etc.
- Active voice as much as possible. Do not say: Beakers are left to sit overnight (beakers are not capable of sitting).
- Spell words correctly. Capitalize words correctly. (Check the dictionary. Proper nouns are capitalized.)
- Use clear, concise, specific language.

### What NOT to do or use in writing research papers or lab reports:

- In Procedures section of a research paper: Do not begin with “Gather all materials.”
- In Procedures section: Do not use “Next,” or “Then.” (The numbered list speaks for itself!)
- In any section or lab report: Do not use contractions (don’t, isn’t, they’re). Keep it formal!
- In any section or lab report: Do not begin a sentence with a digit or pH
- In any section or lab report: Do not use empty words (a lot, many, very, things). If the words do not serve a purpose, do not use them.

### Basic MMSTC Formatting

- Center and Bold titles (The main title on your cover page, and the titles for each section)
- Underline plain text for sub-sections within sections.
- Double-space paper/report except: 1. Materials (Use a single-spaced list and columns if possible), and 2. For individual procedures that are more than one line long. Continue to use double-spacing between each procedure.
- **Turn off the “add extra spaces between paragraphs” option. Make this be the first step you do whenever you start a new document! ☺**