

## Tip Sheet 9. Standard Manuscript (MS) Format



While instructions to authors for journals specify how to format manuscripts particular to that journal, you may wish to have a working format or template that makes it easy to convert to the specifications of the outlet. The format for a standard manuscript will serve the purpose: it allows you to begin writing before you select a journal, and this format can also be used for books, white papers (policy reports), and technical reports with just minor changes in the headings and subheadings. Follow these instructions to create your template for a standard manuscript format:

Open the word processor; save the file as StdMSFormat.

Go to page layout: Set the orientation to portrait. Work with the ruler exposed at the top of the page.

Set the margins at 1" top, bottom, right (R), left (L).

Keep tabs at default: space tabs at ½ inch from the L margin to the 2" mark.

Set no header; set footer: your surname justified L, auto page number justified R.

Save the template at this point.

Use a simple, common font like Times New Roman (TNR) or Arial (A) for the MS. In this tip sheet as an example, these fonts both are 11 points, no bolding or italic, with Times New Roman for text in this tip sheet. Choose a font that is the right size for your purpose: serif (like Times new Roman, it has the little “flags” on each letter that form a horizontal line for easier reading through the text), and sans-serif (here Arial and literally “without flags”) for visuals. Note that you may wish to know the measurements used by typesetters to understand typefaces, which are labeled as “font” in print jargon or in word processing programs:

Point: .0138 (approximately 1/72) of an inch. 72 pts. = 1 in.; 36 pts. = 1/2 inch; points are used to measure the height of a typeface. For the word “bop” in 11 points for both fonts, (**bop [11 pt. NTR]** and **bop [11 pt. A]**) the space from the top of the o to the top of the b is the ascender height; the o comprises the “x-height”; from the bottom of the o to the bottom of the p is the descender length. The point size is the added height of the ascender, the x-height, and the descender. The more open the x-height, the easier a font is to read in visuals; use of Arial condensed in tables gives taller but less wide fonts. Line spacing, the height above and below the line of type, is set in points.

Pica: 12 points = 1 pica or 6 picas = 1 inch; used for linear measurement of type. For example, copy could be set 20 picas wide and 36 picas deep (inches are not the unit of measure in layout or typesetting).

Em: — The square of the type size, meaning a 10-point em is a square 10 points high by 10 points wide; used to measure the quantity of type, e.g. the em-dash is a dash as long as the points of the type face laid horizontally. NTR em is — ; A em is — . This dash is used to set phrases apart from main text—like this!

En: – One half an em. This dash is used for date or data ranges with or without a space on either side, e.g., 3 – 5 ml or 3–5 ml (TNR), 2010 – 2011 or 2010–2011 (A). Check your style guide for spacing.

hyphen (- NTR, - A) is a “thin em” or 1/4 to 1/3 the em.

For line spacing in the MS, set standard double spacing. Double spacing allows copyeditors and peer reviewers to write inline changes and comments with space to do so. Double spacing also allows enough space to write (and center on a separate line) mathematical equations when needed. If the outlet then requires single spacing, simply select all, go to paragraph spacing, and select single.

All the headings and subheadings in the MS format should be justified left, the default in most word processors; this is important because it allows easy import of the MS into a page layout program without the need of removing justification codes. Create a style with these levels of headings:

Title: Level 1 heading, 14 pt font

Section heading: Level 2 heading, **11 pt font bold**

Subsection heading: Level 3 heading, *11 pt font italics*

Sub-subsection heading: Level 4 heading, 11 pt font underlined

Text: 11 pt font normal

Save the style as StdMSFormat.

When you use this template, you now need to write then highlight and choose the style level to format the text. When you go to reformat for the outlet, simply create a style according to their guidelines, save it with the journal’s name, then go back into your document, select all, select the outlet style, and all the changes in the headings and text will be automatically made.

