How to Fix Uneven Spacing in MS Word

The Modern Language Association (MLA) requires that academic papers be evenly double-spaced throughout the document, with no "extra space above or below the title of the paper or between paragraphs" (*WR* 466). However, the default formatting provided by most standard Microsoft Word software packages often inserts extra spacing before and after paragraphs. (For the purposes of MS Word, a paragraph occurs every time you hit the **Enter** key.) This results in large gaps between lines in the identification block (your name, the instructor's name, the class, and the due date), before and after the title, and between paragraphs. It can also adversely affect the spacing of the references on your works cited page.

To fix uneven spacing in your paper on a **PC** laptop or desktop computer:

1. Select your entire document by pressing **CTRL-A**.
2. Under the **Home** tab, click the small arrow in the lower right-hand corner of the Paragraph toolbar. The **Paragraph** menu will appear.
3. Under the **Indents and Spacing** tab, review the current settings shown under <u>Spacing</u>. "Figure 1: Typical Default Paragraph Formatting" (shown below), models typical default settings for paragraph and line spacing. The default spacing on your version of MS Word might be slightly different.
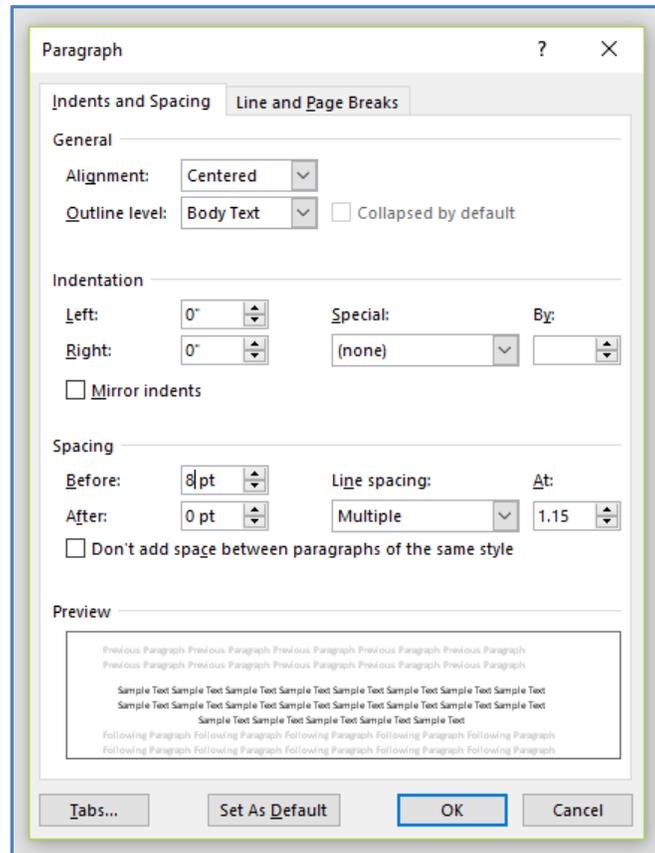

Figure 1: Typical Default Paragraph Formatting

4. Change the settings under Spacing so that Before and After both say "0 pt." Change the Line spacing to say "Double." See below, "Figure 2: MLA Paragraph Formatting," for an example to follow.
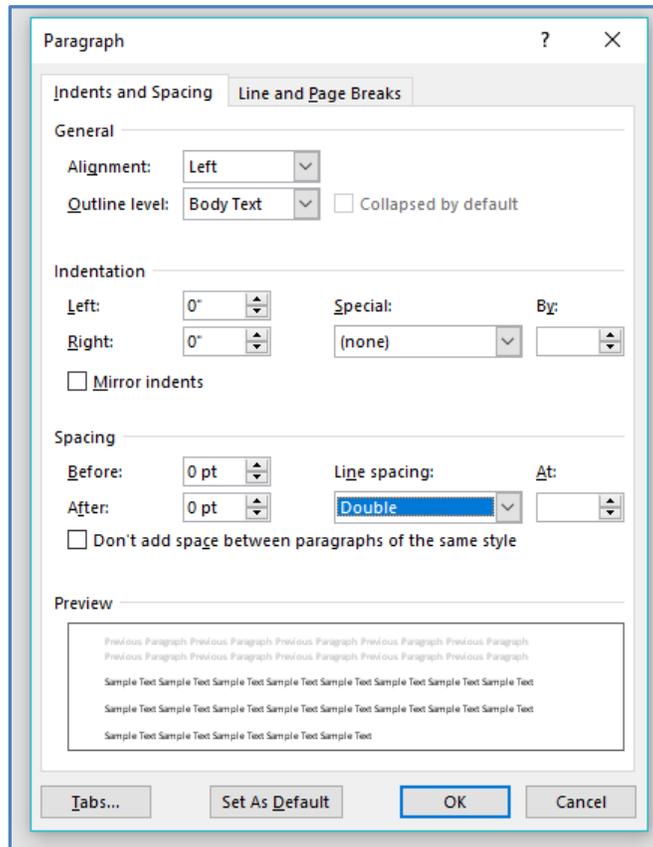

Figure 2: MLA Paragraph Formatting

5. Click **OK**.
6. Click anywhere in your document so that your entire paper is no longer selected. This will prevent any accidental changes or deletions.

Note: The instructions provided above are specific to a **PC** laptop or desktop computer. The procedures to follow for a **Mac** laptop or desktop computer are similar; you will simply need to access the **Format** menu and then select **Paragraph…**. The instructions are the same from that point forward.