How to Plump a Paper

So, you’ve been writing like a fiend, and you only have 8 1/2 pages with nothing left to say and no more evidence to present. Computer word-processing programs provide many methods of extending what you have written in order to meet or exceed the 10-page requirement for your paper. By applying all but the last three of these methods, I was able to plump the 8 1/2 page paper to 20 pages! (But remember that electronic submission provides the instructor with a word count!)

Increase the size of the margins: top, bottom, left, right.

The standard, MLA-approved size of margins is 1” on the top, bottom, left, and right. By extending each of these to 1.2”, you are able to extend your paper by 20 lines, which is about 3/4 of a page. After all, what teacher is going to haul out a ruler and measure the size of your margins? He or she probably won’t notice the difference.

Count the title page (if required or allowed).

Some instructors will not notice that you have included the title page in your page count. Some even allow you to do so. Of course, this adds a full page to your total.

Place the author/page header starting at the 1” top margin rather than at the 0.75” (or other) point.

By moving the header (name and page number) from the 0.75” point to 1” from the top of the paper, you will add about 14 lines or 1/2 page to your paper.

Select a particularly wide font.

Different typefaces have different widths. The typefaces in the box below are all standard typefaces used in document preparation. Times New Roman or 20th Century Schoolbook or similar typefaces with serifs (the little tabs at the top and bottom of each letter) are the standard, but other typefaces are wider, though harder on the eyes for someone who has to read many papers. By selecting Prestige Elite Standard as the typeface, I was able to add more than 4 pages to the paper!

Also try increasing the font size from 12 point to 13 point. When I increased the font size from 12 point to 13 point, a barely noticeable change, almost two full pages were added to the paper.

Add a space between paragraphs.

Magazines often use a different print style than newspapers or journals. Some magazines place spaces between paragraphs and do not include the 5 or 10 space indenting at the beginning of each paragraph.

This style can be easier to read in a magazine. Some students use a space between paragraphs and the indented first line of each paragraph. When I added a blank line between paragraphs in the sample paper, 1 1/4 pages were added.

Include page numbers both top and bottom.

By including page numbers at the bottom of the page (in addition to the top) a writer can add 1 line per page, adding 9 lines to the paper or about 1/3 page.

Include the Works Cited page and/or Bibliography in the page count.

This method doesn’t fool many instructors. You can plead ignorance, but most instructors consider these pages to be addenda to the text.

Skip a page number: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10.

How many instructors will check to see that the page numbers actually consist of a full sequence of numbers? If you have an instructor who only reads your papers for meaning and style, he or she may only look at the last page number and not notice the omission. Take a chance if you’re feeling lucky. 💆

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