

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE & FORMATTING

Required Pages

For consistency across the university, all students should use the page order shown on the next page and follow the formatting instructions for the margins, page numbers, title page, abstract, copyright page, Certificate of Approval, and vita regardless of the style guide used.

Page	Page Numbering
Title Page (no printed page number)	Number is not visible but is assigned Roman numeral one (i)
Abstract (one page only)	Beginning of visible numbers Roman numerals (ii)
Copyright (one page only)	Roman numerals continued (iii)
Table of Contents (minimum of two heading levels)	Roman numerals continued (iv)
Certificate of Approval	Roman numerals continued (varies)
Dedication (optional, one page only)	Roman numerals continued
Acknowledgments (optional, one page only)	Roman numerals continued
List of Tables (required if more than one table)	Roman numerals continued
List of Figures* (required if more than one figure)	Roman numerals continued
Content/Chapters**	Beginning of Arabic numerals (start with page 1)
References	Arabic numerals continued
Appendix/ces (when applicable)	Arabic numerals continued
Vita (one page only)	Arabic numerals continued

* Other approved lists (e.g., List of Acronyms, List of Abbreviations, List of Lists, etc.) go after the List of Figures.

**Students approved to use manuscript-style formatting should follow the [Manuscript Formatting Guidelines](#).

Source: <https://www.tntech.edu/graduatestudies/etd/general.php>

Formatting Changes for Fall 2025

Title and Headings – 2 options:

- Bold, use all caps
- Bold, use title case

Margins – 2 options:

- Use mirror margins with a 1.5" inner margin and 1" outer margins
- Use 1" margins on all sides

NEW for Spring
2026

Best Practices for
ible Formatting

New for Spring 2026: Best Practices for Accessible Formatting

- Before submitting your final PDF, please use an Accessibility Checker and make any needed corrections.
- In particular (but not limited to), please verify that:
 - **Headings and styles** are applied consistently (e.g., using built-in Word styles instead of manual formatting).
 - Appropriate **alternative text (alt text)** is assigned to images, charts, figures, tables, pictures, graphics, and other non-text objects.
 - **Tables include header rows.**
 - **Text is selectable/searchable** (not a scanned image).
 - Any colored elements have sufficient **color contrast** and **color is not the only way information is conveyed.**

Best Practices, cont.

- Common Accessibility Mistakes to Avoid
 - **Using manual formatting instead of styles** (e.g., bolding or enlarging text instead of applying Word heading styles).
 - **Missing or vague alt text** (e.g., using "image" or leaving alt text blank for charts, figures, or diagrams that convey meaning).
 - **Incorrect heading order** (skipping heading levels, such as jumping from Heading 1 to Heading 3).
 - **Decorative images incorrectly tagged** (decorative images should be marked as such, not given descriptive alt text).
 - **Tables without proper structure** (missing header rows or merged cells that interfere with screen readers).
 - **Converting to PDF too early** (fix accessibility issues in Word first; converting early can make issues harder to correct).
 - **Assuming visual clarity equals accessibility** (documents that look well-formatted may still fail accessibility checks).
 - **Printing your document as a PDF** (save as or convert to PDF instead).

Accessibility Resources

- **Microsoft Word**

- Both online and desktop versions have a built-in Accessibility Checker

- **LaTeX**

- Version 6.0 of TNThesis has instructions for creating an accessible PDF in Chapter 12 of the manual
 - Compiling an accessible document should be done after ALL revisions are complete, including any requested by the College of Graduate Studies
 - Be aware that it may take hours to compile an accessible PDF

Accessibility Resources, cont.

- **Accessible Education Center: Document Accessibility**

Information on the importance of creating accessible documents. <https://www.tntech.edu/disability/docaccessibility.php>

- **CITL Accessibility for Documents**

Includes accessibility guidance for Microsoft Word, PDFs, images, and other file types. (Note that the referenced *Awesome Access* tool for converting documents into an accessible format may change fonts and formatting and is not recommended.)
<https://www.tntech.edu/citl/accessibility-doc.php>

- **Panorama for Students**

Use *YuJa Panorama* in iLearn as an Accessibility Checker.
<https://www.tntech.edu/citl/tech-services/panorama/student.php>

Formatting Style Options

APA 7

- The default style is APA 7
- APA 7 resources:
 - APA 7 Style Manual
 - APA Style Blog
<https://apastyle.apa.org/>
 - Purdue OWL
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html

Please indicate your formatting style in the Note to Administrator field when you upload your paper.

Formatting Style Options, cont. (2 of 3)

LaTeX

- Usually used by engineering/science student
- LaTeX will do most of the formatting for you
- Version 6.0 (Spring 2026) is the most recent version:

<https://tennesseetechuniversity.sharepoint.com/:f:/r/sites/LaTeXfiles/Shared%20Documents/General?csf=1&web=1&e=NE3pYv>

Please indicate your formatting style in the Note to Administrator field when you upload your paper.

Formatting Style Options, cont. (3 of 3)

Other (generally) accepted styles

- MLA (English)
- ACS (Chemistry, Chemical Engineering)
 - Consider using supplemental files for images if document page margin is less than 1"
- Manuscript-Style Formatting (Environmental Sciences, Biology, Professional Science Master's)

Please indicate your formatting style in the Note to Administrator field when you upload your paper.

Manuscript-Style Formatting

- The thesis/dissertation is a culminating student paper & still needs to look like a thesis or dissertation
- All page elements are required as listed on the Page Order & Numbering slide
- Use the same page order, *except*:
 - Add a Preface before Chapter 1 or as part of Chapter 1 (if placed before Chapter 1, the page should have a Roman numeral page number)
 - What is a preface? <https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/dissertation-preface-example/>
 - References and Appendices can follow individual chapters instead of following the last chapter
 - Abstracts for chapters are allowed; however, a single abstract for the entire thesis or dissertation must be included as page ii of the paper

Manuscript-Style Formatting, cont.

- Use the same margin size, line spacing, heading style, page numbers, etc. at <https://www.tntech.edu/graduatestudies/etd/general.php>
- Tables/Figures
 - Can be numbered sequentially beginning with #1 in each chapter
 - Tables/Figures can be listed by chapter in the List of Tables/Figures
- Formatting for References, Tables, & Figures
 - Use ONE peer-reviewed formatting style approved by your committee (e.g., American Chemical Society journals, Journal of Wildlife Management, North American Journal of Fisheries Management, etc.)
- More detailed guidelines are available at

Formatting Requirements for ALL Submissions

- All page elements are required (unless listed as optional)
- Use a readable, accessible font like Times New Roman (12 pt), Arial (11pt), Calibri (11pt)
- 1" or mirrored margins
- Left justify the body text
- Use the same page numbering:
 - Roman numerals for the front matter, Arabic numerals beginning with Chapter 1
 - Chapter 1 should start on an odd document page number
- If the title of the paper is more than two lines, the title should be in shape of an inverted triangle (each line should be progressively shorter)

Formatting Requirements for ALL Submissions, cont.

- Use May, August, or December only, plus the four-digit year, for the degree conferral date on the title page
 - E.g., May 2026
 - Papers submitted for a summer graduation should always use August plus the year, even if the degree is conferred in July (for consistency across the years)
- Use the correct degree and major for the title page, abstract, and vita

Check degree block in Degree Works, e.g.:

Level Doctoral **Classification** Doctoral Candidate **Program** PhD - Engineering **College** Engineering
Major Engineering **Concentration** Electrical and Computer Engineering, PhD **Catalog Year** 202010

- The degree is spelled out on the title and abstract pages (e.g., Doctor of Philosophy, Master of Science, Professional Science Master's)
- Can include concentration information (if applicable) in vita

What's the most important thing about formatting?

Consistency

Consistency Tips

- Maintain uniform formatting throughout the document – font, spacing, tab size, heading style, spacing before and after headings or paragraphs, etc.
- Title, name, degree, and major should be the same throughout
- Try to use the same spacing before and after tables, figures, and stand-alone formulas
- Use the same formatting with your figures and tables. Examples of inconsistent formatting:
 - Some figure numbers listed with figures use Fig. 1 and some use Figure 1 structure
 - Some figure/table titles end with a period and some don't
 - Some figures/tables are centered on the page and some are left justified

Additional Formatting Considerations

Use caution with page breaks	Hard page breaks and using blank lines to move text to the top of next page can create unwanted gaps or cause flow issues as you revise your paper
Tabs	Indent all paragraphs Use standard .5" tabs/indents
Widow/Orphan control	Ensure no single lines are at the top or bottom of pages
Preserve your formatting when copying/pasting	If you paste something from another source, choose either "merge formatting" or "keep text only" to preserve your document formatting

Additional Formatting Considerations, cont.

Formulas

Use consistent position and spacing before/after
Keep the formula within the margins

Tennessee Tech

Use the full name – Tennessee Technological University:

On the title page

The first time TTU is mentioned in the body of the paper

Tennessee Technological University then referred to as Tennessee Tech, or

Tennessee Technological University (TTU), then referred to as TTU

The first time TTU is mentioned in your vita

Spelling

- American English spelling is preferred
 - “acknowledgments” not “acknowledgements”
 - “fulfillment” not “fulfilment”
 - Merriam-Webster Dictionary/Thesaurus:
<https://www.merriam-webster.com/>
-

Title Case

- [Title Capitalization Tool - Capitalize My Title - Title Case Tool](#)
- <https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines/capitalization/title-case>

Tables and Figures

Numbering	Sequentially number tables and figures as they appear
Font & Spacing	Use the same font as the main text (or use sans serif font if using serif font for main text) Single-space content within tables and figures
Callout	Refer to tables and figures by number (e.g., “see Table 4.2”, not “in the next table”)
Placement	Insert tables and figures after the paragraph where they are first mentioned, if possible

Tables and Figures, cont.

Flow

A table or figure can be by itself on the page (the caption and any notes are on the same page as the table/figure)

Legibility

Can the reader easily read figure and table contents? If not, consider using landscape orientation or creating a supplemental file.

White space

Leave enough space between a table/figure and the main text so they are visually separated

Formatting References



All references should be formatted/styled the same way



Hyperlinks should be formatted the same way (e.g., blue, not underlined)



Let DOIs (digital object identifiers) and URLs “break” naturally (do not use a hard return to split up the text)



Generally, references ending with a DOI/URL don't have periods, and the rest of the references end in a period

Before Submitting

- Update/refresh the Table of Contents, List of Tables, List of Figures, etc. so page numbers are correct
- Double check the page numbers
 - No page number on the title page
 - Roman numerals for front matter, Arabic numerals from Chapter 1 to the end of the paper
 - sequential
- Use print view – look for meaningless or unnecessary gaps in text or odd patterns
- Run an Accessibility Checker