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Sample MLA Paper

Your first paragraph is called your introductory paragraph. This paragraph should give a brief explanation as to what your paper is about. Somewhere in this paragraph, typically at the very end, you need a thesis statement. Your thesis statement is the goal of your paper contained in one sentence, like this: **MLA format is used in college classrooms because it is organized, professional looking, and easy to use.** I try to list three things about my topic that I am going to discuss in my thesis statement, that way I already have three body paragraphs planned out. Remember that you need to have two spaces between each sentence in your paragraphs, and every paragraph should have three or more sentences.

This is your first body paragraph. So, I am going to take my first point from my thesis statement and discuss it in further detail here: **MLA format creates an organized way for students to structure their papers and the sources they use in their papers. This makes it easier for the instructor to grade their papers as well as easier for the student to write their papers.**

This is the second body paragraph, so I will use the next part of my thesis statement as a talking point: **MLA is professional looking and great for academic papers because, if your paper looks professional, the people who read it will take your information more seriously.** Now, at some point in your essay you will use at least one source to back up your information, to prove that you know what you are talking about. I am going to use my favorite website for when I have a question about writing an MLA format paper, Purdue Owl: **“MLA (Modern Language**

Association) style is most commonly used to write papers and cite sources within the liberal arts and humanities” (Stolley, et al.). “Et al.” means “and others,” meaning that there is more than two authors for this website. If there were only two authors, I would need to list both of their last names in parentheses. Remember that you do not just have to cite quotations in your paper, you must cite all information that you did not already know. This includes statistics, facts, quotes, opinions, and similar things you find in articles and books. We have more information on this in our “Plagiarism” handout.

This is the third body paragraph, so use the last part of your thesis statement: **MLA format is easy to use because of all the great resources available to students such as the Tutoring Center, Purdue Owl online, and the “MLA Cheat Sheet” handout.** Then go on to talk about all these great resources until you get a full paragraph. I’m going to throw in another in-text citation here as an example. **In a personal interview, Caitlin Swisher, Assistant Coordinator of the VC Tutoring Center, said that students who use the Center for help with MLA format often see better grades over time. Knowing how to properly format MLA projects is crucial to good grades.**

This is the last paragraph, also called your conclusion. In this paragraph, you wrap up all of your information and tie it back in to your thesis statement. So, this paragraph will closely resemble your introductory paragraph. It is okay to restate your thesis statement for emphasis, but try to change up the wording some: **Since learning about MLA, I have discovered that the format keeps me organized, helps me look professional, and is easy for me to use.** Go back through your paper to check for grammar mistakes. Also make sure that you have addressed the prompt and written about what your instructor asked you to write about. Finally, make sure that all of your paragraphs tie in to your thesis statement. Now, we need to create a bibliography. Insert a page break now.

Works Cited

Stolley, Karl, et al. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." The OWL at Purdue. 10 May 2006.

Purdue University Writing Lab.

Swisher, Caitlin. "The VC Tutoring Center." Personal Interview. 23 October 2015. Victoria

College.

Note how the citations are in alphabetical order. Also notice how the bottom line of the citation is indented. This is called a hanging indent. In Microsoft Word, select the "View" tab and check the box next to "Ruler". Then, hover your mouse over the bottom half of the thing that looks like an hour glass until "Hanging Indent" pops up. Click and drag this to the right ½ inch.