

This document provides guidance on formatting and writing an MLA paper. Mouse over each comment icon for additional information. Please view this file in the latest version of Adobe's Acrobat Reader instead of a third party .pdf viewer.

 First Last

 Professor Last

 EN 113

 8 April 2013

Title 

 After using the tab key to indent your first paragraph, begin your paper. Start your introduction by attempting to attract the reader’s interest. Orient the reader to the topic by setting the context and providing any necessary background information. The thesis statement is a one sentence summary of the essay’s main points, and it should be the last sentence in your introductory paragraph. Try for a thesis that shows how the main points relate to each other. 

 Start each body paragraph with a topic sentence that makes a clear reference to one idea in your thesis. If the assignment asks you to use and cite sources, do not use sources for your thesis or topic sentences; the thesis and topic sentences are for you to express your main points. If the assignment instructions do not mention using sources, do not use sources unless you ask your professor before submitting the paper. After the topic sentence, the rest of the paragraph should give examples or other idea development as appropriate to the assignment. 

The NMJC English Department knows you can write well, and we expect your best efforts in every paper. Read instructions carefully. Take time to revise and edit. Everything counts in a college paper—neatness, spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence and paragraph construction, topic sentences, thesis sentence, organization, content—everything. 

Sentence fragments, fused sentences, comma splices and subject-verb agreement issues are severe errors. If your professor alerts you to consistent problems with one or more of these errors, seek immediate help from your professor or the free tutoring offered by NMJC (see the 

course syllabus). Should you not take action to correct these severe errors, you can expect to receive failing grades.

 If the assignment *does* ask you to use sources, support the topic sentence through the use of your ideas along with paraphrases, summaries, or brief quotations from professional sources that end with a parenthetical citation like this (Glenn and Gray 98). Your paper must have parenthetical documentation that shows where you obtained your information (Author page). You must indicate if you change pages, but not authors (101). If your source is an electronic source with no page numbers, then a parenthetical citation consists only of the author's last name. Every sentence that uses information from a source needs a parenthetical citation. Be sure to consult the chapters in your handbook on avoiding plagiarism, finding sources, using sources, and citing. Lindsey Hamlin and William Ryan recommend using [plagiarism.org](http://plagiarism.org) as an online resource on understanding and avoiding plagiarism (215).    

Distinguish directly copied material from your own. Always put quotation marks around every direct quotation copied verbatim from a source. If you quote three or more of someone's words verbatim and do not give them credit, you have plagiarized. However, even when you put someone else's ideas into your own words, you still must indicate the source of that information with MLA citation.

Your paper needs a conclusion. It must be related to--grow out of--what has come before. Avoid introducing irrelevant ideas or merely summarizing the paper's main ideas. Good ways to conclude include referring to the paper's title or opening in a compelling way, speculating about the future, calling your reader to action, or ending with an anecdote to show the importance of your thesis. The words of your conclusion are the last ones your reader will see, and they ought to be good work.

  
Works Cited

  
  
 Glenn, Cheryl and Loretta Gray. *Harbrace Essentials*. 2nd ed. Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2015. Print.

 Hamlin, Lindsey S., and William T. Ryan. "Probing for Plagiarism in the Virtual Classroom." *The iDeal Reader*. Comp. Linda Connell, Dallas Hulsey, Pete Mladinic, and Susan Waters. New York: McGraw-Hill Create, 2012. 214-17. Print.



Recommended Writing Resources:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBJD28b9E38> is a video tutorial on MLA format.

<http://www.roadtogrammar.com/> is a site with self-grading grammar exercises. These are great for practicing.

<http://www.chompchomp.com/> is another site with self-grading grammar exercises.

<http://www.mrgunnar.net/ap.cfm?subpage=348270> is a classic essay titled “How to Say Nothing in 500 Words” by Paul Roberts on how to write a great essay.

<http://pathosethoslogos.com/> explores the classic concepts of rhetoric.

<http://plagiarism.org/> will answer all of your questions about how to avoid plagiarism.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> is a comprehensive writing handbook online.

**See the attached MLA Template.docx file for a template you can use for your papers in Microsoft Word.**