Student Firstname Lastname

Dr. Kelley Campbell

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Paper Title Goes Here

Welcome to this paper! This paper serves as an MLA Sample Paper written in Microsoft Word, and also serves as a reminder on paper writing and formatting tips. When starting a new paragraph, indent the paragraph one tab key, or 5 spaces, to signify the start of a new paragraph. When a writer starts a new big idea, he or she should start a new paragraph. The first paragraph of a paper is called an introduction. All papers need an introduction with an attention-getter, an overview of main points, and a thesis statement. The thesis statement is the paper’s “Big Main Idea” that captures the overall perspective or point that the writer wants to share with the reader. For beginning academic writers, the thesis statement is often best placed as the last paragraph in the paper.

First, you need a body paragraph that reviews your first big main idea. The first sentence is often the topic sentence – a sort of “baby” thesis statement for the paragraph - which introduces the paragraph’s main idea to the reader. All new paragraphs should begin with a transition word or set of words (First, Second, Third, To Start, Next, Therefore, Additionally, Overall, In Conclusion). Signal phrases are often used (To start the discussion, To overall conclude, etc.) to gently guide the reader into the start of the paragraph.

Second, the next paragraph addresses the second big main point in the paper. The average length of a paragraph should be about 3 to 6 sentences in length. It is important to remember that a paragraph is a minimum of three sentences. One sentence is an orphan who belongs in the above or below paragraph. Two sentences are the start of a great idea that just needs to be completed. Three sentences is a nice, tidy start to a paragraph. The goal is to avoid writing a paper that has a three-page long paragraph; that would greatly confuse the reader.

Third, another task for writing papers is to remember that all paragraphs, like all stories, need to have a basic beginning, middle and end. The beginning we call the introduction paragraph; it “tells the readers what you are *planning* to tell them.” The middle paragraphs in a paper are called the body of the paper; they “*tell* the readers what you are telling them.” The last paragraph is called the conclusion; this paragraph “tells the readers what you already told them.” Many people are tempted to “blow off” the conclusion, and they do not always give the conclusion the proper focus. Please note that the goal of paper writing is to ensure that you have balance between a beginning, middle and end; remember to include all parts of the paper in the writing process.

Fourth, proofreading and spell checking is an important component of reviewing a paper before it is submitted for grading. Be aware that the spell check may not cover words that are spelled correctly, but used improperly. For instance, as typists, it is easy to transpose and mistype letters; the words “form” and “from” have all the same letters, but in different orders. Proofreading can prove helpful. Many of us cannot proofread our papers, as we are “too close to the forest to see the trees.” Swap papers with your neighbor, a fellow student, or a friend and have him or her read the paper just to see if it sounds like it makes sense and flows. Sometimes, a friend may not know what is *wrong* exactly, but he or she can often tell you that something in the paper “sounds off.” Many writers find that it is very helpful to swap papers with other students during the proofreading process.

Fifth, academic honesty and plagiarism are issues for many universities. Many universities contain policies in the course syllabus and in the student handbook on how to define plagiarism and what the school’s consequences are for academic dishonesty. While all universities are different, many schools adhere to the failure of a student on the paper, in the course, and possible academic dismissal for infractions with plagiarism and dishonesty. If a student is concerned about giving credit in a paper, he or she should check with the faculty, to ensure that proper citation in-text and on the reference page is given.

Sixth, part of researching with MLA formatting style is about giving credit in the body of the paper (called an in-text citation) and on a references page (called the Works Cited page). Specifically, Axelrod and Cooper state, “In-text citations tell your readers where the ideas or words you have borrowed come from, and the entries in the works-cited list allow readers to locate your sources so that they can read more about your topic” (644). Additionally, for in-text citations, “…include the author’s last name and the page number on which the borrowed material appears in the text of your research project” in parentheses (Axelrod and Cooper 644) and “In a few cases, you may not be able to include a page reference, as, for example, when you cite a Web site. In such cases, you may include other identifying information, such as a paragraph number…” (Axelrod and Cooper 645). Here is an example: (“MLA Sample Paper” par. 2-3).

Seventh, for the purpose of the papers in this class, bibliographic notes with footnotes at the bottom of the page and superscript numbers in-text are not needed; “When using the MLA system of documentation, include both an in-text citation and a list of words cited” (Axelrod and Cooper 644). Axelrod and Cooper continue, “In your MLA-style research paper, every source you site must have a corresponding entry in the list of works cited, and every entry in your list of works cited must correspond to at least one citation in your research project” (650). The authors conclude, “Always keep your goal in mind: to provide enough information so that your reader can track down the source. If you cannot find all of the information listed…include what you can” (Axelrod and Cooper 651).

In conclusion, it is important to remember that all papers need to end as they started. The conclusion should be a review of the paper’s main points and it should include a restated thesis statement. The thesis does not have to be repeated word-for-word from the introduction, but it should give the reader a reminder of the paper’s “Big Main Idea.” The conclusion can sometimes offer a final thought, a suggested preference, or a persuasive statement, depending on the type of paper written. Overall, best of luck to you, dear writer, as you begin your journey in academic writing. You can do this; go for it!

Works Cited

Axelrod, Rise B. and Charles R. Cooper. *The St. Martin’s Guide to Writing*. 11th ed. Boston:

Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea. *The Everyday Writer*. 6th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2016. Print.

Lunsford, Andrea, John Ruszkiewicz and Keith Walters. *Everything's an Argument.* 7th ed.

Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2016. Print.

“MLA Sample Paper.” University of Purdue Online Writing Lab, 1995-2017. Web. 30 January 2017.

***NOTE FROM FACULTY:***On the MLA formatted reference page, the title is Works Cited, centered. Double-space the works cited list. Alphabetize the entries by author’s last name or it the author is not known, the title. Use the author(s) full last and first names. Use a hanging indent format, where the first line is not indented, but the second and subsequent lines are indented by 5 spaces, or 1 tab key. For online sources, include at minimum the title of the database or web site, the medium of publication (*Web*), the date you accessed the source (for example: *30 January 2017*), date of publication if available (if not available, use *n.d.*). Do NOT just list the URL or website address alone.

Other recommended sources:

1) University of Purdue OWL – MLA Formatting and Style Guide: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

2) University of Purdie OWL – MLA Sample Paper: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/13/>

3) Son of Citation Machine Website – Free Formatting Tool: <http://www.citationmachine.net/>