StudentFirstName LastName

Professor LastName

CourseName CourseID

Day Month Year

Center Title (no Bold or Underline)

This is a template that shows how to format a research paper or an essay in MLA style. MLA is the Modern Language Association’s rule book for writing at a college level. Summit Christian College expects students to use MLA’s widely accepted guidelines to complete assignments in an orderly and detailed fashion.

An MLA-formatted paper has one-inch margins all around. Each page has a header that consists of the student’s last name and page number at the ½” right margin. Please note that in Word, Google Docs, and OpenOffice (e.g., LibreOffice), the default margins are not correct for MLA format. Also note that the paper is double-spaced, with no extra space between sections or paragraphs. As a rule, students must take the time to “fix” the formatting before they begin their papers. The entire paper, including the heading and title, must be in Times New Roman 12 font. Italics must be used for words and letters referred to as words and letters, for foreign words, for emphasis, and for titles of major works. For papers that use letters or texts in Biblical languages, the Georgia font works well. Beyond the font, always make sure that the essay is left aligned, and always add one space after the closing punctuation between sentences. Simply hit the enter key at the end of each paragraph to format the paper correctly.

An initial title page is not required for a paper written with MLA formatting. However, a professor may occasionally ask the student to create a title page for an assignment. If so, consult *The Little Brown Handbook* or *Purdue Owl* for guidelines. If a title page is not required, the first

page header starts at the top left and should be double-spaced with no punctuation between or after any elements. It consists of four lines:

1. The first line must be the student’s first and last names.

2. The second line should include the title “Professor” followed by the professor’s last name or first and last name, e.g. “Professor Gribble” or “Professor Scott Gribble.”

3. The third line should specify both course number and course name, e.g. “Composition & Grammar I ENG1103” or “Introduction to Psychology PY2103.”

4. The fourth line of the header should be the date in European format with the day first using numbers, followed by the name of the month spelled out, and finally the year in number format. “12 August 2021” is an example of this date format.

A double space should separate the first page’s header from the paper’s title. The title should be centered with each major word capitalized. Use the same font and size of text for the title as for the rest of the paper. However, if the paper has bold headings somewhere (see below), the title can be bold to match bold headings.

Please note that students are not required to use headings in papers, but their use may be helpful in clarifying the student’s thoughts or points on the topic presented. According to *Purdue Owl*, here is how each level should be formatted:

**Level 1 Heading: bold, flush left**

*Level 2 Heading: italics, flush left*

**Level 3 Heading: centered, bold**

*Level 4 Heading: centered, italics*

Level 5 Heading: underlined, flush left

Keep your headings and your formatting consistent throughout the paper.

Listing items, also called seriation, may provide clarity in a paper. The most common method of seriation uses numbers within a sentence. “A series or list of terms or phrases can be introduced following a colon: (1) marked by numbers in parentheses; (2) to enumerate a series of topics; (3) especially when the topics differentiated are complex, lengthy, or disparate” (Scribe 5). Another method of seriation introduces each numbered item as a separate paragraph. The list on the second page of this document is an example. Bullet points should not be used for lists.

In the MLA format, research is documented with parenthetical or “in-text” citations. These citations help students to “acknowledge your sources by keying brief parenthetical citations in your text to an alphabetical list of works that appears at the end of the paper” (Gibaldi 142). In this brief citation, the period goes after the parenthesis. As shown here, the in-text citation comes after the direct quote is finished. Note that the closing punctuation goes after the in-text citation, not after the direct quote. “The exception is a quotation ending in a question mark or exclamation point. Then use the appropriate punctuation inside the closing quotation mark and follow the quotation with the text citation and a period” (Fowler and Aaron 675). The information in parentheses should be as brief as possible. Use the author’s last name or a shortened title for unsigned works and a page number if applicable. If the key information (author’s last name or the title of an unsigned work) is in your text, do not repeat it in parenthesis.

Because every rule has an exception, direct quotes that are longer than three lines of text are set off by an extra one-inch margin rather than quotation marks, and in this case, the period goes before the parenthetical citation. The *MLA Handbook* gives more information on how to handle long quotes.

Because Summit offers Bible-based classes, students need to quote or paraphrase verses

from the Bible and give them parenthetical documentation. For instance, the verse, “Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you the desires of your heart” that has been taken from a phone app would be documented like this (*NIV* Psalm 37.4). The Bible is added as a source in the Works Cited page at the end of the document. Unlike normal Bible verses, MLA uses a period between the chapter and the verse rather than the colon. Also, after the first introduction to the Bible version, the remaining in-text citations can simply state the book, chapter, and verse. The version type is not needed unless it is different. When using a printed Bible, the in-text citation looks the same, but the Works Cited entry looks different. Please see both examples on the Works Cited page of this document.

Short quotations of poetry can also be placed within the regular text of the paper. A slash with a space before and after is used to indicate each new line in the poem. Quotations of poetry more than three lines in length should be set off from the rest of the text as a block quote. The longer poetry quotation should use double-spacing and be indented one inch from the left margin. Each line of poetry can be shown as a line in the block quote. Like block quotes of prose, no quotation marks should be used, but an MLA in-text citation must be included at the end of the last line of poetry, following any punctuation of the original text.

Now to tackle the actual content of an essay. The first sentence of a paper should catch the reader’s attention. After that, give readers some background information to catch up on the topic of the essay. After the background information, start outlining the major contentions for the paper. There is no need for a ton of detail in the introduction, but the information presented should set the stage for your paper. The thesis statement must come at the end of the introduction regardless of how many paragraphs the introduction takes.

The next paragraphs are body paragraphs. Always start each paragraph with a topic sentence and end with a closing sentence that flows into the next paragraph by using keywords from one to another. In a five-paragraph essay, there are three body paragraphs. Sometimes, students must write longer papers that have more body paragraphs. Never fear! Each body paragraph follows the same pattern: topic sentence, details, and closing sentence.

Always finish a paper with a conclusion that restates the main points, restates the thesis statement, and ends by wrapping up the subject with a bang. When writing a paper, the old-fashioned saying, “Tell them what you’re going to tell ‘em. Tell them. And then, tell ‘em what you told them” is a simple way to remember the essay structure.

After the last paragraph, force the document to begin a new page for the Works Cited page. The Works Cited page still has the one-inch margins and has the last name and page number header. This page is also double-spaced throughout with no extra space between entries. Entries in a Works Cited page are alphabetized by the first word of each entry (author’s last name or title of work). Each entry uses a hanging indent where lines after the first one are indented a half an inch. Because the URLs in a Works Cited page are not underlined or live links, remove the hyperlinks so that URLs are formatted like regular print. Remember that the details matter, so watch for the commas, periods, spacing, and dates on the Works Cited page. With this template, students can write correctly formatted and tidy MLA-styled assignments.

Works Cited

*The Bible*.  New International Version, 4th ed., Zondervan, 2005.

*The Bible.* New International Version. *YouVersion*. app version 5.0, Life.Church, 2008-2020.

Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron. *The Little, Brown Handbook*. 12th ed. Longman, 2012.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 7th ed. The Modern Language Association of America, 2009.

The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 1995-2020, owl.english.purdue.edu/owl.

Scribe, Abel. *MLA (Style) Lite for Research Papers*. Fall 2009. PDF File.