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Professor X

English 107

Essay #1 Revision (this line is optional)

29 October 2012 (paper's due date)

An Introduction to MLA

This essay introduces the Modern Language Association (MLA) documentation style and standards. To begin, click the "Page Layout" tab and "Margins" to make sure all margins are set at one inch or "Normal"; then right click and choose "Paragraph" to make sure paragraph indentation is set at ½ inch or 0.5 and "Before" and "After" are set at 0 pt. Set the font size at twelve, the font style at Times New Roman or Arial, and line spacing at double; double-space the entire paper—from heading to works cited. Choose the "Insert" tab and "Page Number," and enter your last name in the header's top right-hand corner. Center the title and do not bold, italicize, or underline it; also, do not use all caps, a bigger font size, or quotation marks. Usually, you will not need a cover/title page—your heading and title supply the necessary information. MLA requires you to write in the "academic" present tense.

MLA also has guidelines for using and citing quotations. Begin by integrating quotes of less than four lines into your paragraphs. If you have not mentioned the author(s) in the quote's introduction, place in parentheses the author's or authors' last name(s) and the page number(s) from which you took the quote, like this: (Smith #). You must also cite any information you have paraphrased. According to *The Little, Brown Handbook*, "MLA documentation style employs brief parenthetical citations within the text that direct readers to a list of works cited at the end of the text" (Fowler and Aaron 644). Notice that I have placed the period *after* the

citation. Also, note that I have italicized the book's title; for essay/article titles, use quotation marks. For quotes that are more than four full lines of text, MLA also has guidelines:

> When you quote more than four typed lines of prose. . . , set off the quotation by indenting it one inch [or two tabs] from the left margin. Long quotations should be introduced by an informative sentence, usually followed by a colon. Quotation marks are unnecessary because the indented format tells readers that the words are taken word-for-word from the source. . . . Notice that at the end of an indented quotation the parenthetical citation goes outside the final mark of punctuation. (Hacker 338)

Did you notice any unfamiliar punctuation in this quote? MLA also has guidelines for changing, adding, or omitting information. If you change or add material, use square brackets around the change or addition. If you omit material, use an ellipsis (within sentences, use three periods; between sentences, use four). To create a "hanging indent" for your works cited, right click and choose "Paragraph"; under "Indentation" and "Special," choose "Hanging" from the drop-down. MLA guidelines often annoy student writers, but as Peter Elbow asserts, "the . . . appearance of your writing has a big effect on how people experience your words [and ideas]" (170).

Works Cited (usually on a separate page)

Elbow, Peter. "The Last Step: Getting Rid of Mistakes in Grammar." *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*, new ed., Oxford UP, 1998, pp. 167-172.

Fowler, H. Ramsey, and Jane E. Aaron. *The Little, Brown Handbook*. 11th ed., Longman, 2010.

Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference.* 5th ed., Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003.