

WRITING STYLE GUIDE

Revised March 2006 by 6th-12th grade representatives

Beliefs

Oswego Community Unit District 308 believes that writing is an essential part of the learning process. Writing enables students to become better thinkers and learners, helping them establish a place in the world through the sharing of experiences and ideas. The ability to write well improves with practice in all subject areas. Clear, effective written communication impacts all areas of life--academic, vocational and personal. Grammar and writing instruction will be based on the material introduced at the elementary level, *6+1 Traits*. Junior high staff will introduce additional skills and develop the previous skills. High school staff will develop all skills and help students master them. The Illinois State Learning Standards are the basis of our writing assessments. Whenever possible, assessments will be streamlined to avoid the loss of instructional time. Grammar is taught as a tool of writing, a tool to enhance communication. The grammar instruction is not the end in and of itself.

Grading Statement

Writing is a cross-curricular skill, with topic content, writing conventions, and format as parts of an assignment grade. Individual teachers decide the criteria for grading an assignment.

Effective Writing Traits

6+1 Traits (Supports Illinois Writing Features)	
Ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear message or purpose• Focus• Accurate, valid and interesting information• Quality and sufficiency of detail to support main idea
Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Internal structure of document• Clear plan of development• Uses transitions
Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Writer's personal style• Matches purpose and audience
Word Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Varied and effective words• Deliberate decisions made about words used
Sentence Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideas flow smoothly• Uses a variety of sentence structures
Conventions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• General rules for mechanics, usage, spelling and punctuation• Level of correctness
Presentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Appropriate appearance of the assignment• MLA format

Parts of a Paper

- ★ **Lead/Introduction** (First paragraph)
 - **Attention-getter** (Grabs reader’s attention)
 - **Thesis statement** (Establishes purpose of writing)
- ★ **Body** (Paragraphs that develop purpose of the piece)
 - **Support** (Quality and sufficiency of detail to support the main idea)
 - **Details** (Specific information)
 - **Elaboration** (Extension or further development of information)
 - **Transitions** (Connectors)
- ★ **Conclusion** (Last paragraph)
 - **Wrap-up** (Closure)
 - **Writer’s Comment** (Writer’s thoughtful insight, observation or connection about topic)

The Writing Process

COMPONENTS	CONCEPTS
★ Prewriting (Generating and organizing ideas before writing) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brainstorming (Collecting Ideas) ▪ Organizer (tool to help students organize ideas) 	Ideas Organization Voice
★ Rough Draft (First copy)	Ideas Organization
★ Revising (Strengthening and clarifying writing)	Ideas Organization Voice Word Choice Sentence Fluency
★ Editing (Correcting mechanics)	Conventions
★ Final Draft (End of process, results in finished piece)	Presentation

Writer's Checklists

The following checklists can assist writers as they develop specific pieces of writing. These checklists serve as an additional guide, but the rubrics, scoring guides and specific guidelines for assignments from the teacher are the primary guides for students.

There are three formal types of writing typically assigned in 6-12 courses: expository, persuasive and narrative. The chart below outlines some examples of each.

1. **Expository writing** – writing that *explains*
 - a. **Informational writing** (ie. news article, lab report)
 - b. **Literary Analysis** (ie. essay response to literature)
2. **Persuasive writing** – writing that *influences* the reader (ie. position essay, debate)
3. **Narrative writing** – writing that tells a *story* (ie. short story, personal experience)

Informational Checklist

- ✓ Based on key question or problem
- ✓ Filled with details, examples, anecdotes, facts, or quotations
- ✓ Correct information
- ✓ Teaches the reader something
- ✓ Explains difficult terms/words
- ✓ Lists sources

Literature Analysis Checklist

- ✓ Makes a point about theme, language, character development, style, or importance of work
- ✓ Quotations from the work support key points
- ✓ More than a plot summary
- ✓ Writer makes connections: text to text, text to self, text to world
- ✓ Writer may analyze the author's voice, word choice, sentence fluency, detail or organization

Persuasive Checklist

- ✓ Helps reader think though issues
- ✓ Writer's position clear
- ✓ Not just opinion
- ✓ Offers evidence: facts, quotations, observations
- ✓ Cites reliable sources
- ✓ Explains why others might not agree
- ✓ Voice is confident, not angry
- ✓ Saves strongest argument for last
- ✓ Helps readers to make up his or her mind

Narrative Checklist

- ✓ A story, not just a "list of things"
- ✓ Solves a problem, answers a question, teaches a lesson
- ✓ Main character grows, changes, or learns something
- ✓ A turning point: change, discovery, conflict
- ✓ Characters seem real
- ✓ Dialogue sounds real
- ✓ One thing leads to another
- ✓ Ending wraps things up

Severe Writing Errors Revision Guide

These severe writing errors are unacceptable:

- Sentence fragments
- Run-ons
- Comma splices
- Pronoun use
- Subject – verb agreement
- Inconsistent or shifting verb tense
- Shifting point of view
- Spelling/typos/usage

Sentence Fragments – SF OR FRAG

A sentence fragment does not express a complete thought, often missing a subject, verb, or both.

- Incorrect** When Chris served the salad.
(We need to know what happened “when Chris served the salad.”)
- Incorrect** Which contained lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, and scallions.
(We need to know what contained lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, and scallions.)
- Correct** When Chris served the salad, which contained lettuce, tomatoes, carrots, and scallions, he suddenly tripped, spilling it into the surprised customer’s lap.

Run-on Sentences – RO

A run-on sentence is two sentences joined without adequate punctuation or a connecting word.
Run-on sentences can be corrected by creating two sentences, adding a semi-colon, or adding a comma and a conjunction.

Comma Splices – CS

A comma splice is when two complete sentences are connected with only a comma.
Comma splices can be corrected by using a semi-colon or rewording the original sentence.

- Incorrect** I thought the ride would never end, my eyes crossed and my fingers were numb.
- Correct** I thought the ride would never end. My eyes crossed, and my fingers numbed.
- Correct** I thought the ride would never end; my eyes crossed, and my fingers numbed.

Pronoun Use – PN, AGR, PRO

Agreement means that sentence parts match. A pronoun must agree in number, person, and gender with the word to which the pronoun refers.

- Incorrect** Emily and Nicole cleaned out their messy lockers on the last day of school. She used an industrial cleaner to scrub the glue residue remaining from her boyfriend’s 43 pictures.
- Correct** Emily and Nicole cleaned out their messy lockers on the last day of school. Emily used an industrial cleaner to scrub the glue residue remaining from her boyfriend’s 43 pictures.
- Incorrect** Mosquitoes are not a problem in cool weather because when the temperature drops below sixty degrees, it can’t flap its wings.
- Correct** Mosquitoes are not a problem in cool weather because when the temperature drops below sixty degrees, they can’t flap their wings.
- Incorrect** Me and Adam are not your classic game geeks; him and me just like to keep up with the latest video games.
- Correct** Adam and I are not your classic game geeks; he and I just like to keep up with the latest video games.

Subject - Verb Agreement – SV, AGR

Subjects must agree with verbs in person and in number.

Incorrect	Not all <u>people</u> in the world <u>considers</u> black to be the color for mourning; in China and in Moslem countries, mourners wear white.
Correct	Not all <u>people</u> in the world <u>consider</u> black to be the color for mourning; in China and in Moslem countries, mourners wear white.
Incorrect	Blue and white <u>is</u> the most popular school colors, but <u>are</u> rock or country the most popular music?
Correct	Blue and white <u>are</u> the most popular school colors, but <u>is</u> rock or country the most popular music?
Incorrect	<u>One</u> of the boys <u>are</u> late.
Correct	<u>One</u> of the boys <u>is</u> late.

Inconsistent or Shifting Verb Tense – VT, Tense

Verb tense shows when the action takes place. Use the right tenses to show the correct order of the events.

(When discussing literature, use the present tense consistently. For example: In “The Tell Tale Heart” Poe writes...)

Incorrect	The boy <u>had ran</u> home.
Correct	The boy <u>had run</u> home. OR The boy <u>ran</u> home.

Shifting Point of View – PV, POV

The writer’s viewpoint should remain consistent throughout the writing.

Incorrect	If <u>someone</u> is a vegetarian, <u>you</u> don’t eat meat.
Correct	If <u>someone</u> is a vegetarian, <u>he</u> doesn’t eat meat.

Spelling/ Typos/Usage – SP

Incorrect	<u>Your</u> going <u>too</u> <u>there</u> party in <u>are</u> car.
Correct	<u>You’re</u> going <u>to</u> <u>their</u> party in <u>our</u> car.

Common Errors

are/our	Sam and Joe are riding to the store with our parents.
it’s/its	It’s fair to say that skateboarding has not lost its appeal.
no/know	Don’t you know that “ no ” means no ?
then/than	Then I noticed that he was taller than Jimmy was.
there/their/they’re	Look at the girls over there . They’re noticeable with their red hair.
to/too/two	The two students were careful not to speak too loudly in the hallways.
who’s/whose	Whose car are we using, and who’s riding shotgun?
your/you’re	You’re confusing your verb tenses.
Incorrect	Correct
alot	a lot
alright	all right
could of	could have/could’ve
should of	should have/should’ve
would of	would have/would’ve

Plagiarism

Plagiarism (from the Latin word for “kidnapper”) is the presentation of someone else’s ideas or words as your own, whether deliberate or accidental. Plagiarism is a serious and punishable offense. Some examples include:

- submitting an essay from another as one’s own.
- purchasing a paper.
- copying a passage directly from source material without proper attribution.

Students are expected to retain all materials that verify the authenticity of their documentation.

If evidence of plagiarism exists, a penalty will be imposed at the teacher’s discretion and may range from a reduction in grade to no credit given for the paper, which could lead to failure of the course. Academic dishonesty is considered Gross Misconduct in the District 308 Student Behavior Code.

MLA Formatting Guidelines

MLA is the adopted format in District #308 for formal documents in 6-12 curriculums. Formal writing assignments—research papers, essays, and reports—must follow MLA format:

Heading (in upper left corner):

- Your name
- Instructor’s name
- Course name
- Date (05 March 2008)

Handwritten:

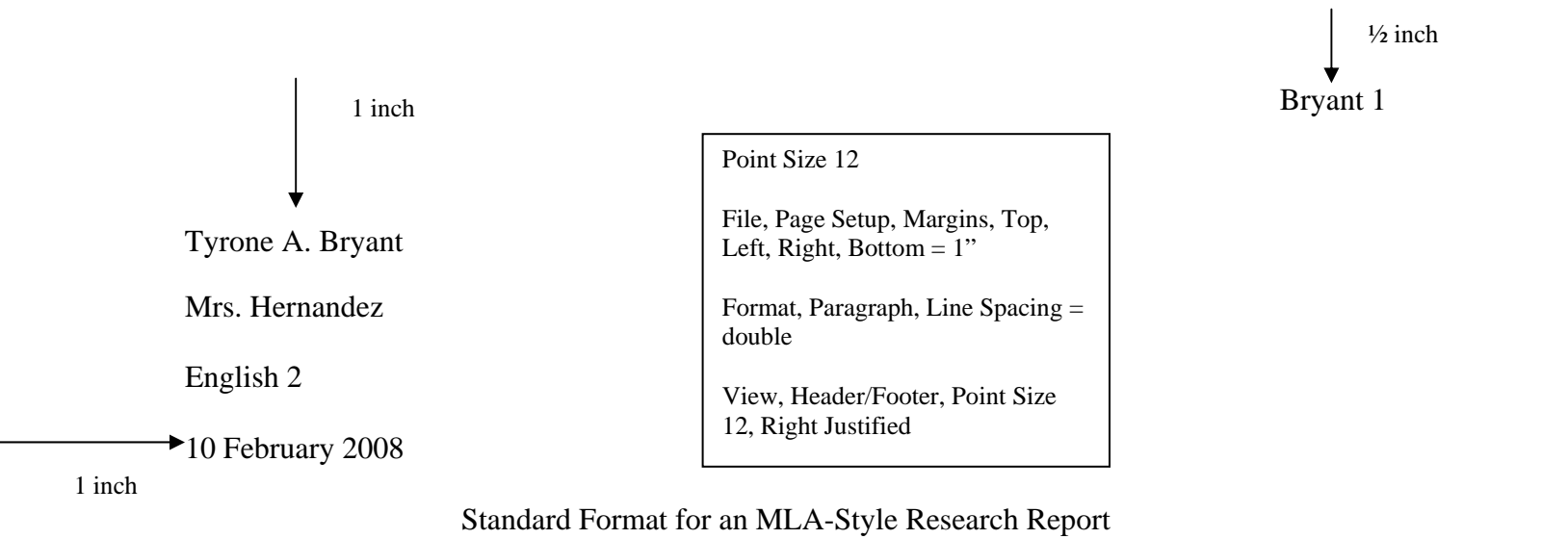
- Dark blue or black pen
- One side of paper
- Double spaced

Computer generated:

- Documents should have consistent font, size, and style throughout
 - Font—Times New Roman, Courier, Courier New, Arial, or Helvetica
 - Size—12 point
 - Style—Plain text (No bold, no italics, no underline)
- Line spacing—double spaced, including heading, quotations and Works Cited
- Spacing after periods—either one or two spaces but be consistent throughout paper
- Margins—All one inch
- Paper title
 - Center
 - Capitalize first, last and other important words
 - DO NOT USE all caps, underlining or quotation marks for the title
 - Use same font as paper font
- Page headers (Go to View/Header and Footer)
 - Upper right corner
 - Number all pages consecutively
 - Last name followed by page number (Gonzalez 2)
 - Page numbers start on first page

For further assistance with using the MLA style, refer to the MLA Website.

www.mla.org



All information in a formal paper must be documented. The MLA-style (Modern Language Association of America) report is illustrated here. There are several key differences between this style and other formats (Harcourt 437). An MLA-style report has one-inch side, top, and bottom margins. “There is no need to document [a source of information] when you are reporting matters of common knowledge” (Davidson 6). The entire report is double spaced, including quotations, documentation, and the space below the title.

No title page is used. Information normally found on the title page (writer’s name, teacher’s name, course title, and date) is typed on the first page beginning one inch from the top margin starting at the left margin. Page numbers for all pages (including the first) are typed at the right margin one-half inch from the top edge of the paper. The writer's last name precedes the page number.

Another difference is the way that long quotations are typed in the MLA style. In the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, Gibaldi provides these guides for including long quotations:

If a quotation runs to more than four typed lines, set it off . . . by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin, and typing it double spaced, without adding quotation marks. A colon generally introduces a quotation displayed in this way. The parenthetical reference follows the last line of the quotation (73).

Format, Paragraph, 1-inch left indent or 2 standard tabs.

↑ 1 inch

Continue to double space the text following the quotation, indenting only the first line of each paragraph one-half inch (or one standard tab). An example of a works cited page follows. Notice the works cited page is also double-spaced and arranged in alphabetical order with the second and succeeding lines of each entry indented one standard tab.

Insert, Break, Page

Works Cited

Davidson, Samuel. Writer's Assistant. 4th ed. Trenton: Parker Hall Publishers, 1997.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 4th ed. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1995.

Harcourt, Jules, A. C. "Buddy" Krizan, and Patricia Merrier. *Business Communication*. 3rd ed. Cincinnati: South-Western Educational Publishing, 1996.

Alphabetical by author's last name or first piece of available information.

[]: **Brackets** are used in cited material when a verb needs to change in tense or a phrase needs clarification. (See example in the first paragraph of this sample paper.)

... : An **ellipsis** is used to indicate that some material has been taken out. (See indented material in the third paragraph of this sample paper.)

Parenthetical Referencing

In writing any paper that requires you to find information from another source—**PRINT OR ONLINE**—you must give credit to that source. Anything that you borrow—a word, a phrase, a sentence or an idea—must be cited. The most practical way to document sources is to insert a parenthetical citation, a brief acknowledgement in parentheses, into the text whenever you use another’s words or information.

WORK WITH NO AUTHOR

List the article’s title and page number, if available, in parentheses.

Example According to a recent article in *Time*, prisons in America are no longer institutions where a criminal can be rehabilitated (“Choosing the Death Penalty”).

When title is long (“Texas Pushes Nation’s Executions to Record Numbers in 1997, but Opposition Grows”), a shortened version is used in the parenthetical reference.

Example Attitudes in Texas have historically varied regarding the death penalty (“Texas Pushes Nation’s”).

ONE AUTHOR

List the author and/or page numbers in parentheses.

With author in text

Include the name of the author in the borrowed sentence. In this example, the information comes from p. 115 of a book by Robert H. Loeb.

Example Loeb concludes that capital punishment has been applied to “a few outcast pariah” (115).

*Use a colon to introduce a direct quote of more than four typed lines. Set off the quote from the text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin. **Do not add quotation marks.** Place the final period before the parenthetical reference.*

Example As stated in a *Beacon News* article written by Bill McAllister:
Gathered by the concrete remains of the Murrah Federal Building, survivors of the explosion that killed 168 people two years ago erupted into a lusty cheer Friday afternoon as word of the death sentence was relayed from a Denver courtroom. Some of the survivors and their families unfurled an American flag that had flown over the Murrah site the day McVeigh’s trial began and burst in to a chorus of *God Bless America*. (A5)

Without author in text

To display a direct quotation of four typed lines or less, include the author’s name and page number in parenthetical reference.

Example “Criminals such as Lee Harvey Oswald and James Earl Ray have done more than inflict an injury on an isolated individual; they have violated the foundations of trust and friendship” (Loeb 71).

TWO OR THREE AUTHORS

Give the last names of every author in the same order as they appear on the title page of the book.

Example Today capital punishment in the United States pertains only to the crime of murder (Hook and Kahn).

TWO OR MORE WORKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Place the author's name, title of article, and page number, if available, in parentheses. Or, include the author's name and title of article in the text with the page number in parentheses.

With author in text

Example In response to critics that use the argument that capital punishment deters crime, statistics show that traits developed during adolescence are more important (Zimring, "Capital Punishment" 85).

Without author in text

Example In *The Death Trap*, Zimring concludes that the death penalty as a deterrent for crime cannot be proven scientifically (49).

INDIRECT OR SECONDARY SOURCE *(quoting a quotation)*

Example According to Professor Kilman Shin, "I believe there is no complex pattern that indicates deterrence" (qtd. in "Risks of Crime" 44).

INTERVIEW, TELEVISION SHOW, MOVIE, VIDEO RECORDING

Include the reference in the text, not in parentheses.

Example In an interview O. J. Simpson states, "Texas as a leader of executions reflects a Western macho thing, the justice of the Marlboro man."

Example The psychological struggles of John Nash are clear in the film *A Beautiful Mind*.

ONLINE SOURCE

Include the first piece of information from the Works Cited entry. No page number is included for an online source.

Example The increasing percentage of executions has put some religious groups on the defensive ("Texas Pushes Nation's").

For further assistance with using the MLA style, refer to the MLA Website:

www.mla.org

Works Cited Guide

Works Cited:

- Use a separate page following the body of the paper.
- Arrange sources alphabetically.
- Double space.
- Include header.

BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

Author's last name. Author's first name. *Book title*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication.

One author

Loeb, Robert H. *Crime and Capital Punishment*. New York: Franklin Watts, 1996.

Two authors

Hook, Donald D., and Lothar Kahn. *In the Balance*. Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989.

Three or more authors (*et al.* means "and others.")

Coffey, Chuck, et al. *Law Without Order*. New York: Arlington House, 1984.

No author listed

The Chicago Style of Justice. 14th ed. Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1993.

More than one volume

Johnson, Edgar. *Dictionary of Law and Law Terminology*. 2 vols. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995.

Edited collection or anthology with individual authors

Bedau, Hugo Adam. "The Death Penalty in America." *The Criminal Justice System in the USA*.

Ed. Thomas Coltrain. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1991.

Edited collection or anthology with editor or compiler receiving credit

Lopate, Phyllis, ed. *The Growth of Technology*. New York: Anchor-Doubleday, 1994.

Corporate Author

Commission on the Humanities. *The Humanities in American Life*. Berkeley: U of California Press, 1980.

REFERENCE BOOKS

Author's last name, first name. "Article Title." *Title*. Edition. Year of Publication.

Signed article

Zimring, Franklin E. "Global Warming." *The World Book Encyclopedia*. 1997 ed.

Unsigned article

"Mandarin." *The Encyclopedia Americana*. 1993 ed.

Less familiar reference (includes editor)

"Oil Spills." *This Fabulous Century: Winds of Change 1960-1970*. Ed. Thomas H.

Flaherty. Alexandria, VA: The Time Inc. Book Company, 1970.

Dictionary

"Friction." *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. 10th ed. 1993.

Almanac (and other non-alphabetically arranged sources include volume and page numbers)
"Disasters." *The World Almanac and Book of Facts*. 1996 ed. 264-273.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES

Author's last name, first name. "Title of Article." *Magazine Title* Day Month Year: Page Numbers.

Hints: Abbreviate all months except May, June and July.
If the article is not on consecutive pages, write the number of the first page and a (+) sign.

Signed article - monthly publication

Nabokov, Vladimir. "A Forgotten Man." *The Atlantic Monthly* Oct., 1984: 60-65.

Unsigned article - weekly publication

"Risks of Crime." *Time* 2 Feb. 1980: 43+.

NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Author's last name, First name. "Title of Article." *Newspaper Name* Day Month Year, section:
page.

Signed article

Brody, Jane. "Multiple Births on Increase." *Chicago Tribune* 10 Oct. 1994: 1:13.

Editorial

"Life of a Writer." Editorial. *New York Times* 11 June 1995, late ed.: A12.

Newspaper insert (published nationally)

Randall, Michael. "Family Is What You Make It." *Parade Magazine* 12 May 1996: 9-10.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW

Name of person interviewed. Personal interview. Date of interview.

Smith, Homer. Personal interview. 7 June 1996.

TELEVISION OR RADIO PROGRAM

"Episode Title." *Program Title*. Network name. Day Month Year.

"Frankenstein: The Making of the Monster." *Great Books*. Learning Channel. 8 Sept. 1993.

"Yes . . . But Is It Fair?" Narr. Morley Safer. *Sixty Minutes*. CBS. WCBS, New York. 19 Sept. 1994.

FILM OR VIDEO RECORDING

Title. Director. Distributor. Year of Release.

It's a Wonderful Life. Dir. Frank Capra. RKO, 1946.

Antarctica. Prod. Nightline. DVD. ABC Video, 2008.

ONLINE SOURCES

Author's last name, first name. "Title of article or document." *Name of periodical* Date of publication.

Name of online institution/organization OR database and version number. Date of access.

<Electronic address, or URL>.

If certain items are not available, simply skip those and go to the next. All internet citations must contain these three items for sources to be considered valid:

"Title." Date of access. <URL>.

Frum, David. "The Truth About the Chair." *Weekly Standard* 19 Jan. 1993. *SIRS Researcher on the Web*. 30 May 2008. <http://researcher.sirs.com/cgi-bin/res-article_display?8CR104A>.

"Texas Pushes Nation's Executions to Record Numbers in 1997, but Opposition Grows." *The Death Penalty in 1997: Year End Report* Dec. 1997. *Death Penalty Information Center*. 28 May 1998. <<http://www.essential.org/dpic/yrendrpt.html>>.

"Zeus: King of the Olympians." 7 March 2006. <<http://mythman.com>>.

EVALUATING ONLINE SOURCES

Information taken from online sources must be verifiable. When using information from the internet, you must be concerned with the accuracy, reputation, and currency of the source.

The most reliable sources contain the following domain abbreviations:

- .edu = education (usually a college or university)
- .gov = government
- .mil = military

The following domain abbreviations may be biased because they are created by companies or organizations:

- .com = commercial
- .org = organization
- .net = network

The ~ (tilde) is a signal for a personal website. Be very wary of it. Personal websites often contain more opinions than fact.

**For further assistance with using the MLA style,
refer to one of the following websites:**

www.noodletools.com

www.mla.org

www.rapidcite.com