

Sue Beck

Professor Louden

ENGL 1301.4

22 October 2027 (use due date, not the date you start the paper)

Sample MLA Paper

A standard format, which can be adapted to almost any writing assignment by increasing the body paragraphs is to start with the standard 5-paragraph essay that includes an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. The introductory paragraph should give a brief explanation of the topic. Typically, a strong thesis statement is the last sentence of the introduction. The thesis statement is the goal of the paper contained in one sentence and should list the reasons, ideas, or opinions on the topic that will be discussed in the body of the paper. Here is a sample thesis statement: School uniforms should be mandatory in public schools because they identify the student body on campus, cut down on peer pressure and discipline problems between students, and are more cost effective for parents. At least three body paragraphs will follow, with each item listed in the thesis presented in a topic sentence, followed by support for the idea. When you use source information, you should include a parenthetical citation, even if you are paraphrasing rather than directly quoting (Jones 123).

After your introductory paragraph, you will move into your first body paragraph. Each paragraph should have a topic sentence that unifies the paragraph, followed by other sentences that offer evidence or support of the claim you're making. A sample topic sentence might look like this: School uniforms should be mandatory in public schools because they help to identify the students and prevent unauthorized visitors. This could be called the school officials' paragraph. If you were incorporating a source here, you may introduce by starting like this:

According to Lee et al., “A source quote would appear here followed by the page number in parentheses like this” (146). Continue on with quotes, examples, etc. The main points of each paragraph should be your own, as the paper is yours. You are using sources to back up what **you** have to say. Be sure to cite direct quotes, as well as summaries and paraphrases. Use sources wisely; don’t just drop in source material to meet the “count.”

The second body paragraph takes another point of the thesis and builds on that. For example, you may choose to write something like this: School uniforms should also be required because they cut down on student disputes over clothing or gang-related apparel. Many teens feel the peer pressure to dress a certain way or be identified with a certain group, and this can lead to problems in the classroom. This could be called the students’ paragraph. Again, use statistics, facts, quotes, opinions, and similar information taken from approved sources.

The third body paragraph uses the last point of the thesis statement: School uniforms can be cost effective for parents. You could actually provide cost comparisons here and call this the parents’ paragraph.

The conclusion restates the thesis and wraps up all of my information. This paragraph will closely resemble the introductory paragraph and not introduce any new ideas or support. An example of the topic sentence of the conclusion might look like this: When considering the issue of school uniforms in public schools, it is important to note the effects on school officials, students, and parents. Then a sentence on each point could be used to sum up the points made.

After the paper is written, allow time to go back and check for grammar and punctuation errors. Make sure the paper stays on topic and addresses only the items set forth in the introduction and stated in the thesis.

If the paper contains research material, the last page will be the Works Cited list of all sources used in the paper at least once.

Works Cited

Jones, Becky, and Hal Rogers. *Terror in the Hallways*. CenGage, 2014. (book with 2 authors)

(do not list this – this is just for identification)

Lee, Edward, et al. "Getting the Best Education Today." *Reading Guidelines*. 2017,

www.educationtoday/bestsources/56?445. (chapter in online book/more than 2 authors)

Smith, Leon. "Student Discipline and Uniforms." *Education Today*, vol. 23, no. 5, May 2017,

pp. 44-49. (Article in a journal)

"Times are Changing." *Modern Educators*, 23 November 2016, [www.moderned.org/](http://www.moderned.org/uniforms/timesarechanging/23/11/)

[uniforms/timesarechanging/23/11/](http://www.moderned.org/uniforms/timesarechanging/23/11/). (Online website)

- Citations are listed in alphabetical order, not how they appear in the paper.
- The bottom line of the citation is indented. This is done by placing the cursor at the end of the first line and hitting the "Enter" key. Then hit "Tab" one time to indent the second line.
- Check the *MLA Handbook*, 9th edition, for further help in documenting sources.
- The Tutoring Center in JH 106 can help. Check the website for times and tutor availability.