Papers in MLA Format: Some Suggestions
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MLA format is typically used in formal English papers.

1. **The Title:**

   Every paper should have a title page consisting of just the title and your header alone. The title should be centered, and use the same font and size of the paper itself, exceptions can be made by the professor. It SHOULD NOT BE **bolded**, underlined, *italicized*, or IN ALL CAPS. The first letter of the first, last and any words in between should be capitalized. You do not capitalize articles (the, a, an etc.), prepositions (below, above, near etc), or conjunctions (so, for, but, yet etc) unless they are the first word in your title. The title should reflect your thesis statement paraphrased into two to three words. Since it should reflect your thesis statement, you should save your title until after you have written and revised your essay. Good titles are also catchy and creative, so if you have one in mind as you write, go ahead and *pencil it in*.

2. **The Header:**

   Often, you will also be asked to include a header above your title on the first page. Your heading be aligned with the left margin of your paper. It should look like this and include:
   
   - Full Name
   - Course
   - Instructor
   - Due Date

3. **Introduction Paragraph:**

   Every paper should have of a strong introduction. An introduction does exactly what it says; it introduces the reader to the topic of the paper. It persuades your reader to continue reading the remainder of your paper. Good introductions begin with an audience “grabber,” a statement or story that hooks the reader into the contents of the paper. Following this “grabber,” you may want to give a bit of background information on what you are going to be discussing, i.e. if you are discussing a book, give a brief plot summary.

4. **Thesis Statement**

   Thesis statements are always the last sentence (or couple of sentences) in the introduction paragraph. They go at the end because they lead readers into the remainder of the paper by articulating your purpose for writing. A thesis statement is imperative for every paper.
How to come up with a thesis statement using the TOW method:

1. **T**: Decide your topic (whether you are given it by a professor, or you come up with it on your own) and state it.
2. **O**: Write your opinion about the topic.
3. **W**: Write 5-8 reasons why your opinion is true.

Example of the organization of a thesis statement:

1. **Topic**: Nuclear Power
2. **Opinion**: Should not be used.
3. **Why** (it should not be used):
   a. It is potentially dangerous
   b. It is more expensive than other alternatives.
   c. It causes water, land, and air pollution.

Now, to write your thesis statement out, you simply add A+B+C together to get: *Nuclear power should not be used because it is potentially dangerous, it is more expensive than other alternate power sources, and because it creates water, land, and air pollution.*

Keep in mind that your thesis is not set in stone, it is fluid. Sometimes, as you write and do your research, you may tend to move in a different direction than you originally intended. This is not a bad thing. Theses can be changed, so if you veer away from your original thesis, just change it to fit what you have written, but make sure your new thesis reflects the direction you have taken in your paper.

5. **Body Paragraphs**

Once you finish your introduction and create a thesis, it is time to move onto your body paragraphs. These paragraphs develop the points you made in your thesis statement by expanding on them and adding support. The body of an essay is like the body of a person, it holds all of the important organs. But just as the paper itself has an introduction, body and a conclusion, so does each body paragraph. Each body paragraph should begin with a topic sentence. The topic sentence of the paragraph acts as its introduction. It is the main idea of the paragraph, providing support for the thesis, unifying the content of the paragraph, and providing direction for the rest of the paragraph. It also gives the reader the gist of what this paragraph is going to discuss. Topic sentences are the first sentence in each paragraph and lead the reader into the content of the paragraph. After the topic sentence is created, the next phase of a paragraph is “its” body. The main point of this idea is supported through details, examples, analysis, facts and quotations. This is the body of the paragraph. It explains the topic sentence and reinforces it throughout the paragraph. These supports are generally 5-8 sentences long. The conclusion of each paragraph should be the linkage between this paragraph to the next.
Paragraph Construction:
1. Introduction: Topic Sentence
2. Body: follows the introduction and discusses the main idea of the sentence using facts, examples, analysis, quotations, and any other information.
3. Conclusion: usually consists of a summation of the paragraph's main point, and links the paragraph to the following one.

6. Conclusion Paragraph:
The conclusion paragraph, like the introduction, is exactly what it says; it concludes the entire paper in one paragraph. Here you should not introduce any new supporting information. Instead you should restate the previous information. However, you can 1) return to what you discussed in your introduction and 2) introduce new information as a means of concretizing what you have been talking about in your essay (such as an example illustrating the significance of the argument you have just outlined or future/additional applications of it, a call for more research, etc.) Often you will find that your first attempt at writing a conclusion is actually a great introduction paragraph. Try it out! The conclusion is basically the introduction paragraph restated in different words, but make sure that you phrase it differently and do not use the same words.

All information was adopted from the following websites:

http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/pamphlets/paragraphs.shtml
http://www.ccsn.nevada.edu/english/frmt.htm
http://www.sheboyganfalls.k12.wi.us/staff/dehogue/FSSH/parag.htm