

# Basic Style Guide for Written Work

Colleges and businesses expect you to be able to read and follow a style manual. The accepted style manual for Mesquite ISD is the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. I've condensed some of the most frequently-needed rules here. Keep this sheet and to refer to it for each essay you write; points are subtracted if your format is sloppy and hard to read.

## General Writing Formatting Rules

- The introduction to a literary paper should contain a **TAG**: Title, Author, Genre.
- Use **PRESENT TENSE** for all verbs when writing about literature. *Literary works exist in the present.*
- Be careful about using First Person: *we* and *us* are usually fine; *I* and *me* are NOT fine.
- **NEVER EVER USE SECOND PERSON** (you, your) in a paper about literature.
- Use MLA format for citations. If you're unsure about this, ASK.

## Paper Formatting Rules

**For Typed Work** *All "Final Copies" must be typed.*

- Place a standard **heading** in the **UPPER LEFT HAND CORNER** of the page.
- Typed papers will have titles. *"Final Copy" is **not** a title.*
- **The title of your essay is in the same font and size as the body copy.** It is not italicized, underlined, boldfaced, or in a bizarre jumbo font.
- Triple space between the title and the body of the paper. (That means that there are **only** 3 blank lines, not 6 or 10.)
- Please do not skip lines between paragraphs (unless you are writing a letter.) If you need help with this, ASK.
- **If you type it, YOU MUST DOUBLE SPACE IT.** *No single spaced papers will be accepted.*
- **DO NOT USE A DECORATIVE FONT.** Times or Arial in 12 point is appropriate. I will not accept a decorative font.

**For Handwritten Papers** (like Timed Writings)

- Use only STANDARD blue or black ink. (*Not pencil or pink or green.*)
- Place a standard **heading** in the **UPPER LEFT HAND CORNER** of the page.
- After the title line, leave **one** blank line. Do not leave more than one blank line.
- Write only on one side of the paper.
- Do not underline the title of your paper or put it in quotation marks.

❖ These titles are **UNDERLINED**  
or *Italicized (if typed)*

### Novels

Long epic or dramatic poems  
Magazine names  
Newspaper names  
Movie titles  
TV Show names

These titles are in "**Quotation Marks**"

Short Story titles

**Poem titles**

Chapter titles

Newspaper article titles

Magazine article titles

Titles of individual TV show episodes

- **The general rule of thumb is this:** If the item would be published alone, by itself, with its own name on the spine – then we underline it (or *italicize* it if it's typed.) If it's something we would find INSIDE another work, but it would not stand alone by itself on the shelf, then it goes in "quotation marks".

*Turn this paper over for more exciting information.*

**READ THIS. IT IS VERY, VERY IMPORTANT:**

**I DO NOT PRINT PAPERS FOR STUDENTS.**

**BE SURE YOUR PRINTER WORKS AND HAS INK BEFORE THE PAPER IS DUE.** "My printer ran out of ink" or "My printer's messed up" will not be accepted as excuses for not having the paper. The computer lab is open at 7:45. I will provide passes, but do not ask to go during your class period. Do not e-mail a paper to me; it will do no good. Major essays are due by 4:00; this gives you time to get it printed at school.

**CHECK-OFF SHEET**

Finally, please be absolutely certain that you see me check your name off on the roll sheet. This is for your protection. **Major Essays count on your test average. That means that they are 40% of your six weeks grade.** You cannot skip a major essay and still pass the class. It's mathematically impossible.

Susie Student

English 4-3A

November 15, 2015

**This is an example of pretty much every format rule discussed in this sheet. Note spacing, verb tense, italics, and citation format.**

*Lord of the Flies: A Study in Basic Human Cruelty*

"The shape of society must depend on the ethical nature of the individual and not on any political system however apparently logical or respectable" (William Golding, qtd. in Epstein 189). Humans are political animals. Throughout recorded history and continuing even today, humankind continues to search for the perfect governmental structure which will secure basic rights for each individual. No matter how perfect a political system is, however, there are individuals who, because of their rebellious nature, simply refuse to conform to the rules that a government sets down for its governed. When this happens, it causes destruction, chaos, and even terror. Many people frequently cannot (or will not) see that such an individual exists or even that the individual could be himself. When the realization is finally made, it is often too late. Such is the case in *Lord of the Flies*, where author William Golding shows, through the character of Jack that humans do have a rebellious, savage nature which eventually leads to their downfall.

For the castaways in Golding's novel, things do not begin easily. A form of government is set up with Ralph as the leader, chosen over Jack's protests. They soon split into two groups: the first, according to Frederick Karl, are "the hunters, with Jack as their leader, are the doers" (249). The second group are the "firekeepers, or thinkers" (Karl 249). But Jack is not satisfied. He wants to control everything, and within a short time, the rule of reason is overthrown and the survivors regress to savagery (Baker 4).