MLA Formatting Without Tears

An essay or research paper is a highly structured form of written communication that should convey the writer’s ideas in a clear, concise, and effective manner (Gibaldi 4). The structure of a traditional essay contains three major parts. Part one, the opening paragraph, introduces the topic and contains the thesis statement. Part two is the body or “heart of the essay” and serves to develop or “prove” the thesis statement (Sebranek 55). Lastly, the third part contains a summary or closing paragraph, which is followed on a separate page by a works cited list (58).

The opening paragraph should attempt to gain the attention of the reader and allow for a smooth transition into the body of the essay. The introduction sets the tone of the essay by expressing the writer’s attitude toward the subject of the paper. The tone may be serious, sarcastic, solemn, objective, etc. (Sebranek 61). One common technique is to develop the opening paragraph by starting with an attention-getting or unusual fact (57).

After developing an interesting introduction, the paragraph should briefly mention the supporting details that you will develop to prove your thesis and then end with the thesis statement itself (“Online”). Your paper will benefit by beginning new paragraphs or sections with connecting words and phrases such as: in addition, likewise, accordingly, in contrast, and in other words (Gibaldi 8).

Finally, make sure your closing paragraph reiterates your thesis and supporting points. You will want to reword this paragraph somewhat to avoid sounding repetitive or disinterested (Sebranek 72).
Works Cited


*The color(s) used in this print out are for illustrating citation format and are not standard MLA format.*

## Yellow highlight indicates page(s) where the information was found.