

Paragraphing: A Basic Guide (structure not style)

The **introduction** to a paper is the first paragraph your reader sees and this paragraph needs to do three basic things: 1. Hook your reader. 2. Introduce the text and author, topic, or subject matter and 3. Lay out your thesis

Your paper should be interesting, convincing and have a strong voice and we will work on the different ways in which a writer can do this. This is just a handout to remind you of the bare bones structure and be used as a guide.

An **evidence paragraph** should typically not start or end with a quote. Your paragraph, your words, should surround the evidence.

- Start the paragraph by introducing the idea or moment you are discussing and give your reader a little bit of context so that s/he can follow your thinking as you move into the piece of evidence. [This should never be a lengthy summary]
- When you quote, you need to be using MLA citation [refer to handout]. Also, introduce who is speaking. The speaker says or the poet writes, for example.
- After the evidence, you need to spend a good deal of time analyzing it. You have to be the eyes and mind for your reader. If you don't say it, they won't think it. Point out the important words, discuss multiple possible interpretations, ask questions.
- Transition/conclude the idea you want to leave your reader with before s/he moves on to your next exciting paragraph.

The **conclusion** is another powerful paragraph that as the last paragraph your reader will see, needs to be clear, succinct and make the importance or relevance of your thesis impactful. The order of a conclusion is the reverse of an introduction: You start by reminding your reader of your thesis, you summarize your key/major points and then you move into a larger discussion about why this thesis is important, why your reader should ultimately care. How does this thesis connect to larger issues in the world? What can your paper teach us? Do not end your conclusion with a question or with a catchy phrase. Think on paper for your reader, do the work to draw out the conclusions you want your reader to have!

Quoting Evidence in MLA format

Once you have your research notes organized and an outline created, you are ready to write. The concrete details that make up your supporting evidence can be presented in one of several ways under MLA format:

- **Direct quote**-This is a quote where the exact words are used from a source. You must introduce the quote as you see below.

Lamott says, "For me and most of the other writers I know, writing is not rapturous" (1).

The quote must be introduced (Lamott says or another version of this) and end with the citation. The quote should not be longer than 2-3 typed sentences within the space of your paper. You can paraphrase and introduce more about what the writer is saying in this moment *before* using the evidence AND you will discuss it more in your analysis *after* you quote it.

- **Indirect quote**-This is a quote that summarizes or paraphrases an author's original work. YOU MUST STILL USE PAGE NUMBERS OR IT IS PLAGIARISM.

In "Shitty First Drafts," Lamott discusses how writers typically do not love the process of writing; it is difficult (1).

- **Block quote**-This is a quote that consists of four or more lines of text and is indented. You don't need quotation marks. DO NOT USE THIS FORM UNLESS YOU ARE GOING TO SPEND TIME ANALYZING AND DISCUSSING EVERYTHING YOU'VE QUOTED. If the quote is BIG, your analysis should also be BIG.

How2: Single space the quote and indent it using one tab to the right. You don't need quotation marks because you are using this format which tells the reader it is a quote. The period and page number also come in a different order than the typical MLA citation.

In her essay, Lamott says:

People tend to look at successful writers who are getting their books published and maybe even doing well financially and think that they sit down at their desks every morning feeling like a million dollars, feeling great about who they are and how much talent they have and what a great story they have to tell. (1)

What Lamott is saying is that...This is important because...

- **Quotes from poetry, drama or prose**-These quotes use line numbers rather than page numbers and you must show the line breaks using a / between the lines. See the example below.

In Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven," the narrator hears a tapping at his door. He exclaims, "While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping, / As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door" (3-4).

If you are quoting four or more lines, please represent the evidence as it looks in the poem using block quote rules. You need to indent the evidence and single space it.

The narrator exclaims:

While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
'Tis some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping at my chamber door -
Only this, and nothing more' (3-6).

What is happening here is....

MLA Titles

Titles of book chapters, essays, poems, short story titles all go in quotation marks. "Creative DNA," "Digging."

Titles of books or websites or journals go in Italics: *New York Times*, *Creative Habit*, *The Hobbit*, etc

