Essays submitted to your professors should be written according to a standard format: font, spacing, margins, headings, and page numbering are prescribed. The sample below illustrates these different features of an academic essay written according to MLA documentation style. For more information, consult a college-level handbook such as The Everyday Writer, a reference of standard grammar and usage recommended by the English Department and the Integrative Studies Program, or visit the Otterbein University Writing Center, 2nd floor, Library. The Writing Center posts hours each term. Watch for our schedule.

Sample First Page

Your Name

Professor ___
FYS 1000
18 August 2013

Your Title

Academic writing follows certain conventions. The font, spacing, margins, and placement of headings and page numbers you select affect the appearance of your essay, which should be consistent from page to page and from paper to paper, and which should be appropriate to the assignment. Established rules dictate these matters of form to help make your essay not only clear and readable but also professional.

Some rules apply to type font, spacing, and indenting. A standard font is the one used here, Garamond, and the font size is usually 12 pt. Margins should be one inch at the top, bottom, left, and right of each page. Essays should be double-spaced. When you begin a new paragraph, tab, or indent the first word five spaces.

A major concern in an analytical essay is how to incorporate and cite quotations in your writing. Carefully selected quotations demonstrate your knowledge of the text. For instance, you might write that in Little Princes, Grennan describes his first encounter with the children of the Little Princes Children’s Home:

“Before I could utter a word I was set upon—charged at, leaped on, overrun—by a herd of laughing kids, like bulls in Pamplona” (Grennan 17). A few words from a quotation may be enough to illustrate your idea. You may want to use a longer quotation occasionally, but try not to overload your essay with quotations. Your ideas and analysis are most important; quotations are evidence. Be sure to document your source.

Work Cited