



Sample MLA Paper

Last Name 1

Student Name

Professor Name

Class Name

5 December 2016¹

Mindfulness: A Guide in the Writing Process²

I have been a yoga practitioner since I graduated from high school and graduated from dance. Knowing that I was never going to be in Julliard's production of *The Nutcracker*³, I gracefully entered a new phase in my life: yoga. Yoga did the same things to my body as dance did—it stretched me, strengthened me and allowed me to transcend my body from pedestrian to something that felt beyond human. But, yoga accomplishes something that dance never could; yoga taught me how to breathe. Sounds silly, right? Why would a person need to learn how to breathe?⁴ Our breath gives us life and by learning how to control our breath, we can become in better control of our lives.

¹ Always have your last name and page number at the top-right corner of the paper. You can do this by clicking "Insert" and then clicking "Header". A box should drop down with templates for headers—click one that's right-aligned and be sure to change the font to match the rest of your paper. MLA does not have a title page—your name, instructor, class and date should be listed left-aligned before the start of your paper. That information should be double-spaced and appear as written above.

² Your title should be center-aligned and should never be in bold, italics or quotations marks unless there is a phrase in your title that should be italicized or quoted. For example, if you were writing an analysis on a novel, then it would make sense to include the novel's title in your title which would make it appropriate to use italics for novel's title.

³ *The Nutcracker* is in italics because it is a ballet performance. Anything performed on a stage (i.e. musicals, plays, ballets) are considered longer works and should be italicized.

⁴ Be wary of rhetorical questions. Sometimes they are great way to engage your audience, but you should never end a paragraph, much less an entire paper, with a rhetorical question because it feels cheap. Avoid bombarding your audience with empty rhetorical questions that don't really add much meaning to your paper especially if you are writing a persuasive paper.



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The other love of my life is writing. Having two lovers can create a complicated matter for most people, but I am lucky because yoga and writing get along extremely well. In fact, sometimes I feel like the odd-man-out when the three of us get together because yoga and writing collaborate in unison to create something that I am no longer in control of. My breath becomes a vessel to my writing and, symbiotically, my writing cannot develop without my breath. Writing and breathing are so interconnected and many writers do not realize this; that the breath plays an important role in the writing process.⁵ Laraine Herring explains in *Writing Begins with the Breath*⁶, “Each inhale is a new beginning, a clean slate. At the start of a writing project, we have this same clean slate. The possibilities for what we can accomplish are truly limitless” (Herring 13).⁷ Each breath in is a new opportunity for a writer to transcribe their thoughts. Writing can be really frustrating because we have so much circulating through our heads, but focusing on breathing can help to tame these thoughts.⁸

Incorporating breathing and meditation into the writing process is typically referred to as “mindfulness”. This is a new and upcoming term in many writing instructors’ vocabulary as these techniques become increasingly popular. “[Yoga] testifies to the power of contemplative

⁵ This is the thesis of the paper. The thesis should appear in the first paragraph or second. You should try to write the thesis as early in the paper as possible, but since my first paragraph was a personal story, the thesis wouldn’t fit in it. In the second paragraph, I began to delve into the actual subject of the paper where it would be a more appropriate place for the thesis.

⁶ The titles of the works you cite in your paper will be listed in your works cited, so don’t feel like you need to list them in the body, however, it’s okay to mention titles in MLA. Also, all of my titles are italicized because I am pulling information from books. Long works (i.e. a book): italics or underline. Short works (i.e. a poem): quotation marks.

⁷ MLA citations consist of the author and the page number with nothing else in the parentheticals. (Author #)

⁸ Always explain a quote and never end a paragraph on a quote.



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acts to bring about metacognitive awareness of the writing process” writes Christy I. Wenger as she describes the impact mindfulness has on her writing students in *Yoga Minds, Writing Bodies: Contemplative Writing Pedagogy* (Wenger 123). When we meditate, we begin to realize subconscious thoughts and ideas that we typically would not be able to detect within ourselves while occupied in a daily task during our hectic lives. Meditation gives a person the chance to dig deeper within oneself to discover what really makes us tick. “Writing yogis, who are situated, connected knowers, integrate personal knowledge with knowledge from others and weave together reason and emotion...as a way to generation reflection and analysis” (Wenger 99).⁹ Allowing time for reflection and contemplation in your life is exactly what meditation is and this can take on a variety of forms for each person. Meditation does not necessarily create knowledge within a person, but realizes it. The amount of emotion and wisdom innate in the human species is oftentimes indescribable, but meditation can help in putting these internalities into words on paper. When I meditate, I can be anywhere; I have mediated in classes, in the car, at parties, but my favorite place to meditate is in my bed because that is where I am the most comfortable and least self-conscious. Meditation keeps from getting ahead of myself and it also prevents me from cutting myself down; it keeps me grounded by reminding me exactly of who I am and what my place is in the world.

The mind and body are so linked together that it would not be a stretch to say that they are dependent on one another. Anything but separate entities, the mind and the body work together to create a full person. Many people think writing is merely the mind at work, but the body is present during this process, too. Without a body, we would not be able to transcribe the

⁹ The reason there are ellipses in this quotation is because it was a little long. Sometimes, when you only want to pick out a few key phrases from a long quote, you can use ellipses in lieu of the parts you are dropping while maintaining the integrity of the quote. Make sure the quote still makes sense if you do this.



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things going on in our minds which is why it is important to treat your body with respect when writing. Many writers use computers these days and so it is important that we look away from the screen every ten to fifteen minutes. It is also recommended to stand up and move your body around incrementally while writing to keep the blood flowing throughout the body which, in turn, will keep the mind energized and full of ideas. Practicing yoga poses while writing can greatly improve the writing process because the exertion of the body will unlock parts of the mind. I am a runner and I, and many other runners, agree that running helps us “clear our minds”. Yoga postures embody this same concept, but on a deeper level because the different contortions of the body fuel different components of the mind. Mark Johnson discusses in *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding* the “embodiment view” and how this mode thinking says that language and thought, mental processes, cannot exist without appearances, the physical world (Johnson 113).¹⁰ In yoga, we learn that everything in the world is interconnected and that everything and everyone plays a role in a larger system. This knowledge is helpful in writing because it reminds the writer that everything they write is in conversation with other writers who are also trying to unearth similar ideas.

Practicing yoga and meditation has made me a more self-aware and world-aware writer. In a writing class, the first thing the instructor will teach the students is how imperative awareness is in writing. A writer must be aware of her audience, her purpose, her exigency and more. If you do not have a basic understanding of these few rhetorical situations, then I promise you that you will have a very tough time writing your piece. Yoga and meditation can help a

¹⁰ Paraphrases must be cited as a quotation would be.



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writer discover the truths in what she is writing about leading her to a full understanding of her topic along with every small detail that materializes on the way.¹¹

¹¹ A strong conclusion should basically recap what the entire paper was about and should also restate the thesis is more or less the same words.



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Works Cited

- Herring, Laraine. *Writing Begins with the Breath: Embodying Your Authentic Voice*. Boston, Shambhala Publications, Inc, 2007, p. 13.
- Johnson, Mark. *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 2007, p. 113.
- Wenger, Christy I. *Yoga Minds, Writing Bodies: Contemplative Writing Pedagogy*. Fort Collins: The WAC Clearinghouse; Anderson: Parlor Press, 2015, pp. 99-123.