



**THE Art Institute of Vancouver  
STYLE GUIDE  
September 2007**

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## **Preface**

The short answer to the question "What is a style sheet?" is that a style sheet helps a writer communicate correctly, clearly, and accurately. Style sheets act as a resource for grammar, spelling, and citation methods.

This simple style sheet is intended for the use of students, staff, and faculty at The Art Institute of Vancouver. This resource is intended to help Ai students learn the basic elements of style, including information not normally found in style sheets, such as how to present written class assignments. Students are expected to use this style sheet in all courses to ensure that their written work is completed and presented properly.

In higher education, students **MUST** use correct style in formal presentations. If they fail to use correct style, they either lose marks or may not have their assignments marked. You should expect to receive similar penalties from your instructor if you fail to use the elements of the style described in this style sheet. As with university or academic setting, Ai students are expected to use correct style.

## **Why Write**

We write for many reasons in life. Most of us write on a day-to-day basis on msn, leaving notes for family or friends, writing reminders, and so on. Within an academic environment, such as The Art Institute of Vancouver, writing becomes more focused. The writing assignments you receive here at Ai will ask you to explain your ideas on a topic in a clear and logical manner, develop your critical thinking skills, develop your writing skills, and learn more about your topic. These writing assignments are very relevant to your future careers. Regardless of your current program, you will need to know how to write clearly and effectively in your chosen professions and future careers. You will have to write presentations, business plans, project proposals, instructions, advertisements, resumes, or letters to your employer or colleagues within the field. If you are unable to communicate effectively through writing, you limit the success that you can achieve.

<b>Section</b>	<b>Contents</b>
<b>General:</b>	Outlines the basic, day-to-day requirements concerning <i>all</i> written work, formal and informal. Every student must follow these directions.
<b>Language Skills:</b>	Deals with common errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
<b>Research and Documentation:</b>	Discusses how to acknowledge sources of information used in assignments properly.

**General:**

1. Write your full first and last name whenever you write your name.
2. Date all your work, whether formal or informal.
3. All written work, such as answers to questions, must be written in complete sentences.
4. Only blue or black ink can be used for any formal work – work presented to the instructor, whether typed or handwritten. Formal work includes written assignments and tests/examinations.
5. All written work must be clearly identified.
  - a. Written assignments of more than one page are to have a cover page. The cover page will include your full name, the name of the course, your instructor's name, and the date the assignment is due. Staple the pages together in the top left hand corner.
  - b. Written assignments of only one page must include your full name, the name of the course, your instructor's name, and the date the assignment is due in the top left hand corner.
6. There will be no “crossed-out” words in a formal written assignment.
7. All formal work (work that is to be handed in) is to be double-spaced (except the Works Cited section) and typed/written on one side of the paper only.
8. Acknowledgement of sources of information in written assignments will follow with the directions provided in the Documentation section of this style sheet.

## Style

Please use these formatting guidelines for writing assignments.

1. Use 12 point Arial or Times New Roman font and one (1) inch margins on all sides of the page.
2. Double-space all work except the Works Cited section of your assignment.
3. Works Cited/Bibliography use 12 point Arial or Times New Roman font with hanging indent.
4. Leave two (2) lines between paragraphs.
5. Indent each new paragraph.
6. Format your writing assignment in accordance with Modern Language Association (MLA) style.
7. MLA uses double quote marks. Periods and commas go inside the quote marks, unless you cite a page number, in which case the period or comma follows the page reference. Put colons and semi-colons outside quote marks.
8. When you introduce a source, write the name of the author and the title of the work into your text and then give the page reference in parentheses ( ) at the end of the sentence or paragraph.
  - a. E.g. According to Alan Gershenfeld's book *Game Plan* "producers are given a certain amount of discretionary dollars to develop a demo" (96).
9. Always work quotations into the flow of your sentence. In other words, quoted material will never stand on its own as a sentence. See # 8 above.
10. When you introduce an author, give his/her full name; subsequently, refer to him/her by surname only.
11. Do not use block quotes (quotes of forty words or more). Instead, excerpt the principle ideas from a source and present these ideas in your own words while acknowledging their rightful owner. Selectively quote key terms and crucial assertions.
12. Strive for simple yet accurate language. Avoid pretentious constructions such as "a whole multiplicity of," which means "many."
13. Use only the most common, acceptable abbreviations, such as Inc., Mr., and St. or generic acronyms such as NFL, CEO, or NATO. When in doubt, spell it out

## Language Skills

### Parts of Speech

Clear communication requires you accurately recognise and identify the different types of words in English, so that you can understand grammar explanations and use the right word form in the right place. Here is a brief explanation of the different parts of speech:

- Noun** A noun is a naming word. It names a person, place, thing, idea, living creature, quality, or action. Examples: cowboy, theatre, box, thought, tree, kindness, arrival
- Verb** A verb is a word that describes an action (doing something) or a state (being something). Examples: walk, talk, think, believe, live, like, want
- Adjective** An adjective is a word that describes a noun. It tells you something about the noun. Examples: big, yellow, thin, amazing, beautiful, quick, important.
- Adverb** An adverb is a word that usually describes a verb. It tells you how something is done. It may also tell you when or where something happened. Examples: slowly, intelligently, well, yesterday, tomorrow, here, everywhere.
- Pronoun** A pronoun is used instead of a noun, to avoid repeating the noun. Examples: I, you, he, she, it, we, they.
- Conjunction** A conjunction joins two words, phrases, or sentences together. Examples: but, so, and, because, or.
- Preposition** A preposition usually comes before a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase. It joins the noun to some other part of the sentence. Examples: on, in, by, with, under, through, at.
- Interjection** An interjection is an unusual kind of word, because it often stands alone. Interjections are words that express emotion or surprise, and are usually followed by exclamation marks. Examples: Ouch!, Hello!, Hurray!, Oh no!, Ha!
- Article** An article is used to introduce a noun. Examples: the, a, an

*Some common errors of which you should be aware, and of which you should not be guilty.*

1. Subject-Verb agreement A plural noun (subject) uses a plural verb. For example, “The dishes in the kitchen is dirty.” This is incorrect. The correct agreement is, “The dishes in the kitchen **are** dirty.”
2. Noun-Pronoun agreement Plural noun = plural pronoun. For example, “The expert carried the sticks of dynamite up the cliff, but it blew up when he tried to insert a blasting cap.” The correct pronoun is *they* not *it*.
3. Each pronoun should be clearly related to a noun. For example, “Six prisoners and two guards went into the dining room. They left them there.” Are the guards or the prisoners “they”, or “them”? It should not be up to the reader to guess. Think of a clearer expression.
4. There is no such word as “alot”; this expression involves two separate words – a lot. However, it is better to use terms such as “many” or “often,” and even better to be more precise. For example, which is clearer and more useful: “A lot of guys tried out for basketball?” Or “Twenty-three boys tried out for basketball.”?
5. “Would of” and “could of” do not exist in the English language. Use of these non-existent terms is probably the result of hearing the contraction of either *would have* “would’ve” or *could have* “could’ve.”
6. The term “etc.” is a contraction of the Latin word “etcetera,” which means “and so on.” “Etc.” is used only in certain circumstances, and should be avoided in informal writing. “Etc.” is utterly out of place in formal writing.
7. Do not use contractions in formal presentations. The only exception would be if you were writing a story or a poem, and decided to use an informal style. Otherwise, contractions, such as it’s, they’re, can’t, we’re, or don’t, simply are not used.
8. Never use the word “it” in your writing. “It” is too vague and weakens your message and writing. Replace the work it with the noun or verb that you are referring to. For instance:
  - a. *It* has a hard cover. (The reader has little understanding of what you are trying to communicate.)
  - b. *The book* has a hard cover. (The reader has a much clearer understanding of what you are referring to.)

## Structural Errors and Corrections

### Rule 1:

A prepositional phrase is a group of words introduced by a preposition E.g. on the road, in the cabinet, to everyone, before the intermission.

- Prepositional phrases are parts of a sentence. They should never be written as complete sentences. Add them on to the previous sentence if they fit.

### Rule 2:

You write a run-on sentence whenever you join sentences without putting a punctuation mark or a conjunction between them. E.g. The wood was damp the fire would not catch.

- Four ways to correct run-on sentences
  1. Write each as a separate sentence.  
E.g. The wood was damp. The fire would not catch.
  2. Join the sentences together using a semicolon between them.  
E.g. The wood was damp; the fire would not catch.
  3. Join the sentences together using a comma and a conjunction like AND, BUT, OR between them.  
E.g. The wood was damp, and the fire would not catch.
  4. Rewrite one of the sentences making it a subordinate clause or phrase.  
E.g. Because the wood was damp, the fire would not start. OR The wood being damp, the fire would not start.
- Watch out for run-on sentences whenever you use words like THEREFORE, HOWEVER, NEVERTHELESS, and FURTHERMORE. These words can cause problems because they need to be used as either an interrupter in the middle of the sentence, in which case you set them off with a comma.  
E.g. The wood was damp, therefore, the fire would not start.  
When you use these words as connectives, you must use a semicolon or a period and a capital between the sentences they connect.  
E.g. The wood was damp; therefore, the fire would not start. OR The wood was damp. Therefore, the fire would not start.

### Rule 3:

A sentence fragment is a group of words that does not express a complete thought.

Sentence fragments are created in three ways

1. The sentence is missing a *subject*.
  2. The sentence is missing a *verb*.
  3. The sentence is not a complete thought.
- You fix a sentence fragment by adding the missing part

E.g. *Fragment:* May your sports utility vehicle its resale value.

*Sentence:* May your sports utility vehicle hold its resale value.

- Or adding the fragment to another sentence as a subordinating clause. The subordinating conjunction is in italics.

E.g. *Fragment:* Hershey's Kisses are called that. The machine that makes them looks like it is kissing the conveyer belt.

*Sentence:* Hershey's Kisses are called that *because* the machine that makes

## Commonly Confused Words

*A lot* and *allot* – a lot = many; allot = divide

*Affect* and *effect* – affect = to influence; effect = to bring to pass

*By* and *buy* – by = near or next to; buy = purchase

*Capital* and *capitol* – capital = a financial resource; capitol = a building in which a state legislative body meets

*Conscience* and *conscious* – conscience = moral sense; conscious = awake.

*Council* and *counsel* – council = a legislative body; counsel = advice, usually legal

*For* and *four* – for = because; four = the number 4

*Here* and *hear* – here = in this place; hear = listen

*It's* and *its* – it's = contraction of *it is* (as in "it's cold outside"); its = possessive form of *it* (as in "its only drawback")

*Lead* and *led* – the past tense of the verb *lead* drops the *a* (as in "I will *lead* the group tonight, but yesterday Mary *led* it")

*Loose* and *lose* – loose = not tight; lose = misplace

*Principal* and *principle* – principal = chief or primary; principle = a fundamental truth or governing law of conduct

*Stationery* and *stationary* – stationery = paper and envelopes; stationary = not moving

*There*, *their*, and *they're* – there = at that place (as in "over there"); their = possessive of *they* (as in "to their advantage"); they're = contraction of *they are* (as in "they're on board")

*To*, *too*, and *two* – to = as far as (as in "I'm going *to* Vancouver next week"); too = when you mean *also* (as in "I'm traveling there *too*"); two = the number 2

*Weather* and *whether* – weather = the state of the atmosphere; whether = if

*Who's* and *whose* – who's = contraction of *who is* (as in "Who's there?"); whose = possessive form of *who* (as in "Whose is it?")

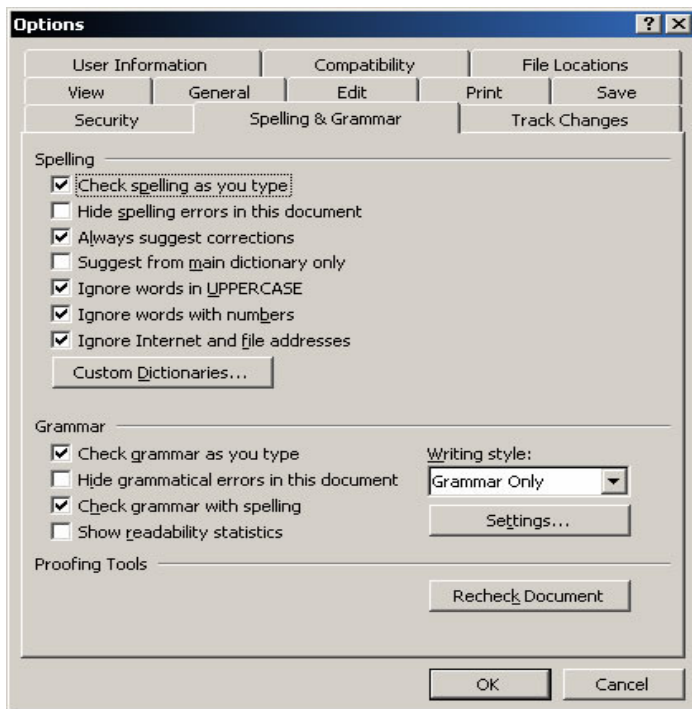
**For more homonyms and homophones, see *Vocabulary for Dummies* by Laurie Rozakis (p. 135-148) available in the AiV Library.**

## How to set your spelling and grammar settings in Microsoft Word

These settings will serve you best in your writing assignments.

### Spelling:

- 1) On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**, and then click the **Spelling & Grammar** tab.
- 2) Under **Spelling** select the following (place a check mark in the following boxes)
  - a) Check spelling as you type
  - b) Always suggest corrections
  - c) ignore Internet and file addresses
  - d) Be sure to clear the check marks from ALL the other boxes under the “Spelling” section.



### Grammar and style:

- 1) On the **Tools** menu, click **Options**, and then click the **Spelling & Grammar** tab.
- 2) Place check marks in the following boxes
  - a) Check grammar as you type
  - b) Check grammar with spelling
  - c) Leave the other boxes empty
- 3) In the **Writing style** box, select grammar and style
- 4) Click **Settings**.

If you are setting options for text written in a language other than your language version of Microsoft Word, the options may vary slightly.

5) In the **Grammar and style options** box do the following:

In the **required** section:

- a) Comma required before last list item >> always
- b) Punctuation required with quotes >> Inside
- c) Spaces required between sentences >>2
- d) The rest of the check boxes in this box

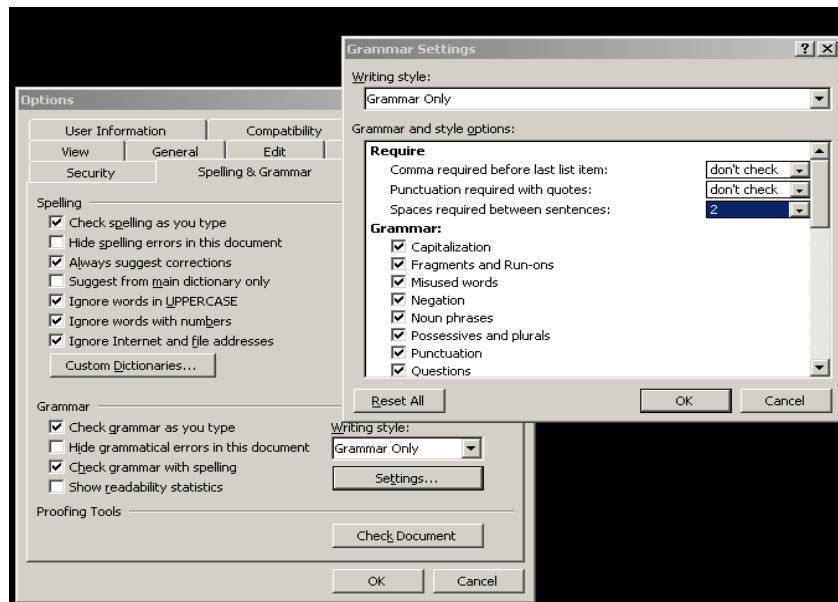
In the **grammar** section:

- e) Leave all the boxes untouched, as the settings are correct.

If you are setting options for text that is written in a language other than your language version of Word, the options may vary slightly. For example, some group names might be different, and others, such as **Require**, may not appear.

**Note:** To restore the original rules of the selected grammar and writing style, click **Reset All**.

If you have any questions about these settings please contact me (Adam Farrell) at [afarrell@aii.edu](mailto:afarrell@aii.edu) or phone 604-298-5492 ext 5263 or 604-683-9200 ext 3425



**Note:** The grammar and spelling features in Word will not tell you if you have used the wrong word if it is spelt correctly e.g. spelling vs. smelling. These features are not always CORRECT – so check with another source if you are unsure.

## Grammar

### Punctuation

Punctuation is one of the most significant tools you can use when writing. When you speak aloud, you constantly punctuate with your voice and body language. You also make a sound in the reader's head when you write. Your "writing voice" can be a dull, sleep inducing mumble or it can be a joyful sound, a shy whisper, or a throb of passion. It all depends on the punctuation you use.

1. Commas before the last item in a list.
2. Question marks only if the sentence is a question.
3. Put a period at the end of each and every sentence unless the sentence requires a question mark or exclamation point.

*Please refer to the Punctuation Handout for more detailed punctuation rules.*

### General Grammar Rules

1. The **verb and subject** of a clause or sentence must always agree in number (singular or plural) and person (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>).

*Example:*      **Incorrect:**    A wide range (of goods) were displayed.  
                     **Correct:**        A wide range (of goods) **was** displayed.

Errors with verb and subject sometimes occur through the use of collective nouns (team, flock, group etc.) which generally take singular verbs, or because the verb is placed a long way from the subject.

2. If two subject are joined by **and**, the verb is plural.

*Example:*      **Incorrect:**    Paper and pen is needed for this exam.  
                     **Correct:**        Paper and pen **are** needed for this exam.

3. If two subjects are joined by **or** or **nor**, the verb agrees with its closest subject.

*Example:*      **Incorrect:**    Neither John nor I are invited.  
                     **Correct:**        Neither John nor I **am** invited.

4. Prepositions govern the objective case.

*Example:*     **Incorrect:**   Are you coming with my brother and I?  
                  **Correct:**     Are you coming with my brother and **me**?

*Note:* In the above example the preposition **with** governs both **my brother** and **me**. A preposition should be placed immediately before the word to which it relates. Try to avoid ending a sentence with a preposition.

*Example:*     **Awkward:**   Whom are you sending that invitation to?  
                  **Correct:**     To whom are you sending that invitation?

Some words have their own prepositions. Note these examples:

different **from**            **similar to**   dissent **from**            relate **to**  
interested **in**             accede **to** (an opinion or policy)

5. Relative pronouns are governed by four rules of usage. You will notice that:

(a)     we use **who/whom/that** for people, and **which/that** for things.

*Example:*     **Incorrect:**   These are the people which we saw.  
                  **Correct:**     These are the people **whom** we saw.

(b)     **who** is subject; **whom** is object; **which** and **that** are both subject and object.

*Example:*     **Incorrect:**   My mother who you met before is here.  
                  **Correct:**     My mother **whom** you met before is here.

(c)     the **case (subject or object)** of the relative pronoun depends on the meaning of its own clause.

*Example:*     **Incorrect:**   He is the person whom I believe will help you.  
                  **Correct:**     He is the person **who**, I believe, will help you.

(d)     The relative pronoun must agree in number (singular or plural) with the word *immediately preceding* it.

*Example:*     **Incorrect:**   He is one of those boys who is always boasting.  
                  **Correct:**     He is one of those boys **who are** always boasting.

Whether **who** is singular or plural depends on the number implied in the preceding word.

6. Certain words take *singular* verbs and possessives. Frequently used examples of such words include:

each    any    anyone    every everyone    none    neither    either

*Example:*    **Incorrect:**    None of the group were dancing  
                  **Correct:**    None of the group **was** dancing.

7. When comparing *two* things, use the comparative form of the adjective (suffix ends in **er**); when comparing *more than two*, use the superlative form (suffix ends in **est**).

*Example:*    **Incorrect:**    He is the quickest of the *two*.  
                  **Correct:**    He is the **quicker** of the *two*.  
                  **Correct:**    He is the **quickest** of them *all*.

Three frequently used adjectives are *irregular* in their comparative and superlative forms. They are:

good	better (comparative)	best (superlative)
bad	worse (comparative)	worst (superlative)
many	more (comparative)	most (superlative)

8. When using several verbs, keep them in the *same* tense *unless the sense dictates otherwise*. For instance, when referring to events which are going on in the present or which occur frequently (or happen as a general rule), use the *present* tense of the verb *throughout*.

*Example:*    **We are eating** pizza. We often **eat** pizza for lunch and generally I **make** a salad to go with it and we **drink** fruit juice.

9. If two nouns are joined by **and**, check whether the definite article (**the**) is required for each noun (consider whether the meaning is clear).

*Example:*    The owner and manager came over. (one person)  
                  The owner and **the** manager came over. (two people)

10. Avoid splitting the infinitive of the verb.

*Example:*    **Awkward:**    We want to quickly finish this book.  
                  **Preferred:**    We want **to finish** this book quickly.

## **Basic Rules for Writing Assignments**

1. Follow the instructor's directions to the letter. Your instructor may give instructions regarding the subject, citation style (MLA), length of paper, choosing a topic, thesis statement, or information about having your outline approved ahead of time.
2. Hand your assignment in on time. Many instructors will dock grades for late assignments. Learn to work within deadlines, these are real life!
3. Read your course outline very carefully. Information about the writing requirements may be on the course outline.
4. Hand in a clean copy without coffee stains on it. It makes a difference.
5. No spelling or grammar errors.
6. Always back your work up on disk.
7. Keep a copy of the assignment, as instructors have been known to lose them ☺
8. Learn from the comments you have received on previous assignments. You can record the comments in one place so you can review suggestions. Alternatively, you can keep papers all together so you can review and learn from comments.
9. Try to have your assignment(s) complete 3 – 7 days before it is due, so that you have a buffer zone. Unexpected things do happen!
10. Since two minds are better than one, start your assignments early. Give your unconscious mind some material to start working with. Learn to use your creative side!
11. Complete a first draft in advance of the deadline and solicit feedback from your instructor.

## Documentation

### Why do we cite sources?

One purpose of citations is to leave a trail of clues for interested readers. When you document papers correctly, you provide others with a way to find the sources you have used. Another purpose of citation is to promote ethical responsibility and academic consistency within a discipline. If you do not cite and document your sources carefully, you run the risk of plagiarism, described in the MLA Handbook as "intellectual theft" (Gibaldi 66).

## Plagiarism

### What *is* plagiarism?

You may have heard so many different definitions of plagiarism that you feel confused about exactly what it is. Despite all this variation, you can avoid the serious charge of committing plagiarism by adopting a conservative definition of the term and following the guidelines below. The Art Institute of Vancouver defines plagiarism as: "Plagiarism consists of using another person's work, words, or ideas as if they were one's own. Plagiarism may occur as a result of ignorance and/or inexperience about the correct way to acknowledge and reference authors. It may also occur as a deliberate misuse of the work of others with the intent to deceive." The Art Institute of Vancouver expects honest work at all levels from students. Cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication or falsification of data are not acceptable. The School regards academic dishonesty as a very serious matter and imposes strict penalties on those students who are found to be guilty of an offence. The following courses of action, taking into account the severity of the offence and whether or not there are significant extenuating circumstances, may be followed in cases where academic dishonesty has been established:

- award zero marks for the piece of work or examination, with or without the opportunity to redeem the piece of work,
- or award a fail grade for the whole topic or course of which the piece of work or examination concerned is a part,
- refer the matter to the Dean of Academic Affairs or the Associate Dean,
- or expulsion.

### What needs to be cited?

When you write a paper, you often use and build on the work other people have researched and compiled. Whether you are writing an expository report or adding your own insights and opinions to existing research, it is important to give credit where credit is due. If you incorporate or refer to other people's work in your assignment, you must give credit to those authors using parenthetical citation and a Works Cited list (also known as a bibliography, although are different). In addition to facts and statistics, you must also acknowledge other people's ideas or theories.

You need to document:

1. Direct quotes, both entire sentences and phrases
2. Paraphrases (rephrased or summarized material)
3. Words specific or unique to the author's research, theories, or ideas
4. Use of an author's argument or line of thinking
5. Historical, statistical, or scientific facts
6. Articles or studies you refer to within your text

You do not need to document:

1. Proverbs, axioms, and sayings ("A stitch in time saves nine.")
2. Well-known quotations ("The personal is political.")
3. Common knowledge (Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, or oxygen has an atomic number of 8, or "The Starry Night" was painted by Vincent Van Gogh.)

Sometimes it is difficult to be sure what counts as common knowledge, especially when writing in an academic discipline that is new to you. Perhaps you are not familiar with Van Gogh or an atomic number. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself if a knowledgeable reader would be familiar with the information. You may, in fact, need to consult with a reader within the discipline. If he or she would have to look it up, you usually should document it. If you are not sure if something counts as common knowledge, document it to be safe.

### **Basic Citation Examples for Print Documents:**

1. Book

Author's Last Name, First Name. Book Title. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date.

2. Journal Article

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Article Title: Subtitle." Periodical Title volume (year): inclusive page numbers.

**NOTE:** Journals that paginate each issue separately will call for an issue number as well: ...volume. issue (year): inclusive page numbers.

### **PLEASE SEE MLA CITATION HANDOUT FOR DETAILED CITATION INSTRUCTIONS OR REFER TO**

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1998.

**Works Cited**

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6<sup>th</sup> ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1998.

Nelson Marlborough Institute of Technology. Library Learning Centre.

Riley, Patrick. *The One-Page Proposal: How To Get Your Business Pitch Onto One Persuasive Page*. New York: Regan Books, 2002.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The Writing Center. "MLA Citation."  
<http://www.unc.edu/depts/wcweb/handouts/mla.html>