Intriguing and Preferably Not Overly Clever Title for Your Paper

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. However, if Jack succeeds in writing a paper that fulfills the basic guidelines of the paper assignment, he will make his professor very happy. Professor of Jack will be even happier if his paper has been spell-checked and proofread, and if he remembers to fill in his own full name in the header, instead of leaving it as “Your Full Name.” If Jack neglects to replace the header with all of the appropriate details that correspond to the course he is actually taking, Professor of Jack will have no idea who has submitted Jack’s paper or which course it is for. The paper will be placed into the “figure this one out later” folder, and perhaps forgotten altogether. This may have tragically unnecessary consequences at the end of the semester when it seems as though Jack hasn’t even submitted a final paper. All this Sturm und Drang could have been avoided if Jack had simply remembered to put his own name on his paper. The length of this particular paragraph, by the way, is a good length for an introductory paragraph, even for a brief paper (5–7 pages). This would also be a good place to mention that Professor of Jack will expect to find his thesis statement here, at the end of the first paragraph, and not coyly buried somewhere in the introduction.

Other things that will make Professor of Jack happy: starting off each paragraph with a clearly phrased topic sentence. In fact, we might venture to guess that all of Jack’s professors would be ecstatic to find such carefully crafted signposts for the argument at the beginning of every paragraph. It is true that this may seem like a mechanical device, and yet a thoughtful writer will learn how to do this with some finesse. This might be a good place to demonstrate how to do parenthetical citation. For example, if you “quote from an essay by a scholar named
Humpherdink, you would include the citation information at the end of the sentence with the page you quoted from" (Humpherdink 218). Hopefully you noticed that there is a clear space after the second quotation mark and that the period appears after the closed quotation; those are two common mistakes. Be forewarned that other professors regard parenthetical-citation style with crushing contempt and will expect you to use the traditional style of footnotes or endnotes for citing your sources. “Whatever you do, don’t just drop in a direct quotation as a separate sentence without integrating it into your own prose. Professors that hail from many disciplines will find that terrifyingly annoying.” Perhaps the next time I revise this document template I will include a demonstration of how to do a block quotation.

You will also notice that now that we are on the second page of this paper, a header with proper automatic pagination has appeared in the upper right corner of the page. To be honest, this one detail is the primary reason Professor of Jack finally decided to require all students to use the same document template for submitting formal papers. Professor of Jack had an epiphany in the car one day when commuting with another English professor; she commented that it drove her slightly insane when students forgot to paginate their term papers. “Yes! I know exactly what you mean! That drives me crazy, too!” exclaimed Friend of Jack’s Professor. It was a moment of epiphany. Professor of Jack realized that she could simply devise a document that was already properly formatted, including the all-important automatic pagination, and require her students to use the template—instead of creating a list of document features and hoping beyond reason that all of her students would actually figure out how to implement all of those features (which are all listed at the end of this document).

This clever new device, sadly, will not prevent some students from ignoring this requirement or never noticing it in the first place, and submitting papers that bear unseemly traces of the individual student’s quirky, personal preferences. Professors actually share your dorky enjoyment of florid typefaces, but we find them a bit harder to read. Moreover, we are mostly amused when we suspect that the student has used Florid Typeface to disguise the fact
that the paper is actually a whole lot shorter than it’s supposed to be. And occasionally we frown at the possibility that the student thinks we are too dumb to have figured this out eons ago. If some of you ultimately forget to use this template and submit a paper with 1.25” margins formatted in a typeface like this, that will not be the end of the world. Instruments of reform need not be perfect. At least “Use this document template” is easier to follow than “Use the following 8 document features for submitting your term papers.” Professor of Jack now feels a tiny pang of nostalgia for the era of the IBM Selectric and whiteout that took forever to dry.

And in case you’re curious, here are the standard formatting features for a formal essay:

- 1” margins all around
- 11–12 point standard font (Times Roman, Arial, e.g.)
- double-spaced
- header on first page only that includes your name, course #, date, & word count
- header with automatic pagination
- ~22 lines per page
- *no* title page
- submit all final drafts via email as an attachment