Online Shopping:
Risky (but Better) Business

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The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 6th ed., says that a research paper does not need a title page. However, if your instructor requires a title page, use the format illustrated here. Double-space all material on the title page. Then, on the first page of your paper, put your last name, a space, and the number 1 in the upper right-hand corner (see page 282). The title page is not numbered. If you do not use a title page, follow the first-page format illustrated in Chapter 17.

Title

Student Identification

Course Identification
Online Shopping: Risky (but Better) Business

Recently, I shopped at the Logan Old Navy to find a new pair of jeans, but since I wear an uncommon size, I could not find exactly what I wanted. The attendant in the fitting rooms suggested that I visit OldNavy.com to find what I was looking for. She gave me all the information I would need to find the jeans and purchase them online, and when I visited OldNavy.com, I found the jeans, and they were cheaper than in the store. Needless to say, I bought more than just the jeans because of the wonderful prices. This was not my first experience, but because of the price, the convenience, and access to more items, I became excited to seek out new online shopping venues.

I am not alone in my growing interest in online shopping. According to Nielsen/Netratings, 498 million people worldwide now have access to the Internet from home, and just as these people are using the Internet for quick access to information and electronic communication, millions of them are also turning to the Internet for shopping purposes (Hupprich and Bumatay). Consumers should shop online because, despite fears of safety and identity theft, its simplicity, the convenience of comparison shopping, and access to a variety of merchandise make online shopping the logical and best choice for consumers.
**Page Numbering.** Kaycee numbered the pages automatically by using the page numbering command. The numbers (arabic) are located 1⁄2 inch from the top of the page and flush with the right margin. She included her last name along with the page number as a header. There is a space between the name and the number. The numbering proceeds consecutively throughout, including the Works Cited pages. Any pages that come before the first page of the paper are not numbered in the same sequence. Rather, roman numerals are used for pages that precede the actual text, such as an outline page or an abstract page. The title page is not numbered.

**Title.** The title of Kaycee’s research paper is intriguing, yet simple and direct (see 5b-7). She uses a subtitle to grab our interest. The title is centered 1 inch from the top margin. Notice the spacing between the title and the start of the text (double-spaced).

**Introductory Narrative.** Kaycee begins with an introduction that includes a personal narrative about online shopping. By using this narrative (story), she immediately grabs the reader’s attention (see 5b-7, 6h). She is appealing to her own authority on the topic, thus paying attention to the persona component of her rhetorical stance (see 3b-2). Everything is double-spaced, including the title and the start of the body of the text.

**Describing the Controversy.** In paragraph 2, Kaycee describes the current controversy over online shopping. Even though it is growing rapidly, consumers still express concerns about such things as safety and identity theft.

**Citing an Internet Source.** Kaycee uses an Internet source, Nielsen/Netratings, for paragraph 2. Because Internet sources typically do not include page numbers, they are cited in parentheses by the author’s names only, in this case Hupprich and Bumatay. Notice how the parenthetical citation is punctuated—the period for the sentence follows the parenthetical citation.

**Thesis.** At the end of paragraph 2, Kaycee states her thesis (see 7a, 12a-2). In the thesis statement, she takes a clear position on the issue, which she will argue in her paper. The thesis provides direction and structure to the paper that follows.
The convenience of online shopping became clear to me not only as a consumer but also as a retailer. During the holidays, I work for Sears in Frisco, Texas. Our store is new and we still only serve the urban areas, so many people travel from rural areas to shop. While working over Christmas I helped one such woman who needed to shop for items for the baby she was expecting. She could not purchase everything she needed in this one trip and did not want to have to make the drive numerous times, so I suggested she go online to see what Sears.com had to offer. After visiting the site she decided to order all of her baby furniture from the comfort of her own home. She informed me that though she was able to buy most of the items she needed online, she would come back to the store to shop for baby clothes, which were not available online.

Rural customers are not the only consumers who benefit from online shopping. More and more shoppers use the Internet to comparison-shop before purchasing items online or in a store, so they save money. There are price-comparison tools on the Internet, and some, such as PriceGrabber.com, find the best price for a particular item and then calculate the tax and shipping costs. This site and others can be used to get price quotes for items varying from airline tickets to cashmere sweaters.
**Topic Sentence.** The first sentence of paragraph 3 is an example of a topic sentence (see 6a). It tells us what the topic of the paragraph will be—the convenience of online shopping for both consumers and retailers. The paragraph then goes on to develop that topic, using an extended example.

**Citing Common Knowledge.** In paragraph 4, Kaycee uses information that is considered common knowledge for this topic; that is, anyone who is broadly familiar with the topic would agree on this information. Therefore, it is not necessary to provide any source citation (see 11a-3).

**Transitional Sentence.** Notice that the first sentences of paragraphs 4 and 5 are examples of transitional sentences (see 5b-2, 6c). Kaycee tells us through the first transitional sentence that it is not only rural customers who can benefit from online shopping. She tells us through the second transitional sentence that consumers, even though they may benefit from online shopping, still may wish to have that personal experience of trying on something before buying it. The use of transitional sentences to link paragraphs is very effective in Kaycee’s paper.
Many customers may want to try on a cashmere sweater to see how it looks on them before buying it, even if they have to pay more to do so. For example, Ahmad Kushairi says, “For me, I would like to browse the shelves and feel the products before deciding if I even want to purchase.” Online retailers are aware of this and try to target these consumers by providing new technologies. For example, My Virtual Model Inc. has created a tool that allows customers to “try clothes on” before purchasing them. This technology has “increased online sales” by leading to 26 percent more purchases than average and increasing the average order size by 13 percent. Virtual models are being used by numerous online retailers, such as Lands’ End, Limited Too, Lane Bryant, and Nutri/System (“Virtual Model”).

Retailers also target consumers by offering deals through special online promotions such as credit card companies offering deals to their cardholders. For example, American Express, Visa, MasterCard, and Discover have promotions that include free shipping and discounts ranging from 5 to 25 percent. To receive these deals, however, customers must first visit the credit card site, and they will usually have to use promotion codes or visit the retailers’ sites from a link on the credit card company’s site. The discounts change frequently and vary among the various credit
Direct Quotation from a Print Source. To give credence to her opening statement in paragraph 5, Kaycee uses a quotation from a print source. Notice how she has used the author’s name in a signal phrase. No page number is required because the source is only one page long.

Source Paraphrase. The second half of paragraph 5 paraphrases a print source; that is, the information from the source has been restated in Kaycee’s own words and reordered (see 11c). We can tell from the parenthetical citation that no author is listed for this article. Rather, the citation uses the title of the article from the journal Capital Times. No page number is needed for a one-page source. Remember that paraphrases tend to be about the length of the original source. They are used when key information needs to be incorporated into the flow of your own wording.

Argument Developed. In paragraph 6, Kaycee further develops her argument by showing how retailers promote online shopping through special offers and deals to credit card holders.

Summary of a Print Source. The second half of paragraph 6 summarizes a print source; that is, the information has been both restated and considerably condensed from the original source. Summaries differ from paraphrases by virtue of their length; summaries are only about one-third as long as the original.
card companies. Credit card companies can also offer promotions for local businesses and attractions, so consumers can register their email address to learn of the offers before they are posted on the site (Frey).

In addition to good deals and access to new technology, online shopping offers a place for consumers to shop quickly and easily online, as well as quickly and easily offline. One segment of the population that has benefited the most is teenagers. Jared Blank, an analyst for Juniper Matrix, points out that teens today “use the Internet as a shopping mall--a place to meet friends, play games, and shop--even without the intent to purchase. Teens spend almost as much time on Amazon.com as adults, even though few of those teens can make purchases on the site” (qtd. in “Nearly One-Third”).

Teens are not the only segment of the consumer population who browse for goods online and then choose to shop in brick-and-mortar stores. According to the NPD Group, Inc., 92 percent of online consumers use the Internet to shop and/or purchase online (qtd. in Pastore). Cyberjournalist Michael Pastore points out that NPD’s data show that even those consumers not making purchases online are still influenced by what they see on retailers’ Web sites. Eighty-four percent of occasional buyers, who made at most one online
Development of the Topic. In paragraph 7, Kaycee adds another example of how online shopping can benefit consumers. Notice the use of the transitional expression “In addition” at the beginning of this paragraph.

Introducing a Source Within a Source. In the second half of paragraph 7, Kaycee quotes from a source found within another source. She quotes Jared Blank regarding the behavior of teens as fledgling consumers. However, since Blank’s statements are found in a journal article that he did not author, that article’s information is included in the parenthetical citation, along with the notation qtd. in to let the reader know that Blank is being cited indirectly.

A Paraphrase of an Internet Source Within a Source. Similarly, from reading Pastore’s Internet article in the Cyberatlas, Kaycee learned about a study from the NPD Group that helped explain some of the complexities of online shopping behavior. She paraphrases the information regarding the study in paragraph 8 and quotes the vice president of online research at NPD indirectly, using the qtd. in notation in her parenthetical citation. The designation qtd. in is used for indirect paraphrases and summaries as well as indirect quotations.
purchase in the past six months, describe their usual use of the Internet for shopping online and then going offline to purchase. Pamela Smith, vice president of NPD Online Research, explains:

Measuring online sales alone cannot capture the full benefit of a retailer having an Internet presence. We know that even consumers who don’t typically purchase online are using retailers’ web sites to browse and decide what to buy. . . . Although it may not result in a purchase at that time, it could translate directly into an offline sale.

(qtd. in Pastore)

The following chart, which outlines how online shoppers describe how they typically use the Internet for shopping, illustrates Smith’s point.

Fig. 1. How shoppers typically use the Internet

Source: Pastore.
Indented Quotation. In MLA style, quotations that are longer than four lines of prose or three lines of poetry are set off from the rest of the text through indentation (see 13a, 20b-3, 55b). The indentation should be ten spaces from the left-hand margin, but the quotation extends to the right margin. Notice that the punctuation of the parenthetical citation for such indented quotations differs from the usual. Usually, the period follows the parentheses of a citation. However, with an indented quotation, the period comes before the citation.

Using Ellipses. Kaycee has used ellipses to show that a portion of the original quotation has been left out of her paper (see 56k). Use ellipses any time you have omitted a section from a quotation.

Citing Statistical Information. Notice how Kaycee has used the chart at the end of paragraph 8 to reinforce her point about the habits of online shoppers. Since Kaycee has created this figure using data from one of her sources, she provides the source information below the figure caption.
Since the NPD study was completed, our nation has experienced an economic downturn, but online spending has increased. A recent study titled “The State of Retailing Online 5.0” reports that “fully 56 percent of holiday retailers reported online profits in 2001, compared to only 43 percent in 2000” (Cox). Profits from online shopping usually come from holiday shopping. According to Nielsen/NetRatings, online shoppers were expected to spend 43 percent more than the $6.9 billion from the 2000 holiday season. One hundred six million users were estimated to shop online for the 2001 holidays, which would be a 27 percent rise over the 85 million shoppers in 2000. Categories normally reserved for traditional stores are climbing in online preference (Chan et al.).

Although online shopping trends and spending are growing, there are still consumers who resist purchasing products over the Internet. One reason many people may choose to browse for goods online and then purchase them offline is their concern about identity theft. In fact, a report by Taylor Nelson Sofres points out, “Almost one-third (30 percent) of Internet users who have not shopped online stated that they didn’t want to give credit card details (up by 5 percent from 2001) and 28 percent cited general security concerns” (qtd. in Greenspan). In order to confidently shop online, consumers must be sure that the retail site is
More Statistical Support. Paragraph 9 illustrates an effective use of source statistics to bolster Kaycee’s argument. The statistics show that despite the economic downturn, online shopping has increased.

A Source with Multiple Authors. The citation at the end of paragraph 9 indicates a source that has more than four authors (see 13a-2). According to MLA style, a work by four or more authors may be cited using the first author’s name plus the designation et al. (“and others”).

Introducing Counterarguments to the Thesis. In paragraph 10, Kaycee introduces the counterarguments to her thesis, that is, the arguments that might be mounted by the opponents to her position. She acknowledges that some shoppers resist moving online and explains the reasons for their hesitation.
safe and secure and that no one can steal personal information from the site. According to the Online Shopping Guide, which is an online shopping directory sponsored by Microsoft Internet, consumers can protect themselves by considering three things: transaction security, privacy, and credit card fraud (“Online-Shopping Safety”).

Transaction security is the first thing to be aware of when shopping on the Internet, and data encryption provides the most secure way to send information from site to site without having anyone in between being able to read it. When an Internet user sends information, the data is encrypted, or put into code. Anyone who tries to read the information while it is en route to the site will find it impossible. Secure Sockets Layer (SSL), the standard for sending secure data, protects against snooping and possible tampering and then verifies that the site to which the data is sent is authentic. Netscape Security Center, which is an informational site published on the Internet browser’s homepage, explains that shoppers should make sure that their data is always being checked by SSL when sending or receiving confidential information (see Fig. 2). SSL works with certain versions of browsers, such as Netscape, Internet Explorer, and AOL, and can also be verified by simply calling the vendor. Oftentimes, a padlock will appear in the bottom left
Refuting the Counterarguments. At the end of paragraph 10, Kaycee asserts that the fears expressed by some consumers can be allayed by following certain precautions, thus refuting the counterarguments.

Topic Sentence. Paragraph 11 begins with a topic sentence, letting the reader know that this paragraph will be about online security.

Development of the Topic. Kaycee develops the topic of online security in paragraph 11. She paraphrases the article “How Encryption Works” from the Netscape Security Center Web site in order to explain how consumers can protect themselves.
Sorensen 8
corner to tell you if the site is secure (“How
Encryption Works”).

Transaction security can also be ensured by checking the credibility of a source. One way to do this is to look for the Better Business Bureau Online Reliability Seal, which guarantees that a retailer has been in business for at least one year, has become a member of a local Better Business Bureau (BBB), and has agreed to arbitration in case of a dispute over sale. The BBB says that online advertisements or emails with excessive capital letters, dollar signs ($$$$

!!!!!) at every turn, misspellings, and grammatical errors may indicate a sleazy operation (Better Business).

Fig. 2. Netscape Security Homepage.

Source: “How Encryption Works.”
In-Text Citation Without an Author. Notice that the citation at the end of paragraph 11 does not have an author’s name. That is because this Internet source does not have any author listed. There is no page number because Internet sources are typically not numbered.

Further Topic Development. A transitional sentence begins paragraph 12, alerting the reader to the fact that this paragraph will describe yet another way consumers can protect themselves against online fraud when shopping via the Internet. Kaycee paraphrases information from the Better Business Bureau’s Web site.

Visual. Kaycee includes a screen shot from Netscape’s Security Center to illustrate her point about the availability of information regarding security that can be found on the Internet.
Privacy is another important consideration for online shopping, and consumers may worry that once their data gets to the receiver safely, a hacker may come in and steal uncoded information. Most retailers move data off their Internet server after receiving it so it will be inaccessible to hackers. Each company has a different policy, so it is best to check with customer support or the help section for specifics.

The Online Shopping Guide also advises that shoppers need to check the policy on credit card fraud and to be aware of any guarantees that online retailers make about identity theft (“Online Shopping”). Ellen Stark reminds us that despite what policies individual companies have, the Fair Credit Billing Act ensures that a bank cannot hold a customer liable for more than $50 in fraudulent charges. So, no matter what concerns consumers have about a hacker stealing their identity and charging products to stolen credit card numbers, the federal government has provided consumers with protection.

Despite concerns about safety and identity theft, more and more people are turning to the Internet to meet their consumer needs. Retailers are aware of this trend and are anxious to attract new customers to their sites, and they are therefore willing to improve site safety and user-friendly technology to entice shoppers. While some people choose to shop online because they
Further Topic Development. Paragraph 13 develops another consideration regarding consumer protection. The transitional first sentence of this paragraph uses the word “another” to show us this is an additional aspect of the topic: privacy.

Appeal to Logic. In paragraph 14, Kaycee uses an appeal to logic (see 7f-1) as she builds her case. She cautions readers to be careful to check policies regarding identity theft. She paraphrases information from an expert to support her own assertion.

In-Text Citation of a Print Source. Paragraph 14 shows a citation from a one-page print source that includes the author’s name. Notice how the author’s name, Ellen Stark, is used in a signal phrase: “Ellen Stark reminds us that. . . .”

Conclusion. In her conclusion, Kaycee summarizes her central arguments (see 5b-7, 6h). This type of summary conclusion is appropriate for her paper.
find shopping in brick-and-mortar stores annoying and time-consuming, others just enjoy the fact that not only can they shop without leaving their homes but they can shop without even getting dressed. Others would rather simply click on a button to order goods than stand in checkout lines or battle for parking spaces in a crowded mall lot. Whatever the reason for initially shopping online, many consumers, like myself, not only enjoy the benefits of ease and convenience of e-commerce but also believe that it will only get better.

Now that you know about online shopping, you are probably wondering where to shop online. These are just a few links to some of my favorite online shopping sites. Just remember, just because you shop online does not mean you buy online. You can shop around and then visit the store as you normally would; this will save you a few hours—or days!

- amazon.com
- bn.com
- fossil.com
- landsend.com
- oldnavy.com
- sears.com
- shop.com
- target.com
- wal-mart.com
**Action to Be Taken.** Following the summary conclusion, Kaycee provides the readers with a few links that she has found useful for online shopping.
Works Cited

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  Reports a Record Half Billion People Worldwide Now
  Have Home Internet Access.” Nielsen/Netratings 3
  www.nielsen-netratings.com/pr/
   pr_020306_eratings.pdf>.
Works Cited. The Works Cited page is an alphabetical listing of all the sources used in Kaycee’s research paper. The title is centered 1 inch from the top margin. The list is double-spaced throughout, including between the title and the text. Notice that the first line of each source is flush left with the margin, but the rest of the information is indented 5 spaces. This practice makes the author’s name stand out. The Works Cited pages are numbered consecutively following the research paper text. For more information about the MLA style of documentation, see Chapter 13.

Online Professional Site. The first source is a Web site. Notice the two dates; the first is the date of publication or last update, and the second is the date the source was accessed by Kaycee.

Online Professional Site. The second source is an article found on a Web site. The title of the article is in quotation marks. Since there are more than four authors, the first author is listed by name followed by et al. (“and others”).

Online Article. The third source is an article from an online publication called the Cyberatlas.

Newspaper Article. The fourth source is a print source from a newspaper.

Online Article. The fifth source is another article from the online publication Cyberatlas.

Online Article. The sixth source is an online article from a professional Web site.

Online Article. The seventh source is an online article from the same professional Web site as the second source. Each article must be listed separately, even if more than one comes from the same Web site.


**Newspaper Article.** The eighth source comes from a printed newspaper. Notice that all titles of articles are enclosed in quotation marks and initial capital letters are used for the words in the title.

**Article from a Full-Text Database.** The ninth source was found by Kaycee via a library subscription database (see 9d-2). Notice that the publication information from the print source (*PR Newsswire*) is included first, followed by the information about the database used to locate the source.

**Online Newsletter.** The tenth source is an article found in an online newsletter.

**Online Article.** The eleventh source is an article from an online publication.

**Magazine Article.** The twelfth source is an article from a printed popular magazine.

**Newspaper Article.** The thirteenth source is an article from a print newspaper.