**TOOL:** Activate Instruction

**GOAL:** Student-directed acquisition of core content knowledge and student-paced advancement

**BREAK THROUGH MODEL:** Summit Public Schools

# Activate Instruction

## Why was this tool developed?

Summit Public Schools educators wanted to empower their students to direct their own learning while at Summit and then—by extension—in college. They envisioned a more flexible, personalized, and self-directed way for students to acquire core content knowledge. This meant that instead of educators determining the pace of instruction while using one-size-fits-all teaching methods, students would be directing their own pace and choosing to learn from the resources that best suited their individual learning styles. Since students were already spending a few hours daily in computer-based "Personalized Learning Time," this was an optimal time for students to practice self-direction.

In order to help make students productive in this endeavor, Summit needed a one-stop-shop that would serve two main purposes: 1) curate Open Educational Resources (OER) with their own curriculum in one open, web-based platform, from which students could select the resources that help them learn best; and 2) integrate assessments with the curriculum so that students could advance through the content at their own pace. **Finding no existing product on the market that combined free, open core content resources with assessments into one web-based platform, Summit teamed up with Illuminate Education and the Girard Education Foundation to create the technology solution: Activate Instruction.**

> " *We chose to provide options for students—with direction and support—as they make choices around learning how they need to with what they need and when they need it, rather than dictating the resources and the order they would use them.* "
>
> **Adam Carter,** *Summit Public Schools*

## How is it different?

To empower students to "own" their acquisition of core academic content, Summit leaders created an online gateway to vetted curricula. The vision was to build an open system, similar to Wikipedia, which would put curriculum and resources in one place. Activate Instruction launched in 2013 as a free, open, and online source that curated the OER that Summit educators were already using along with their own curriculum into a web-based platform.

The content on Activate Instruction is organized in modules according to grade level and subject and is based on various content standards from several states. Teachers create playlists from this curriculum, tailored to each individual student's level, and based on goals that students have outlined in their Personalized Learning Plan (PLP). Playlists provide a jumping point each day for students when they begin their Personalized Learning Time. From these playlists, students have the power to choose the resources that best support their style of learning. The resources offer a variety of learning media including games, projects, and videos.

Summit contracted with Illuminate Education to integrate the Illuminate assessment system

with the resources in Activate Instruction. This allows the 1,600 Summit students to work through the resources on their playlist, and then take an assessment that is built into the curriculum and scored immediately. Students receive real-time performance feedback from the system, and they pace themselves based on their competency. In this way, students take ownership of the process and the pace.

## What is the advantage for students?

Activate Instruction was developed with funding from the Girard Education Foundation to be a free, open, online resource for all K-12 students and their teachers. It is especially useful in Summit's blended learning environment, in which students spend several hours each day in personalized learning using digital content. The tool helps students use this time productively by offering playlists of curriculum that are based on the student's own competency and goals. In this way, the tool gives students the flexibility to self-direct their learning, but narrows the scope of options just enough to keep students moving efficiently.

This tool also helps students make the connection between the curriculum they choose and their progress toward goals. The process of choosing their own curriculum and receiving immediate performance feedback in Activate Instruction helps students understand their individual style of learning. Feedback helps them learn what types of resources will help them reach the goals they had set in their PLP. Because their PLP is connected to Activate Instruction, students can see progress.

The web-based platform of Activate Instruction allows Summit Public Schools to connect it with other web-based academic tools. For instance, work that students do through Activate Instruction is connected to ShowEvidence, another online tool that shows a roadmap of students' projects in a cognitive skills rubric.

## How does it improve learning?

Before Summit instructors meet with students one-on-one and in groups, they can view assessment feedback from each student through Activate Instruction, which helps instructors know whether to spend time reinforcing concepts students learned in the online curriculum or pushing students to go deeper into the content. Teachers can use assessment feedback to target instruction to concepts that students are struggling with, or to enrich their learning by having students practice knowledge transfer or critical reasoning skills. By combining self-directed independent learning with deeper learning with teachers, Summit hopes that its graduates will be better prepared to succeed in college.

## What is the advantage for instructors and administrators?

Instructors use Activate Instruction playlists to individualize instruction for a wide range of student abilities in one classroom. When students and teachers come together for face-to-face instruction, instructors can then be even more effective at fostering some of the cognitive skills that come from deeper dives into concepts.

The integrated assessments through Illuminate free teachers from proctoring exams. They spend less time grading assessments and more time enriching students' academic experience. Finally, Activate Instruction is a platform through which instructors can monitor every student's progress toward individual PLP goals.

## What are the challenges?

The theory behind Activate Instruction is that practitioners will continue to add to the bank of resources in Activate Instruction, making the curriculum relevant and useful to a broad spectrum of educators. However, because the tool is free and open, the pace of this iterative process depends upon the action or inaction of practitioners. At present, however, all indications are that collaboration is leading to a robust selection of curriculum.

## What's next?

As more students and teachers utilize Activate Instruction, Summit and its technology partners continue to improve the user interface and usability of the system. Summit is working with Illuminate to make some data reports easier to access. Finally, as the bank of online OER expands, those resources will continue to be added to Activate Instruction.

**ARTIFACT:**

Sample Playlist in Activate Instruction.

(Click on a screenshot to open the playlist in your browser.)

## MLA style 1

Created By Summit English
By the time you finish this playlist, you should be able to:
1. Format a paper using MLA style.
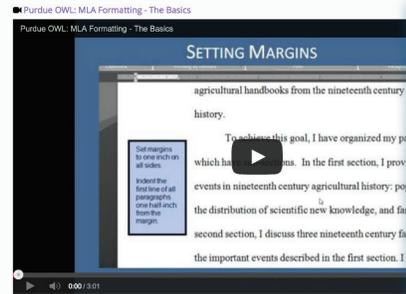2. Correctly format titles using italics, underlining, or quotation marks.

| 👍 | 👎 | Introductory Material |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 0 | Diagnostic Assessment: MLA style 1 |
| 👍 | 👎 | MLA Format |
| 69 | 10 | MLA Formatting and Style Guide |
| 47 | 8 | MLA Formatting: The Basics |
| 2 | 0 | Check for Understanding: MLA Format |
| 2 | 0 | Answer Key: MLA Format |
| 👍 | 👎 | Titles |
| 69 | 4 | Titles Using Italics and Quotation Marks |
| 40 | 4 | Italics and Underlining |
| 39 | 3 | Dealing with Titles in MLA Format |
| 1 | 0 | Check for Understanding: Titles |
| 1 | 0 | Answer Key: Titles |
| 👍 | 👎 | Content Assessment |
| 0 | 0 | Content Assessment: MLA style 1 |

### MLA Formatting: The Basics

Created By Summit English
In 2 Playlist(s)
**Description:**
A video outlining the basics of MLA formatting.
**Purpose:**
Watch this video to learn the basic requirements of MLA formatting.

Purdue OWL: MLA Formatting - The Basics

SETTING MARGINS

More in MLA style 1

Introductory Material
Diagnostic Assessment: MLA style 1

MLA Format
MLA Formatting and Style Guide
MLA Formatting: The Basics
Check for Understanding: MLA Format
Answer Key: MLA Format

Titles
Titles Using Italics and Quotation Marks
Italics and Underlining
Dealing with Titles in MLA Format
Check for Understanding: Titles
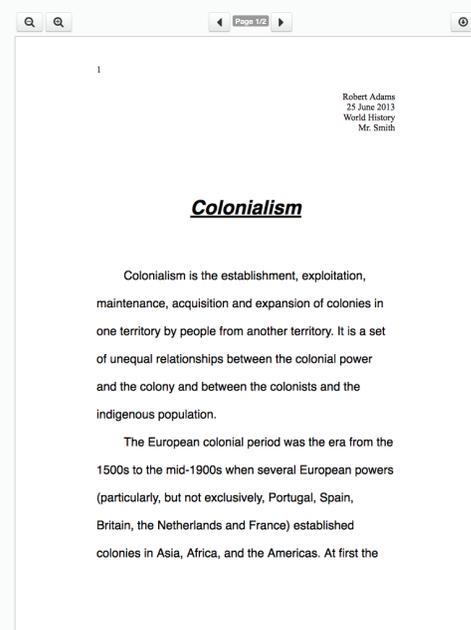Answer Key: Titles

Content Assessment
Content Assessment: MLA style 1

### Check for Understanding: MLA Format

Created By Summit English
In 1 Playlist(s)
**Description:**
A sample paper that does not follow MLA style guidelines.
**Purpose:**
Download this document and use your knowledge of MLA style to format it correctly.

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Robert Adams
25 June 2013
World History
Mr. Smith

### *Colonialism*

Colonialism is the establishment, exploitation, maintenance, acquisition and expansion of colonies in one territory by people from another territory. It is a set of unequal relationships between the colonial power and the colony and between the colonists and the indigenous population.

The European colonial period was the era from the 1500s to the mid-1900s when several European powers (particularly, but not exclusively, Portugal, Spain, Britain, the Netherlands and France) established colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. At first the

More in MLA style 1

Introductory Material
Diagnostic Assessment: MLA style 1

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Check for Understanding: MLA Format
Answer Key: MLA Format

Titles
Titles Using Italics and Quotation Marks
Italics and Underlining
Dealing with Titles in MLA Format
Check for Understanding: Titles
Answer Key: Titles

Content Assessment
Content Assessment: MLA style 1

## Activate Instruction℠
A free tool to personalize learning

## USE IT:

- Activate Instruction is freely available on the web.
  http://www.activateinstruction.org
- Contract required to integrate with Illuminate assessments.
  https://www.illuminateed.com
- Contract required to integrate with ShowEvidence.
  http://www.showevidence.com

## FOR MORE INFORMATION:

**Summit Public Schools:**

http://summitps.org

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## NEXT GENERATION LEARNING CHALLENGES

nextgenlearning.org