

Trinity Christian School Tiger Writing Guide

Your Guide to Making Your Mark Through Writing.

Whatever may be your task, work at it heartily (from the soul), as
[something done] for the Lord and not for men.

Colossians 3: 23 ^{Amplified Bible}

Welcome to the TCS Tiger Writing Guide! The purpose of the guide is to help you find answers to your questions about writing. Throughout this year, you will be writing for a variety of purposes, but the basic rules of writing apply in all cases. Blessings as you develop as a writer in this very important year.

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The 6 + 1 Traits of Good Writing

Ideas and Content

We don't want [the writer] to describe every ride at Disneyland or tell us that the Grand Canyon is awesome... If one of the rides at Disneyland got stuck or if somebody fell into the awesome Grand Canyon, that would be worth hearing about. – William Zinsser

Ideas and content is what you have to say – the reason for writing your paper. Everything about your writing begins with that message. If you can choose your own topic, pick something important to you, that you know a lot about. If someone picks the topic for you, look for a way to connect it to your own experience. That way you can use what you know.

Keep it small. If your topic is too big (like “Animals of Africa”) you’ll wind up trying to tell too much and not be able to focus on any one idea long enough to make it clear. Skinny it down (“Why Lions Hunt in Pairs”).

Surprise your reader with what you know. Don’t spend time on things that anyone else

could write. Don't say, "Cooking in a restaurant can be hard work." Even people who don't cook can figure that out. Instead, tell what goes on in the kitchen when an angry customer sends the food back. *That* would be an interesting insight!

One more hint: **Make your ideas crystal clear.** Avoid general statements like "Our trip was exciting." Exciting how? Instead say, "I chased two very hungry black bears away from our camping supplies." Specific details that help the reader picture what is happening can make or break your writing.

Organization

I look back and forth and see potential endings and titles and leads. I'm looking for a trail through the material I have... -- Donald Murray.

Without a clear trail, your ideas collapse or crash into each other. It is the **organization that gives your writing direction** and helps the reader move through the ideas in a purposeful way.

Begin with a strong lead so you hook the reader right away. Don't settle for "Once upon a time" or "My paper is about dogs." Think about your lead working like a fishing lure or fly that dangles right in front of the nose of the fish until it just can't resist and takes a big, committed bite.

If you take a look at your whole piece of writing, **it should carefully build** to the most important moment or point you are trying to make. Toss your reader interesting details that work like stepping stones – each getting the reader closer and closer to the key idea or event.

The order of your details is really important, too. Ideas shouldn't dive bomb the reader out of the blue; they should come at just the right time to help the reader understand. Everything needs to fit together with a strong connecting line back to the main idea.

Watch out for getting bogged down in trivial details (what color the help's socks were, or whether she had milk on her cereal.) Keep moving right along. And when you reach the end of the story or make your last point, STOP! Make that last sentence count by leaving the reader with something to think about. Good endings are tough, but don't fall into the pit with "And I woke up and it was only a dream," or "No you know the three reasons why Americans should carpool." Readers won't feel satisfied with these endings and neither will you.

Voice

Voice separates writing that is read from writing that is not read...Voice is the writer revealed. – Donald Murray

Voice is YOU coming through your writing. It's what gives your writing personality, flavor, style, and sound all its own. Only you can give your writing this special touch because no one else sees the world quite the way you do. Your voice is a distinctively yours as your fingerprints.

Honesty is important to create voice in your writing. You must say what you truly think and feel – not what you think someone else might want to hear. This takes courage. You must write from the inside out – from the part of you that's in touch with your feelings. This means you need to know yourself, listen to yourself, and trust those thoughts and feelings. Sometimes the very act of writing will help you discover what you truly think and feel. It's risky, a bit scary, and exciting, too.

Think about your reader as you write. Write directly to that person just as if he or she was standing there talking to you. Be yourself. Don't try to impress the reader. Readers will respond to your sincerity, honesty, and conviction.

Write with confidence, as if you know what you're talking about and it is utterly fascinating. Your enthusiasm will be contagious and will draw the reader into your writer's web of ideas and feelings.

Word Choice

I do not choose the right word; I get rid of the wrong one. – A.E. Housman

As you read and listen to other people speak, you cultivate a rich vocabulary of precise and colorful words that let you say exactly what you want – not come close, but nail it right on the head. This is the essence of good word choice. Every new word increases your power.

In his book, *On Writing Well*, William Zinsser says, "**Verbs are the most important of all your tools.** They push the sentence forward and give it momentum...flail, poke, dazzle, squash, beguile, pamper, swagger, wheedle, vex. Probably no other language has such a vast supply of verbs so bright with color." Learn to develop a critical eye toward verbs in your work. Are they active, powerful, full of energy and pizzazz?

Keep the vocabulary natural. Never write to impress or you'll end up with sentences like this: "He cultivated his way into the kitchen," or "Our friendship was highly lucrative." In an attempt to

use words that were bigger, these writers forgot to make sure they made sense. A thesaurus can be a good friend to a writer, but only if used sparingly and with thought.

Your writing works best with specific words carefully chosen to create a vivid picture in the reader's mind. **Play around with the words until they sound good.** Don't say, "The dog was big and mean." Say "A hundred pounds of snarling yellow fur launched itself from the porch, straining at a rope thin as spaghetti." Now that's something we can see happening!

Sentence Fluency

Clarity. Clarity. Clarity. When you become hopelessly mired in a sentence, it is best to start fresh... -- Strunk and White The Elements of Style

Read what you write aloud and **listen to the rhythm of the language**. Do you like what you hear? Does it make you sit up and take notice, or are you lulled to sleep by the sing-song sameness of each sentence pattern? Writers who read a lot notice that they develop a feeling for sentences that some people call “sentence sense.” It’s that sense that there’s more than one way to say a thing – but some ways just sound better than others.

Your sentences should be clear; they should make sense. **Cut the deadwood**. Don’t say “At this point in time we feel we are about ready to begin to fight.” Say, “Now we’re ready to fight.” Make every word work hard and your sentences will be powerful, full of punch.

Notice how your sentences begin. These beginnings are repetitive and boring: “We went to the beach. We had fun. We saw seagulls. We went home.” Vary the openings and combine very short sentences: “Despite being overrun with pesky seagulls, we had fun at the beach.”

Don’t let sentences drift on too long, either. If a sentence feels unwieldy, out of control, slice it in half. Make two sentences. As Zinsser tells us, “There is no minimum length for a sentence that’s acceptable...Among good writers, it is the short sentence that predominates.

Read your work aloud and listen to the rhythm and flow of the words. Does the fluency match the mood and content? Long and flowing where the piece is descriptive and thoughtful. Short and snappy where you need to make a point.

Conventions

One of the hardest tasks of the writer is to read what is on the page, not what the writer hoped would be on the page. – Donald Murray

Conventions are the rules of language – spelling, punctuation, grammar, usage, paragraphing, and capitalization – that make your text correct and easy for others to read. When you follow the rules, readers don’t need to waste energy mentally editing; they can pay attention to your clever ideas, creative organization, unique voice, vibrant word choice, and lyrical fluency.

Conventions are different from the first five traits because to improve those traits you have been

learning how to revise – how to rethink and re-see your work. **Editing is fixing – making sure the text is as error-free as possible.** The purpose is to make your paper readable to someone else. Sometimes mistakes in conventions get in the way and keep the reader from understanding your message. They also irritate some readers – something no writer sets out to do deliberately.

Develop a proofreader's eye. Check everything, then check it again. It's often hard to spot your own mistakes. Try reading aloud; it makes you slow down. You may also find it helpful to have someone else look at your work.

The Writing Process

Assessing your audience

Write appropriately for whoever will be reading your piece. This includes choosing vocabulary and sentence structures to suit the reader(s). The way you write a note to your friend objecting to the dress code is likely to be more casual than the way you write a letter on the same topic to a principal; a letter addressed to the school board or written as a Letter to the Editor of the *Statesman* is likely to be even more precise and formal.

Developing a Purpose

When making decisions about where to begin working with a topic, you need to be clear about your purpose for writing. Here are some ideas of how to focus a paper on SPORTS.

1. You could write a **NARRATIVE**. A narrative tells a story about a time when something happened. It has a beginning, middle, and end. It often has a setting and characters. One of the characters might be you. This is a personal narrative. A narrative on the topic of sports might have these titles: The Time I Struck Out, I Nearly Drowned, A Game I'll Never Forget, I Thought We Would...
2. You could write an **EXPOSITORY** essay. Expository writing explains and provides information; it may use a story for an example, but the purpose is not to tell a story. It is to inform or to show how. Sets of directions, travel brochures, newspaper articles, computer manuals, school essays, and textbooks are all examples of expository writing. For the general topic of sport, you might EXPLAIN how to avoid sports injuries. TELL step by step how to execute a slam dunk in basketball. EXPLAIN what it takes to be a great long distance swimmer. PROVIDE INFORMATION on the best places in your area to buy equipment. TELL HOW to maintain ski equipment.
3. You could write a **PERSUASIVE** piece on sports. The purpose would be to convince someone else to understand and appreciate your point of view. It needs to be something you feel strongly about and you need to use specific information to build your case. Think about how focused an attorney is as he passionately argues for his client in front of a jury. Talk a friend into joining the swimming team with you. Convince a parent to let you bungee jump. Talk the coach into no more Saturday practices. Persuade the School Board to add skateboarding to the school athletic program. Convince someone that tennis is more valuable to know how to play than baseball.
4. Write a **DESCRIPTION** of an event, feeling, thought, or object. When you describe, you need to use very specific words to make a vivid picture in the reader's mind. Search out the telling details and then surround them with words. Your description makes everything clear for the reader like bringing the world into focus through a pair of binoculars. When your

binoculars are in focus, you can see even the tiniest and most intriguing details. You might explain to someone how it felt the day of your first big game with the soccer team, describe equipment you need to play football, tell what it was like to be the catcher on the baseball team when the 200 pound base runner started home from 3rd base, etc.

Pre-Writing

Generate ideas through brainstorming, researching, freewriting, mapping, and outlining key ideas. Begin organizing these ideas and narrowing your subject into a workable topic.

Drafting

Begin by narrowing your topic to a **thesis statement** – one sentence that will serve as the overall purpose of your essay.

Broad subject: *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*

Specific topic: Draco Malfoy

Question about the topic: Why is Draco important to the story?

Thesis: Draco Malfoy serves as a contrast to the goodness of Harry Potter and his friends.

Next, organize the information into main ideas for your paper (as a general rule, you want at least two or three main ideas). These main ideas will be developed into **topic sentences** – sentences that establish the purpose of each body paragraph.

Now, choose a paragraph structure that will best suit your topic and writing style (such as eight-sentence format or major point/minor point format).

Then incorporate text and details to support your main ideas. Be sure to follow the rules for quotations and internal documentation when you use information from a text.

Finally, conclude the essay by connecting the thesis to a larger issue such as the community, something personal, other works of literature, or world events.

Revising

This step involves moving around large blocks of text, examining the order of the paragraphs, and assessing the detail and commentary provided in the original draft. Major changes occur at this stage of writing.

Editing

This step involves looking for errors in mechanics, spelling, word choice, and sentence structure. Minor changes occur in the editing step. **HINT:** Often reading the essay out loud or reading it from back to front helps the writer notice previously undetected mistakes. It is also a good idea to have another person edit the essay before the final copy.

Publishing

This is the final step in the writing process; it involves turning in a final copy of your essay. Make sure you follow your teacher's specific instructions for handing in the essay. Unless otherwise instructed, use the MLA guidelines for headings and margins.

Definition of an essay

An **ESSAY** is multi-paragraph and includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. An essay is not one paragraph or a certain number of sentences or paragraphs.

SHORT ANSWER is a few sentences that also include a beginning, middle, and end. The basic structure for a short answer response is main idea → supporting detail → writer's commentary → conclusion. The following is a suggested pattern for completing short answer responses.

Five Sentence Response:

Answer **WITH** a reason.

Explain your answer.

Use a detailed and appropriate piece of the text (quotation) to illustrate what you mean.

Explain how the quotation ties to your answer.

Tie it all back to the prompt or to a main theme of the piece.

Anatomy of an Essay

The Introduction

To write a satisfactory introductory paragraph, the writer must include three fundamental parts: the attention getter, the bridge, and the thesis statement.

The Attention-Getter

The purpose of the attention-getter is to capture the reader's attention, to make him or her want to continue reading. The length of the attention-getter will vary depending on which type you use. The following are types of attention-getters:

1. Narrative / Anecdote – tell a true or fictional story related to your topic
2. Illustration – give a specific example related to your topic
3. Startling Statistic – provide shocking or surprising information
4. Analogy – draw a comparison between your subject and something else
5. Rhetorical Question – use a well-chosen, relevant question (or questions) to raise the reader's curiosity
6. Definition – define your topic if the meaning is vague or uncommon
7. Statement of Opposing View – for effect, build up one point of view in the attention-getter and then change it in the thesis
8. Quotation – select a quotation from an important authority, a famous personality, or a fragment of verse or prose that is relevant to your thesis
9. Compare / Contrast – present a series of contrasting examples

The Bridge

Because attention getters represent broad ideas and thesis statements represent narrow, focused ideas, directly connecting them is often awkward. However, if the ideas are not logically connected, the reader is required to jump across this gulf of ideas in order to make the connection. Since the gulf must be crossed, providing a “bridge” for the reader to cross is better than having the reader jump to a random sentence. Some readers are unable to make the jump, so you have lost their attention before you have even begun. Take the following example:

Attention Getter: How many times does a National Football League team rally from twenty-one points behind in the fourth quarter to win the game?

Thesis Statement: The Dallas Cowboys have historically been the luckiest team in the National Football League.

Even though these two statements are loosely connected (they both involve football), to have the second immediately follow the first leaves the reader “in the gap” wondering what logical connection there might be between the National Football League, twenty-one points, rallying, and the Dallas Cowboys.

A writer must, therefore, *bridge* these two seemingly dissimilar ideas. Consider the following:

How often does a team come from twenty-one points behind to win in the National Football League? In the 1997 football season, such a feat did not happen a single time. And yet, it occurred on Sunday of the first weekend of the 1999 season during the Dallas-Washington football game. No one will doubt the role of luck in such a comeback, and all teams enjoy some measure of luck at one time or another, but the Dallas Cowboy franchise appears to have had more than its share. In fact, many consider the Cowboys to be the luckiest franchise in the history of the National Football League.

Note how the “bridge” (underlined in the above example) works on a basic level. Three ideas are mentioned in the thesis which are not mentioned in the attention getter. These are “the Dallas Cowboys,” the concept of “luck,” and the opinion that “the Cowboys are lucky.” Note in the example how we work the writing to bring the concept of the Dallas team into the essay. Later, the concept of luck is introduced, and finally, before the thesis, the two are linked in one sentence, and the concept comes full circle.

Writing the Thesis Statement

Write a complete sentence (simple or complex, not compound)

Avoid "be" verbs (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been, has, have, had)

Avoid mentioning the paper such as "In this essay, I will..."

Make sure your thesis includes an opinion worth proving, not an observable fact.

Wrong: My essay is about the works of John Keats and how his life affected his

writing.

RIGHT: John Keats's family history of illness and early death affected the tone of his poetry.

Wrong: Charles Dickens wrote many novels that include compelling child characters.

RIGHT: Charles Dickens demonstrates poor economic conditions in Victorian England through the experiences of his novels' compelling child characters.

Basic Paragraph Structure: Two Methods

*Please note that these outlines provide only a guideline for structuring paragraphs. They are NOT meant to dictate precise numbers of sentences in paragraphs or essays and should not be interpreted rigidly. Students should adapt these structures to fit their specific evidence and main ideas. **The objective is to make sure that each body paragraph supports the thesis statement, includes ample evidence through text, facts, and details, and includes the writer's own thoughts and observations about the supporting detail.***

Eight Sentence Paragraph Format

This format is also called "chunk writing." Despite the name, each paragraph can have more than eight sentences. The writer may have additional concrete details and/or commentary.

The basic outline for this format is as follows:

- I. Topic Sentence [1]
 - A. Concrete detail [2]
 1. Commentary [3]
 2. Commentary [4]
 - B. Concrete detail [5]
 1. Commentary [6]
 2. Commentary [7]
 - C. Summary Sentence or Transition sentence [8]

The following is an example of a paragraph written in eight-sentence format:

[topic sentence →] Draco Malfoy's harsh features indicate his tendency to cause trouble. [concrete detail →] His "sleek blond hair and pointed chin were just like his father's" (Rowling 194). [commentary →] The words "sleek" and "pointed" remind one of something rigid and fixed. [commentary →] Malfoy is unwilling to compromise or try to get along with the others at Hogwarts like his father who buys his way into getting what he wants. [concrete detail →] Likewise, as Ron and Hermione laugh at Draco, his "lip curl[s]" and he replies with "smirking" (194). [commentary →] The children always wonder what ill-will Draco has in store for them behind the crooked

and arrogant smile. [commentary →] Draco's face cannot hide his malicious nature and his ability to spoil the plans of the well-meaning students. [summary sentence →] While looks can be deceiving, Draco's looks provide a clue to the reader that danger lurks ahead.

Majors/Minors Paragraph Format:

While either format is acceptable, we encourage more experienced writers to explore the majors/minors format. Major supports are general statements that the writer wishes to prove; minor supports offer specific proof and elaboration. This format also is flexible, and additional major or minor supports can be used as needed, as can be seen in the example.

The basic outline for the majors/minors format is:

- I. Topic Sentence
 - A. Major Support
 1. Minor Support (detail, facts, evidence)
 2. Minor Support
 - B. Major Support
 1. Minor Support
 2. Minor Support
 - C. Major Support
 1. Minor Support
 2. Minor Support
 - D. Summary Sentence or Transition sentence

The following is an example of a paragraph written in majors/minors format:

[topic sentence →] In most cases, college students enjoy much more freedom than high school students. [major point →] In college, students often have more free time than they had in high school. [minor point →] For example, college classes generally meet every other day rather than every day. [minor point →] Also, students may be in class for three to four hours instead of seven or eight. [minor point →] However, students must learn quickly that the extra hours in the day are best used for doing school work since no class time is given for this in college. [major point →] College also shifts accountability from the parents and teachers to the students. [minor point →] In many college classes, the professor does not take roll; therefore, students are free to decide when they will go to class. [minor point →] Likewise, students must keep up with longer reading assignments and more information without the benefit of daily reminders and weekly quizzes. [minor point →] Students can schedule their studying around other events, but many learn very soon that keeping up with the professor's syllabus will result in greater success. [major point →] New college students are generally the most excited about social freedom. [minor point →] College co-eds, for the most part, enjoy a curfew-free environment for the first time. [minor point →] Students also spend their money as they wish and develop their own budgets. This often results in the stereotypical phone call home for money. [minor point →] After running out of money one time too often or oversleeping because they stayed out too late again, college students learn the ultimate value of budgets and curfews. [concluding statement →] Even though some of the lessons are hard to learn, college students still find that the extra freedom they enjoy in college is a welcome change.

Topic Sentence

A **topic sentence** is the one point or main idea that the body paragraph makes about the subject. It is one reason why the thesis statement is valid.

Make sure that when you write your essay that each body paragraph has a solid topic sentence. Since your topic sentence is one reason why the thesis is valid, your topic sentence can be a “because” statement. For example:

Thesis statement + *because* + reason

My grandma’s house is my special place because her furniture is comfortable.

This whole paragraph will then describe how Grandma’s comfortable furniture makes her house a special place.

Your topic sentences should directly reflect the idea of your thesis statement. They may even include your thesis statement in their subject. Your reader should be able to look at any of your topic sentences and understand what the thesis statement is without knowing your thesis statement ahead of time.

The rest of your body paragraph is evidence in the form of concrete detail and commentary/ elaboration (or major and minor supports).

Evidence: Support with Detail or Text

A **concrete detail** is a fact, quotation, piece of evidence, or statement used in support of your topic sentence. Each body paragraph will consist of at least two concrete details on which you will elaborate.

In the following example, the concrete detail follows the topic sentence and is underlined:

My grandma’s house is my special place because her furniture is comfortable. For example, the minute I relax on her couch, I find myself drifting off to sleep.

In this concrete detail, the writer uses the couch as evidence of Grandma’s comfortable furniture.

Paraphrasing and Using Quotations

There are three ways you can use other people’s information:

Paraphrase – rewriting the information in your own words

Embedded Quotation – quoting (word for word) only a few key words or phrases

Full Quotation –quoting (word for word) an entire sentence or paragraph

The best papers will blend all the three methods. To understand how to paraphrase and use quotations, we will use a paragraph taken from Ray Bradbury’s afterword to his novel

Fahrenheit 451.

ORIGINAL SAMPLE

Finally, many readers have written protesting Clarisse's disappearance, wondering what happened to her. Francois Truffaut felt the same curiosity, and in the film version of my novel, rescued Clarisse from oblivion and located her with the book people wandering in the forest, reciting their litany of books to themselves. I felt the same need to save her, for after all, she, verging on silly star-struck chatter, was in many ways responsible for Montag's beginning to wonder about books and what was in them. In my play, therefore, Clarisse emerges to welcome Montag, and give a somewhat happier ending to what was, in essence, pretty grim stuff.

Paraphrase

Rewrite information into your own words without changing the author's meaning or intent.

For example:

Bradbury writes in the afterword to *Fahrenheit 451* that, like the man who directed the film version of the novel, he too feels the need to resurrect Clarisse. In the play he writes of the novel, he does have Clarisse meet Montag at the end. This makes sense since Clarisse was so important in awakening Montag to think for himself (178).

Embedded Quotation

Carefully choose a few words or a phrase to quote word for word; put the author's exact words in quotation marks and blend with paraphrase.

Embedded quotations are an effective and powerful way to share the author's exact words while still maintaining your own voice.

The words or phrases you choose to quote should be significant—in general, do not quote facts (i.e.

In the original example, it would be a waste of a quotation to quote "Bradbury writes in the afterword." There is nothing profound about that.)

For example:

Bradbury writes in the afterword to *Fahrenheit 451* that when he wrote a play of his novel, he "rescues Clarisse from oblivion," as did the man who directed the film version of the novel (178). Bradbury believes this is appropriate because her "silly, star-struck chatter" was crucial in helping Montag learn to wonder and think for himself (178).

Full Quotation

If you find a sentence, or several sentences, with such significance that not using the author's exact words will cause your paper to lack effectiveness or accuracy, then you may include them word for word in your paper; put quotation marks around author's exact words.

Full quotations are only effective if used sparingly.

The sentence(s) you choose to quote should be significant—again, in general, do not quote facts

For example:

Short Quotation (4 lines or fewer)

In talking about why he wrote *Clarisse* back into the play version of his novel, Bradbury says, "I felt the same need to save her, for after all, she, verging on silly star-struck chatter, was in many ways responsible for Montag's beginning to wonder about books and what was in them" (178).

Long Quotation (more than 4 lines): Indent entire block of text one inch and omit quotation marks; in this one instance, the punctuation goes before the internal documentation.

In talking about why he wrote *Clarisse* back into the play version of his novel, Bradbury says,

I felt the same need to save her, for after all, she, verging on silly star-struck chatter, was in many ways responsible for Montag's beginning to wonder about books and what was in them. In my play, therefore, *Clarisse* emerges to welcome Montag and give a somewhat happier ending to what was, in essence, pretty grim stuff. (178)

Omissions in Quotations

Sometimes it is necessary to take out or change part of a quotation in order to maintain the flow and structure of your paper. These are a few guidelines:

If you leave out any words in a quotation in order to maintain the flow of your paper, you must insert an ellipsis (three dots) in brackets to indicate where the omission occurs. In the following example, the words *in essence* were omitted:

Example: In Bradbury's play, "Clarisse emerges to welcome Montag, and give a somewhat happier ending to what was [...] pretty grim stuff" (178).

Do not leave out any words that will change the meaning of a sentence you are quoting. This is not honest.

Also use brackets [] if you add words of your own or make other changes, such as using *he* in place of *I* or changing a verb tense, to fit the quotation into the structure and grammar of your own sentence.

Commentary and Elaboration

Commentary and **elaboration** are your opinion, interpretation, insight, personal response, evaluation, reflection, or supporting evidence about a concrete detail in an essay. When you write commentary and elaboration, you are "commenting on" a point that you have made.

There are several types of commentary or elaboration, and the acronym **SCOPE** may help you.

S → Statistics: Use reasonable data and/or refer to sources

Example: [concrete detail →] Teen drivers are some of the most dangerous on the road. [commentary →] In fact, Time magazine has stated that teens are the worst drivers we face, and studies have shown that teens are involved in forty-seven percent of all accidents.

C → Comparisons: Reference the detail to something that has meaning to the reader, something to which it can be related.

Example: [concrete detail →] Teen drivers are some of the most dangerous on the road. [commentary →] Many drive as though they were Indy 500 racers.

O → Outcomes: Make a connection between the reason and outcome (effect)

Example: [concrete detail →] Teen drivers are often guilty of exceeding the speed limit. [commentary →] Driving in this manner often causes the driver to lose control and crash.

P → Personal Anecdote: Relate a *short* personal story.

Example: [concrete detail →] Teen drivers are some of the most dangerous on the road. [commentary →] When I was younger, I was no exception. I loved speed and would often go to deserted stretches of highway to enjoy the exhilaration of racing down the road.

E → Example: Describe a situation or event.

Example: [concrete detail →] Teen drivers are some of the most dangerous on the road. [commentary →] Just last week John Smith, a sixteen year old, was clocked by the police at eighty miles per hour while he was driving on Mellow Meadow Dr.

Note that each concrete detail is followed by commentary/elaboration—an extension of the idea. In your writing, you may mix methods of commentary and elaboration but do not leave this important information out.

Summary Sentence

The **summary sentence** reflects the topic sentence. Basically, all you need to do is reword the topic sentence. As you mature as a writer, the summary sentence can also be used as a transition sentence into your next body paragraph.

It is important to remember never to introduce new information or new ideas in your summary sentence. This sentence is strictly for summarizing what you have said in the body paragraph and transitioning to the next main idea of your paper.

Transitions

Transitional words and phrases serve as a way to link your thoughts from one sentence to the next sentence, from one idea to the next idea, or from one paragraph to the next paragraph. Transitions also help your sentences and paragraphs flow together seamlessly by preventing

jumps between thoughts–this provides coherence. See the table below for an organized list.

| Purpose | Transition Words & Phrases |
|------------------------|--|
| Sequence | again, also, and, and then, besides, finally, first...second...third, furthermore, last, moreover, next, still, too |
| Time | after a bit, after a few days, after a while, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, before, earlier, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, then, thereafter, until, when |
| Comparison | again, also, in the same way, likewise, once more, similarly |
| Contrast | although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the one hand, regardless, still, though, yet |
| Examples | after all, even, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, of course, specifically, such as, the following example, to illustrate |
| Cause and Effect | accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, so, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end |
| Place | above, adjacent to, below, beyond, closer to, elsewhere, far, farther on, here, near, nearby, opposite to, there, to the left, to the right |
| Concession | although it is true that, granted that, I admit that, it may appear that, naturally, of course |
| Summary/ Conclusion | as a result, as has been noted, as I have said, as we have seen, in any event, in conclusion, in other words, in short, on the whole, therefore, to summarize |

Conclusion

Every essay should include an ending called the conclusion. For shorter essays, often a strong concluding sentence at the end of the last body paragraph will suffice. For longer essays, however, a separate concluding paragraph is more appropriate. (Ask your teacher for specific requirements). In each case, the information should avoid any new information. The words should "echo" the ideas in the thesis statement. The most effective conclusions will then connect the idea in the thesis to a larger issue such as the writer himself, the community, or another related topic or literary work. One technique for conclusions, called "bookending," relates back specifically to the original attention-getting device in the introduction.

Guidelines for Formatting

Basics

Paper: Your paper must be word-processed on unlined 8 1/2" x 11" white paper.

Margins: Use 1" margins on all sides of the page.

Name and page numbers: Your last name and page number should appear in the upper right hand corner one-half inch from the top of the page and one inch from the right side of the paper. (use the header function for this step). Number all pages including page one (and your works cited page if research is involved). It should look like this: **Travolta 5** (DO NOT write p. or page. DO NOT put in a hyphen. DO NOT write your first name.)

Wrong: Travolta p. 5

Wrong: Travolta page 5

Wrong: John Travolta -5

RIGHT: Travolta 5

Spacing: Double space your entire paper. That means your heading, your long quotations, and works cited. DO NOT triple or quadruple space.

Heading: Your heading will appear one inch from the top and left edges of your paper only on the first page. Double space between each of the following: **your complete name, your teacher's name, the name of your class, and the complete date in this form: 24 October 2006.** Be sure to double space; do not triple or quadruple space. See the example below.

Travolta 1

John Travolta

Mrs. Davis

English III-1

24 October 2005

Life After Vinny Barbarino

Begin essay here....

Title: Return only once after the date and center the title. Use upper and lowercase letters, not all capitals; do not enclose your title in quotation marks. Underline only words that need to be underlined, such as titles. Return once after the title, indent and begin your first paragraph.

Indentions: Indent five spaces (or 1/2") from your left margin. (one tab)

Paragraphing: Do not leave a single line of a paragraph at the bottom or the top of a page.

Citations for MLA (In-Text)

In MLA style, in-text citations, called parenthetical citations, are used to document any external sources used within a document (unless the material cited is considered general knowledge). The parenthetical citations direct readers to the full bibliographic citations listed in the Works Cited, located at the end of the document. In most cases, the parenthetical citations include the author's last name and the specific page number for the information cited. Here are general guidelines for in-text citations, including *HYPERLINK "http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/mlaparen.html" \l "name" use of authors' names, HYPERLINK "http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/mlaparen.html" \l "placement" placement of citations, and HYPERLINK "http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/research/mlaparen.html" \l "electronic" treatment of electronic sources.*

Use of Authors' Names

Always mention the author's name—either in the text itself or in the parenthetical citation—unless no author is provided.

If the author's name is not mentioned in the text

If the author's name is not used in the sentence introducing the source material, then include the author's last name in the parenthetical citation before the page number(s). Note that no comma appears between the author's name and the page number(s). Here is an example:

The modern world requires both the ability to concentrate on one thing and the ability to attend to more than one thing at a time: "Ideally, each individual would cultivate a repertoire of styles of attention, appropriate to different situations, and would learn how to embed activities and types of attention one within another" (Bateson 97).

If the author's name is mentioned in the text

If the author's name is used in the text introducing the source material, then cite the page number(s) in parentheses:

Branscomb argues that "it's a good idea to lurk (i.e., read all the messages without contributing anything) for a few weeks, to ensure that you don't break any of the rules of netiquette" (7) when joining a listserv.

If there is more than one work by the same author

If a document uses more than one work by an individual author, include an abbreviated form of the title of the work in addition to the author's name and relevant page number(s). Separate the author's name and the title with a comma:

Hyper textuality makes text borderless as it "redefines not only beginning and

endings of the text but also its borders—its sides, as it were" (Landow, Hypertext 2.0 79).

If two authors have the same last name

If the document uses two sources by authors with the same last name, include the author's first name in the text or the parenthetical citation:

Tom Peters talks about a company that facilitates employees' renewal by shutting down its factory for several hours per week while teams work through readings on current business topics (57).

If there are two or three authors

If a source has two or three authors, place all of the authors' last names in the text or in the parenthetical citation:

A team can be defined as "a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (Katzenbach and Smith 45).

If there are four or more authors

If a source has four or more authors, include the first author's last name followed by et al. (Latin for and others), either in the text or in the parenthetical citation. You can also name all of the authors:

Cogdill et al. argue that "making backchannel overtly available for study would require making its presence and content visible and its content persist, affecting the nature of the backchannel and raising social and ethical issues" (109).

If the source has a corporate author

If a source has a corporate author, include the author's name and the page(s). If the corporate author's name is long, it should be included in the text rather than the parentheses:

According to the Centre for Development and Population Activities, interest in gender roles and responsibilities over the past decade has been "driven by the realization that women often do not benefit from development activities and in some cases become even poorer and more marginalized" (3).

If no author is identifies

If a source does not include an author's name, substitute for the author's name the title or an abbreviated title in the text or parenthetical citation. Underline the title if the source is a book;

if the source is an article, use quotation marks:

The use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems has grown substantially over the past five years as companies attempt to adapt to customer needs and to improve their profitability ("Making CRM Work").

Footnotes/Endnotes

Footnotes are citations contained at the bottom of the page where a source is referenced. Endnotes are at the end of the document before the works cited page. They both use the exact same formatting.

At the end of the sentence that contains the quotation or needing a reference marker place a superscript.¹ Microsoft Word allows you to select a footnote or endnote and automatically inserts the reference number and the citation placement. All notes should be a 10 pt font.

Format of the notes is as follows:

First Reference

Author's Name (First Last), *Title of Work*, (City of Publication: Publisher, Publication Year), pg.

Linda S. Hudson, *Mistress of Manifest Destiny*, (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2001), 15.

Every Consecutive Reference

Author's Last Name, *Short Title (One or Two Words)*, pg.

Hudson, *Mistress*, 15.

Plagiarism

"The accidental or intentional failure to identify your sources is considered plagiarism, an offense with severe consequences." (from The Next Level: What Colleges Expect from Your Writing)

Simply put, **plagiarism** is when you take an author's words or ideas and use them in your writing without giving him or her credit. If the idea did not occur to you before you began your research, then you must give credit to the source that inspired it. There are four types of plagiarism:

word-for-word plagiarism – a researcher repeats the exact words of a source without giving the necessary credit

paraphrase plagiarism – saying basically the same thing as an original source with just a few

words changed without a citation

spot plagiarism – using only a source’s key words without giving credit

self plagiarism – turning in an assignment that you have written and turned in for a previous course or assignment

Printing papers from the Internet has become an increasingly common practice at high schools and colleges around the nation; this too is plagiarism. It is the policy of most English departments that a plagiarized essay will receive a grade of zero. In college, plagiarism can lead to expulsion; in the workplace, plagiarism can result in termination. Plagiarism can be avoided by giving credit to the author(s) of information you use. This is done through internal documentation, also known as parenthetical documentation.

Revising and Editing

In the revision process, a writer should take the opportunity to improve the fluency of the essay by using a variety of sentence structures. Use the following Phrase Toolbox as a guide to sentence variety.

Phrase Toolbox

Prepositional Phrase: (shows relationship between words)

Adjective Phrase: (which one, what kind, how many?)

*The store **around the corner** is painted green.*

*The girl **with the blue hair** is angry.*

Adverb phrase: (when, how, where?)

*Oscar is painting his house **with the help of his friends**.*

*Sally is coloring **outside the lines**.*

Infinitive phrase: (“to” with a verb.)

***To dance gracefully** is my ambition.*

*Her plan **to become a millionaire** fell through.*

*She wanted **to become a veterinarian**.*

*John went to college **to study engineering**.*

Appositive phrase: (renames a noun or pronoun)

*My teacher, **a woman with curly hair**, is very tall.*

*Bowser, **the dog with the sharp teeth**, is coming around the corner.*

Participial phrase: (verb form functioning as an adjective)

***Blinded by the light**, Sarah walked into the concert hall.*

***Swimming for his life**, John crossed the English Channel.*

Gerund: (an “ing” verb form functioning as a noun)

***Walking in the moonlight** is a romantic way to end a date.*

*He particularly enjoyed **walking in the moonlight**.*

***Walking the dog** is not my favorite task.*

Absolute phrase (“ing” or “ed” form of a verb, modify the entire sentence, set off by

comma)

Their minds whirling from the avalanche of information provided by their teacher, the students made their way thoughtfully to the parking lot.
His head pounding, his hands shaking, his heart filled with trepidation, the young man knelt and proposed marriage to his sweetheart.
The two lovers walked through the garden, their faces reflecting the moonlight, their arms twined about each other, their footsteps echoing in the stillness of the night.

from Laying the Foundation, AP Strategies.

In addition to working on fluency, the writer should eliminate common errors in writing. The list below is a start. However, please note that the following list of editing guidelines is in no way a complete list of the errors you may have made in your essay.

The Seven Deadly Sins of Bad Writing

#1: Passive Voice

In most instances, put the verb in the active voice rather than in the passive voice. *Passive voice* produces a sentence in which the subject *receives* an action. In contrast, *active voice* produces a sentence in which the subject *performs* an action. Passive voice often produces unclear, wordy sentences, whereas active voice produces generally clearer, more concise sentences. To change a sentence from passive to active voice, determine who or what performs the action, and use that person or thing as the sentence's subject.

Examples

Passive voice:

On April 19, 1775, arms were seized at Concord, precipitating the American Revolution.

Active voice:

On April 19, 1775, British soldiers seized arms at Concord, precipitating the American Revolution.

Other examples of passive voice:

1. The process of modernization in any society is seen as a positive change.
2. The Count is presented as an honest, likeable character.
3. Thomas Jefferson's support of the new Constitution was documented in a letter to James Madison.

Overuse of *to be* (a related problem)

Use of forms of *to be* (*is, are, was, were*) leads to wordiness. Use an action verb to replace *to be* forms.

Example:

It is the combination of these two elements that makes the argument weak.

Revision:

The combination of these two elements weakens the argument.

#2: Incorrect Punctuation of Two Independent Clauses

(Note: an independent clause has a subject and a verb and can stand alone as a sentence.)

Good writers know that correct punctuation is important to writing clear sentences. If you misuse a mark of punctuation, you risk confusing your reader and appearing careless. Notice how the placement of commas significantly affects the meaning of these sentences:

Mr. Jones, says Ms. Moore, is a boring old fool.

Mr. Jones says Ms. Moore is a boring old fool.

Writers often combine independent clauses into a compound sentence to emphasize the relationship between ideas. Punctuation of compound sentences varies depending upon how you connect the clauses.

The rules are

- (a) Separate independent clauses with a **comma** when using a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or, for, nor, so, yet*).
- (b) Separate independent clauses with a **semi-colon** when no coordinating conjunction is used.
- (c) Separate independent clauses with a **semi-colon** when using a conjunctive adverb (e.g., *however, therefore, thus, consequently, finally, nevertheless*).

Examples of Correct Punctuation, Rule a:

1. *We all looked worse than usual, for we had stayed up studying for the exam.*
2. *This room is unbelievably hot, and I think that I am going to pass out.*
3. *Monday is a difficult day for me, so I try to prepare as much as possible on Sunday.*

Examples of Correct Punctuation, Rule b:

1. *We all looked worse than usual; we had stayed up all night studying for the exam.*
2. *This room is unbelievably hot; I think I am going to pass out.*
3. *Monday is a difficult day for me; I have three classes and two other commitments.*

Examples of Correct Punctuation, Rule c:

1. *We all looked worse than usual; however, we were relieved we had studied.*
2. *The discussion is really interesting; nevertheless, I think I am going to pass out.*
3. *Monday is a difficult day for me; however, I have figured out how to prepare for it.*

#3: Wordiness

Concise writing is the key to clear communication. Wordiness obscures your ideas and frustrates your reader. Make your points as succinctly as possible, and move on. As Strunk and White tell us in *Elements of Style*:

Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences.... This requires not that the writer make all sentences short, or avoid all detail and treat subjects only in outline, but that every word tell. (23)

Once you start searching for unnecessary words, you will find you can cut many without any loss of meaning. In fact, your writing will be crisper and more appealing. Remember: make "every word tell."

Strategies for eliminating wordiness:

Use action verbs rather than forms of the verb *to be* (*is, are, was, were*).

Wordy

The reason that General Lee invaded Pennsylvania in June, 1863, was to draw the Army of the Potomac away from Richmond.

Revised (replace *was* with action verb *invaded*)

General Lee invaded Pennsylvania in June, 1863, to draw the Army of the Potomac away from Richmond.

Tip: As a first step in reducing wordiness, identify instances of *this is*, *there are*, and *it is* at the beginning of your sentences, and ask yourself whether you can eliminate them.

Make the real subject the actual subject of the sentence; make the real verb the actual verb.

Wordy

In Crew's argument there are many indications of her misunderstanding of natural selection.

Revised (replace subject *there* with *argument*; replace verb *are* with *demonstrates*.)

Crew's argument repeatedly demonstrates misunderstanding of natural selection.

Eliminate Redundancies

My personal opinion, at the present time, by means of, the basic essentials, connect together, for the purpose of, in close proximity

Eliminate Unnecessary phrases/clauses

| | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <i>The reason why is that</i> | <i>in the event that</i> |
| <i>This is a subject that</i> | <i>because of the fact that</i> |
| <i>In spite of the fact that</i> | <i>until such time as</i> |
| <i>Due to the fact that</i> | <i>by means of</i> |

Passive voice

In most instances, it is better to put verbs in the active voice. Passive voice produces unclear, wordy sentences, whereas active voice produces clearer, more concise sentences.

Wordy *In 1935 Ethiopia was invaded by Italy.*

Revised *In 1935 Italy invaded Ethiopia. (more concise and vigorous)*

#4: Misuse of the Apostrophe

Use the apostrophe to indicate possession and to mark omitted letters in contractions. Writers often misuse apostrophes when forming plurals and possessives. The basic rule is quite simple: **use the apostrophe to indicate possession, not a plural**. Yes, the exceptions to the rule may seem confusing: *hers* has no apostrophe, and *it's* is not possessive. Nevertheless, with a small amount of attention, you can learn the rules and the exceptions of apostrophe use.

Possessives

Form the possessive case of a singular noun by adding 's (even if the word ends in s).

Hammurabi's code, Dickens's last novel, James's cello

Form the possessive case of a plural noun by adding an apostrophe after the final letter if it is an s or by adding 's if the final letter is not an s.

the students' disks, the children's toys

Remember: the apostrophe never designates the plural form of a noun. A common error is the use of the apostrophe to form a non-possessive plural. Compare the following correct sentences:

*The **student's** disk was missing.*

*Several **students'** disks were missing.*

*The **students** searched for their missing disks.*

Possessive pronouns, such as *yours, hers, its, and ours*, take no apostrophe.

The decision is yours.

Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone, everybody, no one, somebody*, use the singular possessive form.

Somebody's dog stayed in our suite last night.

Contractions

The apostrophe is used to mark omitted letters in contractions. (Note that contractions are often considered too informal for academic writing.)

Avoid the dreadful *it's/its* confusion.

It's is a contraction for *it is*. *It's* is never a possessive.

Its is the possessive for *it*.

As Professors Strunk and White remind us in *Elements of Style*, "It's a wise dog that scratches its own fleas" (1).

#5: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Misplaced and dangling modifiers create illogical, even comical, sentences. We confuse our

readers if we fail to connect modifiers (words that describe or limit other words) to the words they modify; be sure to place modifiers next to the words they modify. See the illogic in this example:

Walking back from the village, my wallet was lost. (Does your wallet walk?)

Revised

Walking back from the village, I lost my wallet. (Your wallet doesn't walk, but you do.)

A misplaced modifier is a word or phrase that due to its placement mistakenly refers to the wrong word. The modifier truly is misplaced.

To correct a misplaced modifier, move it next to or near the word it modifies.

A fine athlete and student, the coach honored the captain of the tennis team.

(The coach was not the fine athlete and student.)

Revised

The coach honored the captain of the tennis team, a fine athlete and student.

Limiting modifiers (*only, almost, nearly, just*) are commonly misplaced. To avoid ambiguity, place them in front of the word they modify.

Marsh's evidence reinforces the view that the artist *only* intended the images for a local audience.

Revised

Marsh's evidence reinforces the view that the artist intended the images *only* for a local audience.

A dangling modifier is a (usually introductory) word or phrase that the writer intends to use as a modifier of a following word, but the following word is missing. The result is an illogical statement.

To fix a dangling modifier, add the missing word and place the modifier next to it.

Acting on numerous complaints from students, a fox was found near Root.

(The fox did not act on the complaint.)

Revised

Acting on numerous complaints from students, security found a fox near Root.

After reading the original study, the flaws in Lee's argument are obvious.

Revised

Reading the original study reveals obvious flaws in Lee's argument.

Dangling modifiers go hand-in-hand with wordiness and passive voice. Correct one and you correct them all!

#6: Pronoun Problems

Pronouns are useful as substitutes for nouns, but a poorly chosen pronoun can obscure the meaning of a sentence. Common pronoun errors include

Unclear Pronoun Reference

A pronoun must refer to a specific noun (the antecedent). Ambiguous pronoun reference creates confusing sentences.

Writers should spend time thinking about their arguments to make sure they are not superficial. (Unclear antecedent: who or what are superficial?)

A key difference between banking crises of today and of yesterday is that they have greater global impact. (Which crises have more impact?)

If a whiff of ambiguity exists, use a noun

A key difference between banking crises of today and yesterday is that today's crises

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Affect vs. effect | We studied the <i>affect</i> of the angle on acceleration. (affect) |
|-------------------|---|

Vague Subject Pronoun

Pronouns such as *it*, *there*, and *this* often make weak subjects.

Pope Gregory VII forced Emperor Henry IV to wait three days in the snow at Canossa before granting him an audience. It was a symbolic act.

To what does *it* refer? Forcing the Emperor to wait? The waiting? The granting of the audience? The audience? The entire sentence?

Use a pronoun as subject only when its antecedent is crystal clear.

Agreement Error

A pronoun must agree in gender and number with its antecedent. A common error is the use of the plural pronoun *they* to refer to a singular noun.

In the original state constitution, they allowed polygamy.
They (plural) refers to constitution (singular).

Revised

The original state constitution allowed polygamy.

It is often better to use a plural noun and pronoun than to use a singular noun and pronoun. Note that indefinite pronouns such as *each* and *everyone* are singular.

Each student must meet his or her advisor. (correct but awkward)
Each student must meet with their advisor. (incorrect: singular noun, plural pronoun)
Students must meet with their advisors. (correct: plural noun and pronoun)

#7: Committing Pet Peeves

Learning to write clearly and effectively is a central part of your education. As the *Hamilton College Catalogue* notes, "The college expects its students to think, write and speak with clarity, understanding and precision." Below is a list of professors' pet peeves you should bear in mind as you aim for "clarity, understanding and precision" in your writing.

| Pet Peeve | Problem | Correction |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Pronoun -antecedent agreement | The student finished the essay only to discover that <i>their</i> printer did not work. | The student finished the essay only to discover that <i>his</i> printer did not work. |
| Bloated diction | Once liberty is <i>actualized</i> , justice will <i>burgeon</i> . | With liberty, justice grows. |
| Use of "I" as object of a verb | They went with Richard and <i>I</i> to tour the Coliseum. | They went with Richard and <i>me</i> to tour the Coliseum. |
| Indefinite antecedent | President Johnson's ignoring of George Ball's Vietnam memo proved disastrous for <i>him</i> . (for whom?) | President Johnson's ignoring of George Ball's Vietnam memo proved disastrous for <i>the president</i> . (for whom?) |
| Loose vs. lose | Forecasters fear that stocks will <i>loose</i> value next year. (loose rhymes with goose) | Forecasters fear that stocks will <i>lose</i> value next year. (lose rhymes with shoes) |
| Than vs. then | The report indicates that Americans work more hours <i>then</i> Europeans. | The report indicates that Americans work more hours <i>than</i> Europeans. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| Affect vs. effect | We studied the <i>affect</i> of the angle on acceleration. (affect is generally a verb) | We studied the <i>effect</i> of the angle on acceleration. (effect is a noun) |
| Less vs. fewer | Pizza has <i>less</i> calories than French fries. | Pizza has <i>fewer</i> calories than French fries. |
| Who vs. which or that | Johnny is the one <i>that</i> made an “A.” | Johnny is the one <i>who</i> made an “A.” |
| Indefinite you | When <i>you</i> read the poem, you notice the theme immediately. | After reading the poem, <i>the audience</i> notices the theme immediately. |
| Abbreviations | Freebirds originated in College Station, <i>TX</i> . | Freebirds originated in College Station, <i>Texas</i> . (<i>YUM!!</i>) |
| Preposition at the end of the sentence | Where is the library <i>at</i> ? Who are you going <i>with</i> ? | Where is the library? <i>With whom</i> are you going? |
| Expletive sentence beginnings | <i>There are</i> eight blocks in our schedule. | Our schedule has eight blocks. |
| Progressive verb tense | The writer <i>is stating that</i> life is fragile. | The writer <i>states</i> that life is fragile. |
| Literary present tense | The world portrayed in <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> <i>was</i> one in which books <i>were</i> banned. | The world portrayed in <i>Fahrenheit 451</i> <i>is</i> one in which books <i>are</i> banned. |
| A lot | I enjoyed reading the novel <i>a lot</i> . (A lot is a piece of land. Do not use <i>is</i> to describe a large amount of something.) | I enjoyed reading the novel <i>tremendously</i> . |

Revision Checklist

This checklist is suited for expository writing and the research paper; however, it can also be used with other essays. Be sure to read over your assignment carefully since your teacher may have specific requirements not indicated on this form.

Format

- _____ Did I follow the MLA guidelines for my heading?
- _____ Did I follow the MLA guidelines for my page numbers?
- _____ Did I double-space throughout?
- _____ Did I indent quotations of more than four lines?

Introduction

- _____ Will the introduction capture the reader’s attention?
- _____ Does my introduction present my thesis statement clearly?
- _____ Is there a bridge between my attention-getter and my thesis?
- _____ Did I eliminate “to be” verbs in my thesis statement?
- _____ Have I eliminated the words *essay*, *paper*, *paragraphs*?

General

- _____ Does my paper adequately support or prove my thesis statement?
- _____ Does my paper have a clear introduction, body, and conclusion?
- _____ Do my ideas flow logically from one to the other?
- _____ Have I used transitions?

- _____ Do the body paragraphs of my paper present evidence from a variety of reliable sources?
- _____ Is information from my sources presented in a combination of summary, paraphrase, quotation, and embedded quotation?
- _____ Have I used internal (parenthetical) documentation? (if applicable)
- _____ Did I follow the MLA guidelines for internal documentation? (if applicable)
- _____ Did I eliminate the word *you*?

Conclusion

- _____ Does the conclusion give my reader a sense of completion? Are all the loose ends tied up? Has my thesis been supported? Did I leave my reader with one last powerful thought?
- _____ Is my conclusion more than two sentences? (It should be.)
- _____ Did I eliminate phrases like “I hope you enjoyed my paper” “That’s about it” “Thank you for reading my paper”?

Works Cited (if applicable)

- _____ Are my entries alphabetical? (DO NOT NUMBER!)
- _____ Did I cite all the sources I used?
- _____ Do I have any extra sources listed that I did not use? (If so, remove them.)
- _____ Did I double space throughout?
- _____ Do I have a page number?
- _____ Did I indent the second and subsequent lines? (hanging indent)
- _____ Did I follow MLA guidelines?

Resources

The Writing Handbook. A&M Consolidated High School English Department. College Station, TX. 2003-2004.

The Next Level: What Colleges Expect from Your Writing, Edited by Lisa Smith Nielsen; Publisher: Association of Texas Colleges and Universities, 2002.

MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers Fifth Edition, by Joseph Gibaldi; Publisher: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999.

Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook Second Edition, by Ann Raimos; Publisher: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

Crafting Expository Argument: Practical Approaches to the Writing Process for Students and

Teachers Fourth Edition, by Michael Degan; Publisher: Telemachos Publishing; 2002.

The 500-Word Theme Fourth Edition, by Lee J. Martin and Harry P. Kroiter; Publisher: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1984.

Purdue University Online Writing Lab. HYPERLINK "<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>" <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

The Seven Deadly Sins of Bad Writing. *Hamilton College Writing Center*.

HYPERLINK "<http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/sins/sin7.html>" <http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/sins/sin7.html>

The Six Plus One Traits of Good Writing.

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