



# Delaware Valley Regional High School



## A Writer's Handbook

*Second Edition*

19 Senator Stout Road  
Frenchtown, NJ 08825  
(908) 996-2131  
[www.dvrhs.org](http://www.dvrhs.org)

## **Preface**

Italian Renaissance artist Leonardo da Vinci once mused, “Art is never finished, only abandoned.” To the passionate writer, this sentiment could not be truer. Although the level of perfection we all hope to attain in our writing—be it reflective, analytical, or expository—may be impossible, we constantly strive to better our own written word and ourselves. This philosophy has guided the teachers of Delaware Valley Regional High School as we worked to compile a writing handbook that could both inspire and guide our students as they work to improve their writing.

The art of writing is one of constant alteration and evolution. Regardless of the arena, writing is an opportunity to express the perspectives and ideas that emerge from your educational odyssey. The ability to create and advance an argument is not only empowering but also integrally important to your success in future academic pursuits. In your quest to improve your writing and prepare for college and beyond, allow this manual to lead you back through the basics to hone your technique, or to explore more advanced skills, which will ultimately enable you to explore literary and nonfiction texts with greater intensity.

This handbook reflects the Modern Languages Association (MLA) format, which is now generally accepted by most colleges and universities. The contents that follow focus on recognizing the importance of artistic integrity in terms of the written word, using and documenting evidence, formatting paragraphs for writing assignments of all kinds, understanding major grammatical /usage errors and how to amend them, and ultimately, drafting an advanced research paper. We trust you will find it a valuable reference now and in the future.

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# Academic Honesty Agreement

## DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY

Pupils are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. This means that they will not engage in any of the following acts:

1. Cheating on examinations, including but not limited to, the non-authorized use of books or notes, the use of crib sheets, copying from other pupils' papers, exchanging information with other pupils orally, in writing, or by signals, obtaining copies of the examination illegally and other similar activities.
2. Plagiarism is not permitted in term papers, themes, essays, reports, images, take-home examinations, and other academic work. Plagiarism is defined as stealing or use without acknowledgment of the ideas, words, formulas, textual materials, online services, computer programs, etc. of another person, or in any way presenting the work of another person as one's own.
3. Falsifications, including forging signatures, altering answers after they have been graded, the insertion of answers after the fact, the erasure of grader's markings, and other acts that allow for falsely taking credit.

Adopted: 24 August 2009

### **Consequences for Plagiarizing on Research Projects/Assignments**

1. First Offense – Teacher submits a conduct report, which will be included in the student's academic record and assigns an academic remediation. Student receives a zero (0) for the assignment, forfeits his/her opportunity to make up the work, and receives up to four (4) morning detentions. Parent(s) will be notified. **Student will not be eligible for Academic Honors.**
2. Second Offense – Teacher submits a conduct report, which will be included in the student's academic record. Student receives a zero (0) for the assignment, forfeits his/her opportunity to make up the work, and receives up to four (4) morning detentions. Parent(s) will be notified. **Student will not be eligible for Academic Hall of Fame.**
3. Third and Subsequent Offenses - Teacher submits a conduct report, which will be included in the student's academic record. Student receives an automatic failure for the marking period, and receives two (2) in-school suspension days. A parent conference will be held.
4. Fourth Offense – Teacher submits a conduct report, which will be included in the student's academic record. Due to the repeated, academic nature, of the offense, a notation will be made on the student's transcript, and he/she will receive a minimum of two (2) in-school suspension days. A parent conference will be held and failure of the entire course will result.

**Consequences for Cheating on Non-Research Projects/ Assignments/ Tests /Quizzes, etc.**

1. First Offense – Teacher submits a conduct report. Student receives a zero (0) for the assignment, forfeits his/her opportunity to make up the work, and receives a minimum of two (2) morning detentions. Parent(s) will be notified.
2. Second Offense – Teacher submits a conduct report. Student receives a zero (0) for the assignment in question, forfeits his/her opportunity to make up the work, and receives up to four (4) morning detentions. Parent(s) will be notified. **Student will not be eligible for Academic Honors.**
3. Third and Subsequent Offenses – Teacher submits a conduct report. Student receives a zero (0) for the assignment in question, parent(s) will be notified, and two (2) In-School Suspension days will be assigned. Students must meet with counselor to re-evaluate course schedule. **Student will not be eligible for Academic Hall of Fame.**

**All offenses for cheating and plagiarism accumulate over the student's four-year career. For example, if a student is caught plagiarizing in his/her sophomore year in English, and then cheats on a test during his/her junior year in history, then he/she now has two (2) offenses.**

**Some Examples:** The following are examples, not exhaustive, of Academic Dishonesty:

1. Copying from the exam/work of another person in or out of the classroom
2. The use of notes for closed-notes assignments. Notes include papers, books, electronic devices (i.e. iPads and phones), information written on any media whatsoever, etc.
3. Plagiarism, intentional or unintentional, of papers, prose, etc. from books, people, the internet, etc.
4. Incorrect citations/missing citations
5. Having another person do an assignment and representing it as being one's own work
6. "Helping" other students by allowing them to copy, completing an assignment for them, or lending work to another student
7. Changing every few words, paraphrasing, copying directly, copying and pasting without proper attribution/citations
8. Taking pictures of or recording tests, quizzes, etc. and using them yourself or disseminating them
9. Messaging, emailing, or posting answers or questions from testing materials
10. Obtaining or receiving testing materials in advance

Adapted from University of Idaho

*I have read and understand the definition of Academic Dishonesty, know the consequences of any such action, and agree to only submit my own work for classes, and will not allow others to copy or submit my work as their own.*

Print Name (student): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Revised: August 2013

# Beginning with the Introduction

Introductions need to **attract the reader's attention and introduce him/her to the main message of the piece**. Your introduction should **clearly** tell the reader what your paper is going to discuss.

## Step 1: Begin with an attention grabber.

1. Startling information/statistic: This information must be true and verifiable, and it does not need to be totally new to your readers. It could simply be a fact that illustrates the point you wish to make.

- In 1933, 24.9% of the American population was out of work.
- 

2. Anecdote: An anecdote is a story that illustrates a point. Be sure your anecdote is short, to the point, and relevant to your topic. Keep in mind: The point of the anecdote is not to tell a story but rather to introduce the essay.

- My grandfather always ate everything on his plate. Even when he was full, he'd keep eating. As a child, I never understood why. One day when I was 10, over some chicken and greens, he told me something I'd never forget. "David," he said, "When I grew up in the Great Depression, I watched my father eat only half a bowl of soup every day so that the rest of us could have a meal. I never forgot what he looked like, so skinny after going without decent food for so long." I remember the look on my grandfather's face and I realize how hard the Depression was.
- 

3. Summary Information: A few sentences explaining your topic in general terms can lead the reader gently to your thesis. Each sentence should become gradually more specific until you reach your thesis.

- The Great Depression was an incredibly difficult time for working Americans. Farmers who lost their jobs were already migrating to California for new opportunities. Any employees who had worked on farms were now unemployed; African Americans struggled more than any other community because they had never owned any land to begin with.
- 

4. Quotation Lead: Using a quotation from a famous writer or celebrity can help enhance a writer's credibility and/or connect readers with the familiar. Both of these benefits help writers to hook readers, getting them to continue reading.

- George Mehales, a Greek immigrant who owned a diner in Spartanburg, South Carolina, confessed "I was wiped . . . I considered killing myself, 'cause I had nothing left." The tragedy of the 1929 Stock Market Crash affected thousands of families, leaving businessmen and farmers without any of their savings.
- 

**Step 2: Add a few sentences of elaboration or explanation to lead the reader from your opening to your thesis statement. The thesis should not come as a surprise, and the subject should not be confusing to the reader.**

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**Step 3: Finish the paragraph with your thesis statement.**

# The Thesis Statement

## Creating a Thesis Statement

### What is a thesis statement?

A thesis statement:

- Presents the view(s) that your essay will prove
- Tells the reader how you will interpret the significance of the subject matter under discussion.
- Is a road map for the paper; in other words, it tells the reader what to expect from the rest of the paper.
- Directly answers the question asked of you. A thesis is an interpretation of a question or subject, not the subject itself.
- Is usually a single sentence at the very end of your first paragraph that presents your argument to the reader. The rest of the paper, the body of the essay, gathers and organizes evidence that will persuade the reader of the logic of your interpretation.

### How do I create a thesis?

A thesis is the result of an in-depth thinking process. Before you develop an argument on any topic, you have to collect and organize evidence, look for possible relationships between known facts (such as surprising contrasts or similarities), and think about the significance of these relationships.

Consider the following question: Which of these words is not like the others: **duck, apple, ball**?

One might be led to believe that the correct answer is *ball* because, of the options provided, it is the only nonliving thing. While this is true, one could stand to reason that *apple* is the correct response because it is the only word with five letters. Furthermore, one might assert that *duck* is correct because it is the only word without a double letter and the only item with legs and wings!

We therefore may determine that any of the options could be correct, because each person perceives things differently. Nevertheless, the accuracy or truthfulness of your answer lies in your ability to substantiate it effectively.

## Strengthening Your Thesis

### How do I know if my thesis is strong?

When reviewing your working thesis, ask yourself the following:

- *Do I answer the Big Question?*
- *Have I taken a position that others might support or oppose?*
- *Am I challenging my readers to consider a perspective they have not considered before?*
- *Does my thesis pass the 'So What?' test?*
- *Does it pass the "how" and "why" test?*

### **Let's try an example...**

Suppose your instructor hands out the following assignment in a class one day: Write an analysis of some major aspect of Homer's *Odyssey*. "This will be easy," you think. "I loved *The Odyssey*!" You grab your notebook and write:

*Homer's The Odyssey is a great piece of ancient Literature with great female characters.*

What makes this thesis weak? Think about what the reader would expect from the essay that follows: you will most likely provide a general, appreciative summary of Homer's epic poem. The question did not ask you to summarize; it asked you to analyze. Your teacher is not interested in your opinion of the poem or the plotline because he or she has already read it! Instead, your teacher wants you to think about *why* it's such a great novel—what does Odysseus' adventure tell us about life, the relationships we forge with our families and friends, and the challenges we encounter on a daily basis? First, the question asks you to pick an aspect of the novel that you think is important to its structure or meaning—for example, the role of Penelope, the contrasting characters Athena and Calypso, or the effect the Sirens have on Odysseus as he sails past. Now you write:

*In The Odyssey, Homer develops a contrast between Athena and Calypso.*

Here's a working thesis with potential: you have highlighted an important aspect of the novel for investigation; it's still not clear, however, what your analysis will reveal. Your reader is intrigued, but is still thinking, "So what? What's the point of this contrast? What does it signify?" Perhaps you are not sure yet, either. That's fine—begin to work on comparing scenes from the book and see what you discover. Free-write, make lists, jot down your reactions. Eventually, you will be able to clarify for yourself, and then for the reader, why this contrast matters. After examining the evidence and considering your own insights, you write:

*As an allegory, Homer's Odyssey illustrates two contrasting roles that women may play in every man's life: there is the embodiment of motherly protection and logic found in Athena, while Calypso serves only to underscore the seductive beauty and sexual temptation that may threaten man's ability to reason.*

This final thesis statement presents an interpretation of a literary work based on an analysis of its content. Of course, for the essay itself to be successful, you must now present evidence from the novel that will convince the reader of your interpretation.

If you wish to take your argument even further, discuss why Homer presents his readers with contrasting character types such as these: What commentary does he offer on women and their relationships with men? What Greek beliefs or values does this poem illustrate through these characters and their relationships with Odysseus? There are virtually no limits to the possibilities of your argument!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from UNC Chapel Hill's Writing Center and the Piscataway High School Writer's Handbook



## **Attaching Arguments to the Thesis**

Because the five-paragraph essay is commonly assigned across subject areas, it may be beneficial to attach key arguments to your thesis statement. In addition to informing your reader of the essay's main points, this strategy will keep you organized as you compose your essay. Suppose your instructor has assigned a critical essay on Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Below is a four-step process illustrating how you can successfully attach main points to your thesis statement:

**1. Write a FOCUS STATEMENT conveying your insight into the essay topic.**

*Macbeth* warns against the dark side of political ambition.

**2. Phrase this FOCUS STATEMENT as a QUESTION to stimulate thought.**

How does *Macbeth* illustrate the dark side of political ambition?

**3. List the Three Best Answers that you determined from your search.**

Macbeth renounces his morality for more power; Lady Macbeth lacks compassion for human life; Macbeth and Lady Macbeth are riddled with guilt and paranoia by play's end.

**4. ADVANCE YOUR THESIS by combining both the focus statement (#1) and your three best answers (#3).**

Throughout his tragic play *Macbeth*, Shakespeare warns against the dark side of political ambition as illustrated by Macbeth's renunciation of morality for power, Lady Macbeth's absence of human compassion, and both characters' bouts of guilt and paranoia.

# Selecting and Weaving Evidence

Almost every body paragraph you write in any essay or paper contains evidence of some sort. What type of evidence can a writer use? **Direct quotations and paraphrases of source information** are the main types of information available to writers.

## Direct Quotation

How do you know when to use a direct quotation versus a paraphrase or summary? First consider what it is that you are trying to say at that moment. Then, use the format that presents the information in the clearest and most effective way possible.

Follow these rules:

### **DO:**

1. Quote directly to strengthen an important point with text that HAS SOMETHING TO SAY or DESERVES TO BE ANALYZED.
2. Use direct quotes if the original wording is EXACTLY what you want to say
3. Use quotes that fit logically into your paper
4. Fit long **and** short quotes into paper. Long quotes are always introduced; short quotes can be read as part of the sentence *when you incorporate them smoothly*.
5. Give credit for ALL quotes **and** paraphrases.
6. QUOTE ACCURATELY!!

### **DON'T:**

1. Use quotes out of context! How would you feel if someone changed the meaning of your idea by taking only part of what you said? It's similar to really bad gossip and it is terrible scholarship!
2. Quote clichés, proverbs, or common knowledge (ex. "We shall overcome" "War is bad" "No pain, no gain")
3. Allow the quote to speak for itself. (More on this below)
4. "Over-quote" or string quotes together. Too many quotations without proper explanation is bad writing because you have done no thinking or analysis of the information in your essay. It is important that your own voice, your own "take" on the information, is heard!

## Paraphrase<sup>2</sup>

“Paraphrasing is making different word choices and re-arranging words in such a way that maintains the same meaning, but sounds different enough that readers will not be reminded of the original writer’s words.”

Let’s look at an example and some rules:

**Original Text:** A new Millennial service ethic is emerging, built around notions of collegial (rather than individual) action, support for (rather than resistance against) civic institutions, and the tangible doing of good deeds.

**Inadequate paraphrase:** Today’s Millenials believe in a new service ethic, constructed around ideas of shared action, backing against civic institutions, and doing good things.

**Adequate paraphrase:** There has been a shift regarding community service in those born around the turn of the millennium: a strong belief in teamwork, the potential of government programs, and the power of acts of kindness to change the world.

□

The inadequate paraphrase not only misrepresents the meaning of the original quote, but it also uses language too close to the original. The adequate paraphrase has sufficient changes to make it sound like the writer’s own words.

When you are paraphrasing, there are a number of strategies you can apply:

- Locate the individual statements or major idea units in the original.
- Change the sentence structure and the order of major ideas, while maintaining the logical connections among them. For example, if the author you are paraphrasing presents a generalization and then backs it up with an example, try using the example as a lead-in to the generalization. For an individual sentence, try to relocate a phrase from the beginning of the sentence to a position near the end, or vice versa.
- Substitute words in the original with synonyms, making sure the language in your paraphrase is appropriate for your audience.
- Combine or divide sentences as necessary.
- Use direct quotations from the original sporadically, limiting yourself to quotations of the most striking or interesting language. Do not quote very plainly stated passages.
- Compare the paraphrase to the original to ensure that the rewording is sufficient and the meaning has been preserved.
- Incorporate the paraphrase throughout a larger section of your essay.

**Remember to ALWAYS document the paraphrase**—give formal credit to the original writer(s).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This section was modified from: "Paraphrasing." *The OWL at Purdue*. Purdue Univeristy, 2014. Web. 19 Aug. 2014.

<<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/976/02/>>.

<sup>3</sup> Tips courtesy of Kennedy, M.L. & Smith, H.M. (2000). *Reading and Writing in the Academic Community*. New York, NY: Prentice Hall College Division.

## Weaving Evidence

No matter what type of evidence you choose to include throughout your writing, this evidence must be clearly incorporated and explained so that it works to prove the points that you are trying to make. Some people refer to this as **weaving evidence**.

How is one to do this? Effective writers use a variety of techniques to weave evidence into their text. However, **writers must introduce and analyze any evidence that they use in their arguments.**

- *Introduce* – provide context for the quote/paraphrase/summary, so that it is clear where it comes from and why it is referenced at this particular moment.
- *Analyze* – explain 1) what the evidence says, and 2) how that evidence relates to the argument being made in that paragraph.

Imagine that your evidence is a man who broke his leg and is using crutches. Under one arm, the man has the Introduction crutch and, under the other, is the Analysis crutch. If you take away either of the two crutches, what will happen to your evidence? *It falls flat on its face.*

Let's look at some examples of effective and ineffective **quote weaving using the introduction-evidence-analysis model** from a paper on the fairy tale "Cinderella." The following quote is from the story of Cinderella as told by the Grimm Brothers.

"Then her mother gave her a knife and said, 'Cut the toe off, when you are queen you will have no more need to go on foot'" (Grimm).

### ***Serious room for improvement:***

The Grimm Brothers story "Cinderella" is about a girl who wants to marry a prince. Her family is really mean to her. "Then her mother gave her a knife and said, 'Cut the toe off, when you are queen you will have no more need to go on foot'" (Grimm). How messed up is that? No one should have to cut her toe off for anyone.

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### ***Room for improvement:***

Cinderella's stepsisters are willing to go to extremes to get the Prince. She even cut off her toe to fit in the shoe. "Then her mother gave her a knife and said, 'Cut the toe off, when you are queen you will have no more need to go on foot'" (Grimm). This shows how extreme the stepsisters are.

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### ***A possible revision:***

The evil of Cinderella's stepmother and stepsisters leads to their undoing. In the end, the stepmother is willing to sacrifice her own daughter: "Then her mother gave her a knife and said, 'Cut the toe off, when you are queen you will have no more need to go on foot'" (Grimm). Not caring about the pain and suffering of her daughter, the stepmother urges her to mutilate herself in order to marry the Prince.

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***Another possible revision:***

The actions of the evil stepmother in the story represent the corruptive nature of her greed. As one of the stepsisters is trying to squeeze her foot into the slipper brought by the Prince, “her mother gave her a knife and said, ‘Cut the toe off, when you are queen you will have no more need to go on foot’” (Grimm). Her desire to marry either of her daughters to the King’s son is so great, she pressures her to disfigure herself, with the consolation that after the wedding she “‘will have no more need to go on foot.’” Obviously, her level of avarice is reflected in the level of brutality to which she subjects her own child.

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Note that both of the last two examples demonstrate good use of evidence weaving. The quote is given context and introduced, and it is also connected to the analysis of the work overall.

The following pages will demonstrate how to clearly weave or integrate evidence into your paragraphs, using two different paragraph formats.

## Evidence-Based Body Paragraphs

Really, this should just be called “a paragraph” because you are now at an academic level where **almost all of the paragraphs you will write require you to support your position with evidence**. As we have seen above, this evidence can be in the form of direct quotations or paraphrases, but you cannot often get away with “because I said so” as valid support – not until you have kids of your own. ☺

Both this and the following paragraph structures demonstrate the basic Intro-Evidence-Analysis format of evidence weaving described above being put to use in a paragraph format, one that can be used for virtually any purpose and subject area.

1. **The Topic Sentence** – This is one of the most important parts of the paragraph because it is the first thing that the reader encounters and it creates a guideline for the rest of the paragraph.
  - If the paragraph is to stand alone, then it should specifically state what the paragraph is going to be about. It makes the statement that the rest of the paragraph will prove.
  - If the paragraph is to be part of an essay, the topic sentence should follow the guidelines above, but should also be directly connected to proving the thesis.
2. **The Introduction of Evidence** – Although we often think that the quotes or examples we choose to back up our thoughts speak for themselves, they usually don't. We know what we are thinking, but the reader doesn't.
  - Provide the reader with context, a frame of reference, for the evidence you are going to provide. This should indicate who is involved in the quote/example, why this happened, what is going on in general, when this is all happening (in terms of the story), and/or where this is all taking place.
  - It isn't necessary to include who, what, why, when, AND where. Pick and choose what you believe is necessary to create a smooth flow and context for your readers.
3. **The Evidence** – When choosing the proper piece of the text to support your topic sentence (and this is ALL about supporting the topic sentence), it is important to choose wisely.
  - Choose quotes that expand upon your main point (the topic sentence) and allow for elaboration or analysis. In other words, pick quotes about which you have something to say.
  - **Avoid** quotes that simply repeat what has already been said, that are too complex to support one idea, that have parts removed in order to make your point, or that simply don't have much or anything to do with proving the topic sentence!
4. **Analysis** – This part of the paragraph is where you clarify what the first piece of evidence is saying, and where your ideas come into play; therefore, this part is very important. This is where you tell the reader why you think the example/quote you have chosen supports your point.
  - While analyzing your evidence, start by restating what you feel it is saying. Then briefly explain why this is relevant to the point you're trying to prove.
  - When you analyze a quote, **AVOID** phrases like “this quote shows,” “this proves that,” etc. You have to explain what it shows or how something is proven.
5. **Concluding sentence** – when you end your paragraph, you are leaving your reader with your ideas. Be sure to tie it all together for him/her so that he/she not only knows exactly what you are talking about, and also perhaps hint at what's to come in the next paragraph, if this is part of a longer essay.

- This statement can be more specific than your topic sentence, but avoid repeating every idea you have just said.
- It is very important that you do not simply re-state your topic sentence!

### **Sample Evidence-Based Body Paragraph**

The following is an example of an Evidence-Based Paragraph that answers the question below. Notice how the format of the paragraph forces the writer to introduce **and** analyze the importance of the evidence to support the opinion presented in the topic sentence.

Numbers in the paragraph correlate to the parts of the evidence-based paragraph listed above.

**Question:** *Is reading fairy tales still a relevant activity in a modern society?*

**Answer:**

(1) It is the underlying messages of fairy tales, and not the superficial elements, that make them relevant and valuable in a modern society. (2) No one thinks that fairy tales are needed to warn children about evil queens and trolls under bridges. But, as G.K. Chesterton once said, (3) “Fairy tales are more than true: not because they tell us that dragons exist, but because they tell us that dragons can be beaten” (Gaiman). (4) It isn’t the threat that is the important part; what matters is the message that threats – even ones that seem impossible to overcome – can be defeated. The “dragons” that loom over us may not breathe fire, but they can be conquered through virtue, honesty, teamwork, and dedication. (5) These are the lessons that these stories teach us, and the reason that – even though we do not live in a world of princesses, magic, or fairies – the tales in which these figures appear still pass on important morals.

#### **Works Cited**

Gaiman, Neil. “Epigraph.” *Coraline*. New York: HarperCollins, 2010. Ebook.

## Analytical Body Paragraphs

The analytical paragraph, also known as the **connection paragraph**, is the building block to writing a solid analytical essay. Once you learn the key elements and practice the pattern, this process becomes second nature. The analytical paragraph builds off of the format of the evidence-based paragraph, but extends it to **connect two pieces of evidence**. It can be used to make a point by connecting two pieces of evidence from the same text or from two different texts – it really depends on what it is you need the paragraph to accomplish.

The structure is so useful and flexible it can be used in a variety of ways for a variety of purposes. Follow the guidelines below to create an insightful piece of analytical writing.

1. **The Topic Sentence** -- This is one of the most important parts of the paragraph because it is the first thing that the reader encounters and it creates a guideline for the rest of the paragraph.
  - If the paragraph is to stand alone, then it should specifically state what the paragraph is going to be about. It makes the statement that the rest of the paragraph will prove.
  - If the paragraph is to be part of an essay, the topic sentence should follow the guidelines above, but should also be directly connected to proving the thesis.
2. **The Introduction of Evidence #1** – Although we often think that the quotes or examples we choose to back up our thoughts speak for themselves, they usually don't. We know what we are thinking, but the reader doesn't.
  - Provide the reader with context, a frame of reference, for the evidence you are going to provide. This should indicate who is involved in the quote/example, why this happened, what is going on in general, when this is all happening (in terms of the story), and/or where this is all taking place.
  - It isn't necessary to include who, what, why, when, AND where. Pick and choose what you believe is necessary to create a smooth flow and context for your readers.
3. **The Evidence #1** – When choosing the proper piece of the text to support your topic sentence (and this is ALL about supporting the topic sentence), it is important to choose wisely.
  - Choose quotes that expand upon your main point (the topic sentence) and allow for elaboration or analysis. In other words, pick quotes about which you have something to say.
  - **Avoid** quotes that simply repeat what has already been said, that are too complex to support one idea, that have parts removed in order to make your point, or that simply don't have much or anything to do with proving the topic sentence!
4. **Analysis #1**—This part of the paragraph is where you clarify what the first piece of evidence is saying, and where your ideas come into play; therefore, this part is very important. This is where you tell the reader why you think the example/quote you have chosen supports your point.
  - While analyzing your evidence, start by restating what you feel it is saying. Then briefly explain why this is relevant to the point you're trying to prove.
  - When you analyze a quote, **AVOID** phrases like "this quote shows," "this proves that," etc. You have to explain what it shows or how something is proven.
5. **Transition**- A good, solid, analytical paragraph should have at least 2 examples that support the topic sentence. While this is a good habit to get into, you simply can't plop another example down



in the paragraph. It is important to show the connection between the previous example and the one that you are about to provide.

- Transitions may just be a word, a phrase, or even a sentence. As long as the relationship between example #1 and example #2 is indicated, you will be in good shape.
- It is important that the transitions you use express what you are trying to say. For instance, if you say “however” you are indicating an opposing idea or thought; therefore, you cannot follow it with an idea that is the same as the one before.

6. **The Introduction of Evidence #2** – Reference Introduction of Evidence #1, above. Here you are basically doing the same thing, only you are introducing the second piece of evidence. Remember, the purpose of the introduction is to provide the context of and for the quote.
7. **The Evidence #2** – The important thing to remember when choosing and ordering the examples in a paragraph is that the first example and second example must connect in some way. There are many ways examples can “connect”:
  - The first evidence could provide a definition or make a point, and the second could provide an example that proves/supports the point made in the first;
  - The first evidence could provide a position, and the second could agree with OR contrast with that position;
  - The first evidence could provide an example and the second an additional example;
  - There are MANY ways that the pieces of evidence could connect – the important part is that they do, and that connection should prove the topic sentence of the paragraph.
8. **Analysis #2/Connection** — While this section is very similar to the first analysis, it goes one step further:
  - You must explain not only what Evidence #2 says and why it is important
  - You also must explain what the connection is between Evidence #1 and #2, as well as how that connection proves the topic sentence.

Because of this, this section may require a longer analysis than the first analysis.

9. **Concluding sentence** – when you end your paragraph, you are leaving your reader with your ideas. Be sure to tie it all together for him/her so that he/she not only knows exactly what you are talking about, and also perhaps hint at what’s to come in the next paragraph, if this is part of a longer essay.
  - This statement can be more specific than your topic sentence, but avoid repeating every idea you have just said.
  - It is very important that you do not simply re-state your topic sentence!

## Sample Analytical Body Paragraph

The following is an example of an Analytical Paragraph that connects two different texts to answer a question. Notice how the format of the paragraph helps the writer to explain both pieces of evidence **as well as the connection between these pieces of evidence.**

Numbers in the paragraph correlate to the parts of the analytical paragraph listed above.

**Question:** *What do you think is the significance of the changes from original fairy tales to their modern retellings? Reference a specific tale in your answer.*

**Answer:**

(1) Modern retellings of fairy tales typically soften the severity of the moral lessons that the stories are trying to teach. *Cinderella* – the Grimm Brothers original and the Disney retelling – is a perfect example of this. (2) The Grimm Brothers tale is, on the whole, far darker and bloodier than its modern counterpart, and the fates of the stepsisters at the end clearly conveys the story's morality. In this version, the sisters beg to be included in Cinderella's wedding to the Prince, attempting to get on her good side: (3) "When the betrothed couple went to church, the elder was at the right side and the younger at the left, and the pigeons pecked out one eye from each of them. Afterwards as they came back ... the pigeons pecked out the other eye from each. And thus, for their wickedness and falsehood, they were punished with blindness all their days" (Grimm). (4) The Grimm Brothers are very clear in the underlying lesson of the tale: the sisters are admonished for all of the wrongs they have committed. They must suffer physically and spiritually for their poor choices and characters. (5) On the other hand, (6) Disney's version includes numerous changes, not the least of which is the exclusion of Cinderella's family from her happily-ever-after wedding. (7) The final wedding scene in the film includes the King, the Duke, and Cinderella's animal friends, but there is no sign of the wicked stepmother or stepsisters. The last the sisters are heard of is in their off-screen attempts to keep the Duke from trying the slipper on Cinderella's foot (*Cinderella*). (8) Disney's version does not focus the moral lesson on the evils of the sisters and their punishment. Instead, it emphasizes the positive moral example of the protagonist: be a good person, and you will be rewarded. (9) This change reflects a cultural shift from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to a present that is more protective of children as a whole; instead of using the warning or negative consequences of the stepsisters as a way to convey the moral, modern children are given the positive example of the "good girl" to follow.

### Works Cited

*Cinderella*. Dir. Clyde Geronimi. Walt Disney Productions/Buena Vista Home Entertainment, 2005. DVD.

Grimm, Jacob and Wilhelm. "Cinderella." *Kinder-Und Hausmärchen*. 7th ed. Göttingen: Verlag Der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, 1857. 119-26. *Grimm Brothers' Home Page*. Prof. Ashliman, University of Pittsburgh, 1 June 2011. Web. 18 Aug. 2014.

# Transitions<sup>4</sup>

Transitions are vitally important to communicating meaning effectively in all types and lengths of writing. Overall, the purpose of transitions is to clarify how different parts of a piece of writing relate to one another. As you saw in the analytical paragraph structure, the transition in the middle of the paragraph tells the reader how the two halves of the paragraph (or the two pieces of evidence) connect together.

## SIGNS THAT YOU MIGHT NEED TO WORK ON YOUR TRANSITIONS

How can you tell whether you need to work on your transitions? Here are some possible clues:

- Your instructor has written comments like “choppy,” “jumpy,” “abrupt,” “flow,” “need signposts,” or “how is this related?” on your papers.
- Your readers (instructors, friends, or classmates) tell you that they had trouble following your organization or train of thought.
- You tend to write the way you think—and your brain often jumps from one idea to another pretty quickly.
- You wrote your paper in several discrete “chunks” and then pasted them together.
- You are working on a group paper: the draft you are working on was created by pasting pieces of several people’s writing together.

## HOW TRANSITIONS WORK

The organization of your written work includes two elements: (1) the order in which you have chosen to present the different parts of your discussion or argument, and (2) the relationships you construct between these parts. Transitions cannot substitute for good organization, but they can make your organization clearer and easier to follow.

## TYPES OF TRANSITIONS

The types of transitions available to you are as diverse as the circumstances in which you need to use them. A transition can be a single word, a phrase, a sentence, or an entire paragraph. In each case, it functions the same way: first, the transition either directly summarizes the content of a preceding sentence, paragraph, or section or implies such a summary (by reminding the reader of what has come before). Then it helps the reader anticipate or comprehend the new information that you wish to present.

1. **Transitions between sections**—Particularly in longer works, it may be necessary to include transitional paragraphs that summarize for the reader the information just covered and specify the relevance of this information to the discussion in the following section.
2. **Transitions between paragraphs**—If you have done a good job of arranging paragraphs so that the content of one leads logically to the next, the transition will highlight a relationship that already exists by summarizing the previous paragraph and suggesting something of the content of the paragraph that follows. A transition between paragraphs can be a word or two (*however*,

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<sup>4</sup> This section adapted from “Transitions,” *The Writing Center, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

*for example, similarly*), a phrase, or a sentence. Transitions can be at the end of the first paragraph, at the beginning of the second paragraph, or in both places.

3. **Transitions within paragraphs**—As with transitions between sections and paragraphs, transitions within paragraphs act as cues by helping readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases.

## TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

Effectively constructing each transition often depends upon your ability to identify words or phrases that will indicate for the reader the *kind* of logical relationships you want to convey. The table below should make it easier for you to find these words or phrases. Whenever you have trouble finding a word, phrase, or sentence to serve as an effective transition, refer to the information in the table for assistance. Look in the left column of the table for the kind of logical relationship you are trying to express. Then look in the right column of the table for examples of words or phrases that express this logical relationship.

Keep in mind that each of these words or phrases may have a slightly different meaning. Consult a dictionary or writer's handbook if you are unsure of the exact meaning of a word or phrase.

LOGICAL RELATIONSHIP	TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSION
<b>Similarity</b>	also, in the same way, just as ... so too, likewise, similarly
<b>Exception/Contrast</b>	but, however, in spite of, on the one hand ... on the other hand, nevertheless, nonetheless, notwithstanding, in contrast, on the contrary, still, yet
<b>Sequence/Order</b>	first, second, third, ... next, then, finally
<b>Time</b>	after, afterward, at last, before, currently, during, earlier, immediately, later, meanwhile, now, recently, simultaneously, subsequently, then
<b>Example</b>	for example, for instance, namely, specifically, to illustrate
<b>Emphasis</b>	even, indeed, in fact, of course, truly
<b>Place/Position</b>	above, adjacent, below, beyond, here, in front, in back, nearby, there
<b>Cause and Effect</b>	accordingly, consequently, hence, so, therefore, thus
<b>Additional Support or Evidence</b>	additionally, again, also, and, as well, besides, equally important, further, furthermore, in addition, moreover, then
<b>Conclusion/Summary</b>	finally, in a word, in brief, briefly, in conclusion, in the end, in the final analysis, on the whole, thus, to conclude, to summarize, in sum, to sum up, in summary

For more information on Transitions, go to: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/owlprint/574/>

## Citations and Documentation<sup>5</sup>

The MLA's in-text citations are made with a combination of signal phrases and parenthetical references. Citations in parentheses should be concise yet complete enough so that readers can find the source on your Works Cited page at the end of the paper.

Use a signal phrase to lead into the quotation or borrowed information. Then use a parenthetical citation directly after the quotation or borrowed information.

### **Author named in a signal phrase**

You can use the author's name in a signal phrase. This allows you to:

- Prepare readers for a change of voice
- Keep the parenthetical citation brief

#### Example:

Flora Davis reports that a chimp at the Yerkes Primate Research Center "has combined words into new sentences that she was never taught" (67).

Note the signal phrase -- Flora Davis reports that -- and the parenthetical citation containing the page number. And note that **the period goes after the parenthetical citation**.

### **Author not named in a signal phrase**

If you choose not to put the author's name in the signal phrase, or if you don't use a signal phrase, then the author's last name must appear in parentheses along with the page number.

#### Example:

Although the baby chimp lived only a few hours, Washoe signed to it before it died (Davis 42).

Note that you must cite the source here because you are using a fact from Davis' book.

Sometimes the idea or information you are borrowing represents the entire theory or perspective of your source; in other words, it's not confined to specific pages. In that case, the page number can be omitted from the parenthetical citation.

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<sup>5</sup> This section was adapted from Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Writing Center, "Documenting MLA Within the Text," <http://www.iup.edu/page.aspx?id=62339>

## **An indirect source**

When a writer's or speaker's quoted words appear in a source written by someone else, begin the citation with the phrase "quoted in".

### Example:

"We only used seven signs in his presence," says Fouts. "All of his signs were learned from the other chimps" (qtd. in Toner 24).

This tells the reader that you got the Fouts quote from page 24 of Toner.

## **A source with no author**

When you are using a source with no author, such as often occurs with internet sources, your citation still has to refer to a source so that the reader will know from where the information was taken. Instead of using an author's last name, use whatever word or words are found at the beginning of the citation – this is most often part of the title of the piece.

### Example:

"The mechanism in the brains of chimpanzees that controls the ability to sign is virtually identical to that in humans" ("Sign").

This tells the reader that the quote was taken from a source, the title of which begins with the word "Sign" – in this case, "Sign Language with Chimps." If there is more than one source in your works cited that begins with the same word, use more than the first word to distinguish between the sources.

## **Quotation four lines or longer**

These "block" quotes should be used **very rarely**, and only if you plan on analyzing the entire selection. However, if you need to quote a large portion of text, you must follow these rules:

1. Quotation should be blocked if it is longer than four lines of type.
2. Include an introductory phrase in the paragraph, and then use a colon.
3. On a new line, indent your quotation and maintain indentation for the entire quotation.
4. When a quotation is indented, do not use quotation marks.
5. The parenthetical citation is included **outside** the ending punctuation.
6. Maintain double spacing.
7. When you are finished quoting and citing, start a new line at the original margin.

### Example:

Desmond describes how Washoe tried signing to the other apes when the Gardners returned her to an ape colony in Oklahoma:

One particularly memorable day, a snake spread terror through the castaways on the ape island, and all but one fled in panic. This male sat absorbed, staring intently at the serpent. He remained in this position for an extended time, still engrossed, until Washoe noticed his absence. Then Washoe was seen running over signing to him “come, hurry up.” (42)

### **Altering a quote**

When using a direct quote in which you insert a word of your own, place square brackets [ ] around the word you have inserted.

#### Example:

Robert Seyfarth reports that "Premack [a scientist at the University of Pennsylvania] taught a seven-year-old chimpanzee, Sarah, that the word for 'apple' was a small, plastic triangle" (13).

If you delete part of a quote, use ellipsis dots . . . to indicate where you have deleted from the original source.

#### Example:

In a recent New York Times article, Erik Eckholm reports that "a 4 year-old pygmy chimpanzee...has demonstrated what scientists say are the most human like linguistic skills ever documented" (A1).

For more information on citing sources and documentation, please refer to the following:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/02/>

## Strategies for Writing a Conclusion

Conclusions are often the most difficult part of an essay to write, and many writers feel that they have nothing left to say after having written the paper. A writer needs to keep in mind that the conclusion is often what a reader remembers best.

*A conclusion should:*

- ❖ Stress the importance of the thesis statement,
- ❖ Give the essay a sense of completeness, and
- ❖ Leave a final impression on the reader.

### NEVER INTRODUCE NEW INFORMATION IN YOUR CONCLUSION!

#### Suggestions

- ❖ **Answer the question "So What?"** – Show your readers why this paper was important. Show them that your paper was meaningful and useful.
- ❖ **Synthesize, don't summarize** - Don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. They have read it. Show them how the points you made and the support and examples you used were not random, but fit together.
- ❖ **Redirect your readers** - Give your reader something to think about, perhaps a way to use your paper in the "real" world. If your introduction went from general to specific, make your conclusion go from specific to general. Think globally.
- ❖ **Create a new meaning** - You don't have to give new information to create a new meaning. By demonstrating how your ideas work together, you can create a new picture. Often the sum of the paper is worth more than its parts.

#### Strategies

- ❖ **Echoing the introduction** - Echoing your introduction can be a good strategy if it is meant to bring the reader full-circle. If you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay was helpful in creating a new understanding.
- ❖ **Challenging the reader** – By issuing a challenge to your readers, help them to redirect the information in the paper, and they may apply it to their own lives.
- ❖ **Looking to the future** - Looking to the future can emphasize the importance of your paper or redirect the readers' thought process. It may help them apply the new information to their lives or see things more globally.
- ❖ **Posing questions** - Posing questions, either to your readers or in general, may help your readers gain a new perspective on the topic, which they may not have held before reading your conclusion. It may also bring your main ideas together to create a new meaning.



# Works Cited

## Works Cited Format

The Works Cited is the last page in a research paper, and it lists the sources—primary and secondary—that you referenced in your essay. It is absolutely essential that you have this page and follow the formatting rules listed below.

- The Works Cited gets a page number (with your last name beside it) and its own page (the last page).
- The ENTIRE Works Cited is double-spaced.
- Alphabetize, alphabetize, and alphabetize! Articles (a, an, the) are not used when alphabetizing! If there is no author, alphabetize by the title of the work.
- Indent second and subsequent lines in entries.
- DO NOT number your entries.
- Make sure the sources in your Works Cited page are actually cited in your paper. If one of the sources is not cited in your paper, it does not belong on your Works Cited page.
- Set margins to one-inch all around.
- Font must be Calibri or Times New Roman 12 pt.
- *Italicize* publication titles and place article titles in “quotation marks.”

The following covers the basic formatting for the most popular source types.

### Books

Lastname, Firstname. *Title of Book*. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of Publication. Medium of Publication.

Gleick, James. *Chaos: Making a New Science*. New York: Penguin, 1987. Print.

### **Entire Website**

Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). *Name of Site*. Version number. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available). Medium of publication. Date of access.

*The Purdue OWL Family of Sites*. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue U, 2008. Web. 23 Apr. 2008.

### **Specific page on a website**

Editor, author, or compiler name (if available). *Name of Site*. Version number. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sponsor or publisher), date of resource creation (if available). Medium of publication. Date of access.

"How to Make Vegetarian Chili." *eHow*. Demand Media, n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2009.

### **Database Article**

Author Lastname, Firstname. "Title of Article." *Title of Publication*. Date of original publication: page numbers. *Database Title*. Medium of publication. Date of access.

Junge, Wolfgang, and Nathan Nelson. "Nature's Rotary Electromotors." *Science* 29 Apr. 2005: 642-44. *Science Online*. Web. 5 Mar. 2009.

### **Further resources for MLA Works Cited format, sources, and in-text citations:**

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/05/>

[http://content.easybib.com/citation-guides/mla-format/#.U\\_P7BEs1rPb](http://content.easybib.com/citation-guides/mla-format/#.U_P7BEs1rPb)

Works Cited

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- . "The Medieval Knighting Ceremony in 'Sir Gawain and the Green Knight'." *The Chaucer Review*

12.3 (1978): 183-189. Web. 7 Feb. 2014.

# THE GREAT EIGHT

## To Save Your Grammatical Fate

This chapter summarizes the experiences of many English teachers who have assessed countless papers on an array of topics. It addresses common errors that recur in students' writing assignments. Understanding "THE GREAT EIGHT" will lead to more effective writing and stronger grammatical skills. For even greater grammatical practice, feel free to peruse *The Elements of Style*, *Purdue Owl* website, or *The Pingry Manual of Style*. Many links have already been set-up for you below. Just click, go, and learn.

### 1) Subject/Verb Agreement

**Subjects** and **verbs** must AGREE with one another in **number** (singular or plural). Thus, if a subject is singular, its verb must also be singular; if a subject is plural, its verb must also be plural.

In present tenses, nouns and verbs form plurals in opposite ways:

**nouns** ADD an *s* to the singular form,

**BUT**

**verbs** REMOVE an *s* from the singular form.

*Citation = <http://www.towson.edu>*

EXAMPLE:

The boy runs home from school. [Singular subject and singular verb.]

The boys run home from school. [Plural subject and plural verb.]

Go to the following link for great practice and review for subject/verb agreement:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/599/01/>

## 2) Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement

**Definition:** An antecedent is the word or group of words to which a pronoun refers. One way to look at this is: A pronoun is a form of shorthand that we use instead of repeating a certain word or group of words; the word or phrase that the pronoun replaces is a duplicate of the word or phrase that is the pronoun's antecedent.

EXAMPLE: We may write, "Our company makes commitments, and our company follows through on commitments" as "Our company makes commitments, and it follows through on them." The pronouns *it* and *them* represent, respectively, company and commitments. The antecedent of *it* is *company*, and the antecedent of *them* is *commitments*.

**Every pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and gender.**

**All pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number and gender.**

Singular antecedents such as *man*, *person*, *customer*, *employee*, *everybody*, *one*, *anyone*, and *each* are referred to by a singular pronoun.

Each of these ideas has **its** merits.

Any student who wants to change a course must first consult **his or her** advisor.

Everyone with an expense account must present receipts for all of **his or her** expenses.

As a person grows up, **he or she** must assume more responsibility.

Two or more antecedents joined by *and* are referred to by a plural pronoun.

Mr. Jones and his assistant are examining **their** options.

With two or more antecedents joined by *or* or *nor*, the pronoun agrees with the nearer antecedent.

Neither the package nor the letters reached **their** destination. (Pronoun agrees with *letters*.)

[NOTE: Such constructions often become awkward. Consider: "Neither the employees nor the boss has abandoned his position in the dispute." Rephrasing is the answer: "The employees have not abandoned their position in the dispute; neither has the boss."]

Collective nouns are referred to by singular or plural pronouns, depending upon whether the sense of the collective noun is singular or plural.

The committee has submitted **its** proposals. (The committee acts as a singular unit – it)

The group have been arguing among **themselves**. (The sense is "group members have been arguing"; the sense is plural.)

[NOTE: The **verb** is often a clue to the appropriate pronoun. Above, "has" treats "the committee" as a singular entity; hence, the proper pronoun is singular. In the second sentence, "have" treats "the group" as a plural; hence, *themselves* is the appropriate plural pronoun. This latter sentence would be better if

rewritten: "Group members have been arguing among themselves." Note that the verb and pronoun must be consistent when both relate to the same noun.]

*Citation* = <http://www.grammarmudge.cityslide.com/>

Go to the following links for great practice and review for pronoun/antecedent agreement:

[https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/agreement\\_pa\\_ex1.htm](https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/agreement_pa_ex1.htm)

[https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/agreement\\_pa\\_ex2.htm](https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/agreement_pa_ex2.htm)

### 3) Comma Usage (,)

#### Place commas between the items in a series.

Some people consider the comma before the conjunction (the “serial comma”) optional, but omitting it can damage a sentence’s rhythm and clarity. Wherever clear writing is valued — *The New Yorker*, Harvard University, or DVRHS — the serial comma is required.

☹ Red, white and blue are Betsy’s favorite colors.

😊 Red, white, and blue are Betsy’s favorite colors.

Omission of the serial comma can create serious confusion. In the following example, are we discussing three Ph.D.-bound Stooges, or are we telling Larry about two Ph.D.-bound Stooges?

☹ Larry, Moe and Curly are pursuing their doctorates.

😊 Larry, Moe, and Curly are pursuing their doctorates.

If a series includes items that are long or contain internal commas, separate the items with semicolons.

☹ John Coltrane, the great saxophonist, Federico Bosco, D.D.S., my former dentist, who is now retired, Max, and Norma went to lunch.

😊 John Coltrane, the great saxophonist; Federico Bosco, D.D.S., my former dentist, who is now retired; Max; and Norma went to lunch.

☹ Mickey, Minnie, Donald, the uncle of Huey, Dewey, and Louie, Goofy, and Pluto have enjoyed several extensions of copyright protection.

😊 Mickey; Minnie; Donald, the uncle of Huey, Dewey, and Louie; Goofy; and Pluto have enjoyed several extensions of copyright protection.

#### Place a comma before an independent clause.

Place a comma before a coordinating conjunction (**and**, **or**, **for**, **nor**, **but**, **yet**, **so**) joining two independent clauses.

☹ We rarely question the notion of self but where is the self to be found?

😊 We rarely question the notion of self, but where is the self to be found?



Omit the comma if both clauses are very short (two or three words each).

😊 Leopold walked but Molly ran.

Place a comma before an independent clause preceded by a phrase or subordinate clause.

😊 Not finding him at home, I left a message in his mailbox.

😊 Because the fire has abated, rescue efforts can proceed.

Omit the comma if the subordinate clause follows the independent clause. No pause, no comma

😊 Rescue efforts can proceed because the fire has abated.

*Citation = The Pingry Manual of Style, Third Edition*

Go to the following links for great practice and review in comma usage:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/3/5/15>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/3/5/16>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/3/5/17>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/3/5/18>

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/3/5/19>

## 4) The Semicolon (;)

Semicolons help you connect closely related ideas when a style mark stronger than a comma is needed. By using semicolons effectively, you can make your writing sound more sophisticated.

### Rules for Using Semicolons

1. A semicolon is most commonly used to link (in a single sentence) two **independent clauses** that are closely related in thought.

When a semicolon is used to join two or more ideas (parts) in a sentence, those ideas are then given equal position or rank.

EXAMPLE: Some people write with a word processor; others write with a pen or pencil.

Avoid using a comma when a semicolon is needed:

**Incorrect:** The cow is brown, it is also old.

**Correct:** The cow is brown; it is also old.

**What's going on here?** Both parts of the sentence are **independent clauses**, and commas should **not** be used to connect independent clauses if there is no **coordinating conjunction**. This mistake is known as a **comma splice**.

Avoid using a semicolon when a comma is needed:

**Incorrect:** The cow is brown; but not old.

**Correct:** The cow is brown, but not old.

**What's going on here?** The **coordinating conjunction** **but** doesn't require a semicolon, since the second part of the sentence isn't an **independent clause**.

2. Use a semicolon between two **independent clauses** that are connected by **conjunctive adverbs** or **transitional phrases**.

EXAMPLE: But however they choose to write, people are allowed to make their own decisions; as a result, many people swear by their writing methods.

**Incorrect:** I like cows, however, I hate the way they smell.

**Correct:** I like cows; however, I hate the way they smell.

**What's going on here?** The conjunctive adverb **however** signals a connection between two **independent clauses**, and commas should **not** be used to connect independent clauses if there is no **coordinating conjunction**.

**Incorrect:** Because cows smell; they offend me.

**Correct:** Because cows smell, they offend me.

**What's going on here?** The first part is not an **independent clause**, so no semicolon is required.

3. Use a semicolon between items in a list or series if any of the items contain commas.

EXAMPLE: There are basically two ways to write: with a pen or pencil, which is inexpensive and easily accessible; or by computer and printer, which is more expensive but quick and neat.

**Incorrect:** I like cows: they give us milk, which tastes good, they give us beef, which also tastes good, and they give us leather, which is used for shoes and coats.

**Correct:** I like cows: they give us milk, which tastes good; they give us beef, which also tastes good; and they give us leather, which is used for shoes and coats.

**What's going on here?** It's unclear what the three list items are, since commas separate the items.

4. Use a semicolon between **independent clauses** joined by a **coordinating conjunction** if the clauses are already punctuated with commas or if the clauses are lengthy.

EXAMPLE: Some people write with a word processor, typewriter, or a computer; but others, for different reasons, choose to write with a pen or pencil.

**Incorrect:** Cows, though their bovine majesty has been on the wane in recent millenia, are still one of the great species of this planet, domesticated, yet proud, they ruminate silently as we humans pass tumultuously by.

**Correct:** Cows, though their bovine majesty has been on the wane in recent millenia, are still one of the great species of this planet; domesticated, yet proud, they ruminate silently as we humans pass tumultuously by.

**What's going on here?** It's unclear where the first **independent clause** ends and the second independent clause begins.

*Citation = <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Semicolons.html>*

Go to the following links for great practice and review in semicolon usage:

[https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/semicolons\\_ex1.htm](https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/semicolons_ex1.htm)

[https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/semicolons\\_ex2.htm](https://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/semicolons_ex2.htm)

## 5) Parallel Structure (//)

**Parallel structure** is repetition of the same pattern of words or phrases within a sentence or passage to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. It is grammatically correct to ensure that phrases, clauses and items on a list after a colon use the correct parallel structure.

### Parallel Structure in Words and Phrases

Some examples of parallel structure of words and phrases include the following:

- Ashley likes **to ski, to swim, and to jump**.

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence would read: Ashley likes **to ski, to swim, and jumping**.

- Joe likes **singing, walking, and diving**.

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence would read: Joe **likes singing, walking and to dive**.

- Mary wanted to make sure that she made her presentation **creatively, effectively, and persuasively**.

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence would read: Mary wanted to make sure she made her presentation **creatively, effectively, and persuaded others**.

- Tim was considered to be a good employee because **he was never late, he was very motivated, and he was not lacking in initiative**.

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence would read: Tim was considered to be a good employee because **he was never late, he was very motivated, and he did not lack initiative**.

### Parallel Structure on Lists

When you have items on a list following a colon, the items should all be in the same form in order to avoid a parallel structure error.

Some examples can illustrate this point:

- The following activities can be done at the shopping center: **buying groceries, eating lunch, or paying your bill**.

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence without parallel structure would read: The following activities can be done at the shopping center: **buying groceries, eating lunch, and a bill payment center**.

- In your bedroom, you can find the following: **a bed, a closet and a desk**.

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence would read: In your bedroom, you can find the following: **a bed, a closet, and sitting at a desk.**

- Dogs are great pets for the following reasons: **they are loyal, they are loving, and they are obedient.**

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence would read: Dogs are great pets for the following reasons: **they are loyal, they are loving, and because of their obedience.**

- People who get ahead do lots of different things such as: **studying, working hard, and going to college.**

This is correct and uses parallel structure. An incorrect version of this sentence would read: People who get ahead do lots of different things such as: **studying, working hard, and to attend college.**

In each of these different examples, words of equal importance can either be written in the same format (which is correct) or they can be written in different forms (which is incorrect). Parallel structure errors can make your writing sound strange to listeners. Many tests, including the SAT, will require you to identify parallel structure errors as a means of testing your writing abilities.

*Citation = <http://examples.yourdictionary.com/parallel-structure-examples.html>*

Go to the following links for great practice and review in parallel structure:

<http://www.chompchomp.com/structure01/structure01.htm>

[http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=parallel-structure-quiz\\_1](http://www.proprofs.com/quiz-school/story.php?title=parallel-structure-quiz_1)

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/35/>

## 6) Active Versus Passive Voice

### Use the active voice

At the heart of every good sentence is a strong, precise verb; the converse is true as well--at the core of most confusing, awkward, or wordy sentences lies a weak verb.

Try to use the active voice whenever possible.

### Active vs. passive voice

In a sentence written in the *active voice*, **the subject of sentence performs the action. In a sentence written in the *passive voice* the subject receives the action.**

**Active:** The candidate *believes* that Congress *must place* a ceiling on the budget.

**Passive:** *It is believed* by the candidate that a ceiling *must be placed* on the budget by Congress.

**Active:** Researchers earlier *showed* that high stress *can cause* heart attacks.

**Passive:** *It was* earlier *demonstrated* that heart attacks *can be caused* by high stress.

**Active:** The dog *bit* the man.

**Passive:** The man *was bitten* by the dog.

### Converting sentences to active voice

Here are some tips and strategies for converting sentences from the passive to the active voice.

- Look for a "by" phrase (e.g., "by the dog" in the last example above). If you find one, the sentence may be in the passive voice. Rewrite the sentence so that the subject buried in the "by" clause is closer to the beginning of the sentence.
- If the subject of the sentence is somewhat anonymous, see if you can use a general term, such as "researchers," or "the study," or "experts in this field."

### When to use passive voice

There are sometimes good reasons to use the passive voice:

#### To emphasize the action rather than the actor

After long debate, the proposal *was endorsed* by the long-range planning committee.

#### To keep the subject and focus consistent throughout a passage

The data processing department recently presented what proved to be a controversial proposal to expand its staff. After long debate, the proposal *was endorsed by* . . .

#### To be tactful by not naming the actor

The procedures *were* somehow *misinterpreted*.

**To describe a condition in which the actor is unknown or unimportant**

Every year, thousands of people *are diagnosed* as having cancer.

**To create an authoritative tone**

Visitors *are not allowed* after 9:00 p.m.

*Citation = [http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CCS\\_activevoice.html](http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/CCS_activevoice.html)*



## 7) Fragments

**A sentence must have a subject and a verb and express a complete idea.**

Fragments are incomplete sentences. Usually, fragments are pieces of sentences that have become disconnected from the main clause. One of the easiest ways to correct them is to remove the period between the fragment and the main clause. Other kinds of punctuation may be needed for the newly combined sentence.

Below are some examples with the fragments shown in **red**. Punctuation and/or words added to make corrections are highlighted in **blue**. Notice that the fragment is frequently a dependent clause or long phrase that follows the main clause.

- **Fragment:** Purdue offers many majors in engineering. **Such as electrical, chemical, and industrial engineering.**  
**Possible Revision:** Purdue offers many majors in engineering, **such as electrical, chemical, and industrial engineering.**
- **Fragment:** Coach Dietz exemplified this behavior by walking off the field in the middle of a game. **Leaving her team at a time when we needed her.**  
**Possible Revision:** Coach Dietz exemplified this behavior by walking off the field in the middle of a game, **leaving her team at a time when we needed her.**
- **Fragment:** I need to find a new roommate. **Because the one I have now isn't working out too well.**  
**Possible Revision:** I need to find a new roommate **because the one I have now isn't working out too well.**
- **Fragment:** The current city policy on housing is incomplete as it stands. **Which is why we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.**  
**Possible Revision:** **Because** the current city policy on housing is incomplete as it stands, we believe the proposed amendments should be passed.

You may have noticed that newspaper and magazine journalists often use a dependent clause as a separate sentence when it follows clearly from the preceding main clause, as in the last example above. This is a conventional **journalistic** practice, often used for emphasis. For **academic** writing and other more formal writing situations, however, you should **avoid** such journalistic fragment sentences.

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Some fragments are not clearly pieces of sentences that have been left unattached to the main clause; they are written as main clauses but lack a subject or main verb.

### No main verb

- **Fragment: A story with deep thoughts and emotions.**

**Possible Revisions:**

- *Direct object:* **She told** a story with deep thoughts and emotions.
- *Appositive:* **Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper,"** a story with deep thoughts and emotions, **has impressed critics for decades.**

- **Fragment: Toys of all kinds thrown everywhere.**

**Possible Revisions:**

- *Complete verb:* Toys of all kinds **were** thrown everywhere.
- *Direct object:* **They found** toys of all kinds thrown everywhere.

- **Fragment: A record of accomplishment beginning when you were first hired.**

**Possible Revisions:**

- *Direct object:* **I've noticed** a record of accomplishment beginning when you were first hired
- *Main verb:* A record of accomplishment **began** when you were first hired.

### No Subject

- **Fragment: With the ultimate effect of all advertising is to sell the product.**

**Possible Revisions:**

- *Remove preposition:* **The** ultimate effect of all advertising is to sell the product.

- **Fragment: By paying too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.**

**Possible Revisions:**

- *Remove preposition:* **Paying** too much attention to polls can make a political leader unwilling to propose innovative policies.

- **Fragment: For doing freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired.**

**Possible Revisions:**

- *Remove preposition:* **Doing** freelance work for a competitor got Phil fired.
- *Rearrange:* **Phil got fired** for doing freelance work for a competitor.

These last three examples of fragments with no subjects are also known as **mixed constructions**, that is, sentences constructed out of mixed parts. They start one way (often with a long prepositional phrase) but end with a regular predicate. Usually the object of the preposition (often a gerund, as in the last two examples) is intended as the subject of the sentence, so removing the preposition at the beginning is usually the easiest way to edit such errors.

Citation = <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/620/1/>

## 8) Run-Ons And Comma Splices

A **run-on sentence** (sometimes called a "fused sentence") has at least two parts, either one of which can stand by itself (in other words, two independent clauses), but the two parts have been forced together instead of being properly connected.

It is important to realize that the length of a sentence really has nothing to do with whether a sentence is a run-on or not; being a run-on is a structural flaw that can plague even a very short sentence:

☹ The sun is high, put on some sunblock.

When two independent clauses are connected by *only* a comma, they constitute a run-on sentence that is called a **comma-splice**. The example just above (about the sunscreen) is a comma-splice. When you use a comma to connect two independent clauses, it must be accompanied by a little conjunction (**and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so**).

😊 The sun is high, so put on some sunscreen.

Run-on sentences happen typically under the following circumstances:

- a. **When an independent clause gives an order or directive based on what was said in the prior independent clause:**

EXAMPLE: This next chapter has a lot of difficult information in it, you should start studying right away.

(We could put a period where that comma is and start a new sentence. A semicolon might also work there.)

- b. **When two independent clauses are connected by a transitional expression (conjunctive adverb) such as *however, moreover, nevertheless*.**

EXAMPLE: Mr. Nguyen has sent his four children to ivy-league colleges, however, he has sacrificed his health working day and night in that dusty bakery.

(Again, where that first comma appears, we could have used either a period — and started a new sentence — or a semicolon.)

- c. **When the second of two independent clauses contains a pronoun that connects it to the first independent clause.**

EXAMPLE: This computer doesn't make sense to me, it came without a manual.

(Although these two clauses are quite brief, and the ideas are closely related, this is a run-on sentence. We need a period where that comma now stands.)

Citation = <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/runons.htm>

# Writer's Checklist

As you read and revise your final draft of the essay, employ the following checklist to be sure that your composition adheres the writing guidelines presented in this handbook:

## MLA FORMATTING

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Is my essay typed in Times New Roman or Calibri 12 pt. font?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Does my essay have a proper heading?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Does my title capture the reader's interest and/or touch upon the paper's major theme(s)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Are the pages of the text numbered consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Has the text of the paper itself met the page-length requirement, not including the Works Cited?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Is the text of this essay double-spaced?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Is there a one-inch margin on all sides of the text of the paper itself?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Have I indented my paragraphs at ½" and all block quotes (quotations over four lines long) at 1"?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Are my parenthetical citations done according to proper MLA formatting?

## INTRODUCTION

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Do I spark the reader's interest with something engaging (a hook)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Does the introduction include the names of the authors and title(s) of their work?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Do I identify and narrow my topic?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Does the introduction provide all necessary background information?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Is there a clear, compelling thesis stating my topic and position?

## BODY PARAGRAPHS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Do I begin my body paragraphs with transitional words or phrases?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Do I use topic sentences that correlate to the subtopics in my thesis statement?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Do I use detailed evidence to prove each point (textual evidence when appropriate)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Is each quotation introduced appropriately and followed by a parenthetical citation?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Have I discussed the significance of my textual evidence?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Did I successfully refute any facts, statistics, or arguments that were in opposition to my thesis?

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Do I end each paragraph with a summary sentence?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Have I transitioned smoothly between paragraphs?

## **CONCLUSION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Does my conclusion demonstrate the significance of my perspective?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Does it synthesize the main points of my essay?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Have I restated my thesis?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Do I conclude the essay with memorable final lines?

## **WORKS CITED**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Does this essay include a Works Cited page?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Does it contain a sufficient number of scholarly sources, in addition to my primary source(s)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Does the Works Cited appear at the end of the document and have a page number?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Does the essay cite each of my sources at least once?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Is the Works Cited page done according to the instructions and model provided?

## **ORGANIZATION**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Does this paper have a clear and logical progression of ideas (unity)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Do all of the paragraphs in this paper flow smoothly, demonstrating consistency and transition?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Are there sufficient facts, examples, statistics, anecdotes, etc. to support my thesis statement?

## **GRAMMAR, USAGE, STYLE, & SPELLING**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Is this paper written in standard, formal English, and does it have appropriate diction (no slang, informal English, contractions, etc.)?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Is this paper free from errors in grammar and usage?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Do I use present tense throughout the essay, and avoid shifts in tense?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Have I avoided passive voice?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Have I avoided wordiness and redundancy?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Have I employed elevated vocabulary throughout the essay?
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Did I spell-check the entire essay with both a computer and a human being?

## Peer Review Sheet

*Writer directions:* Before handing this sheet to your reviewer, think about and write down a question or two that you would like the reviewer to respond to after reading your draft. Perhaps you are curious about whether a specific point is clear, or maybe you're worried about your source citations. Whatever questions you have, write them below:

*Reviewer directions:* The peer reviewers will read the drafts, answering the following questions. **Read the questions before you begin** reading so you can be aware of what to look for as you read.

- 1) First, read through the draft:
  - a) Number each paragraph for ease of reference in commenting.
  - b) Note grammatical errors if you find them – identify/circle, but don't correct them.
  - c) Note stylistic problems and successes (e.g. lack of clarity, or engaging phrases).
  - d) Ask questions or make constructive observations – Try to make at least one constructive note per paragraph.

### **Thesis:**

- 2) Is the thesis of the paper clear and understandable to you? Does it make clear what the paper will argue? If not, explain about what aspect you are confused.

### **Content/Organization:**

- 3) Make a *BRIEF* outline of your partner's paper below (a couple of words or a phrase for each paragraph that describes its topic only – don't get lengthy). Then, review the outline and answer the following questions.
- 4) Are the paragraphs arranged in a logically? Could they be arranged differently to make more sense? How?
- 5) Does each paragraph have a clear *topic sentence*? Do the topic sentences clearly link to the ideas in the thesis? If not, which paragraphs are problematic?

- 6) Has the writer “unpacked” (fully explained) each idea/connection in enough detail to make it both clear and interesting? Is every point developed fully enough to be clear and convincing? Is there a need for more explanation anywhere? If so, mark those sections by writing “CONN.”
- 7) How well does the paper stay on topic overall? Are all the ideas directly relevant to the main point of the paper? Is there any off topic or irrelevant information? Mark that information on the paper by writing “OT.”

### **Integration of sources**

- 8) Is there too much or too little information from the sources (BOTH movie and research)? Do the sources take over the paper, or is the majority of the writing by the student? (Balance should be 80% student, 20% sources).
- 9) Is there any place where the writer should consider strengthening, supplementing, or replacing the source information he/she has included? If so, mark those places with “EVID.”

### **General Considerations**

- 10) Does the paper feel “jumpy” or “choppy”? Are transitions needed or in need of improvement to make connections clearer? Where? Mark them on paper by writing “TRANS.”
- 11) Circle any places where the writer uses first or second person. Is the overall syntax, and diction of the paper formal and academic? What does the author need to avoid in order to maintain that formal tone?

Does the writer provide either parenthetical (Smith 54) or in-text citations (“As Carl Smith discusses in his article...”) in the draft? ☐ Yes ☐ No Mark any instance you see where a citation is needed or incorrect.

## General Scoring Rubric for Written Responses

### Reading Comprehension

Demonstrations of Main Ideas and Details

The response provides an accurate analysis of the text and cites strong textual evidence to support the analysis, demonstrating a full comprehension of complex ideas expressed in the text.

- The response addresses the prompt and provides an applicable and complete development of the claim, topic &/or narrative elements by employing clear and convincing logic, details, textual evidence, &/or description; the development is consistently appropriate to the task, purpose, & audience.

- The response demonstrates a focused reason, clarity, & unity and includes a strong introduction, conclusion, & rational, well-executed development of ideas – it is easy to follow the progression of the writer's ideas.

- The response establishes & maintains an effective style, while maintaining the authenticity of the subject. The response employs precise language consistently, including descriptive words & phrases, specific details, linking/transitional words, indication of tone, &/or domain specific vocabulary.

The response provides a mostly accurate analysis of the text and cites evidence that is supportive of the key ideas in the text.

- The response addresses the prompt & provides an effective development of the claim, topic, and support through clear reasoning, details, and textual evidence. The response is mainly appropriate for the prompt, purpose, & audience.

- The response demonstrates coherence, clarity, and cohesion, as well as an introduction, conclusion, & a logical progression of ideas, making it easy for a reader to follow the writer's progression.

- The response establishes and maintains an effective style, while maintaining the authenticity of the subject. The response mostly employs precise language, including descriptive words & phrases, details, linking/transitional words, tone, &/or domain specific vocabulary.

The response provides a general analysis of what the text says and cites evidence, demonstrates a basic understanding of the key ideas expressed in the text.

- The response addresses the prompt & provides some development of the claim, topic, &/or narrative elements through the use of some logic, details, textual evidence, &/or description; the development is somewhat appropriate to the task, purpose, & audience.

- The response demonstrates some coherence, clarity, &/or cohesion, and includes an introduction, conclusion, relatively logical groupings of ideas, making the writer's progression discernable, but not obvious.

- The response establishes & maintains a mostly effective style, while attempting to address the authenticity of the subject. The response uses some precise language, including descriptive words or phrases, details, linking/transitional words, indication of tone, &/or domain specific vocabulary.

The response provides a minimal analysis of the main points of the text, demonstrates a limited grasp of the ideas presented in the text.

- The response addresses the prompt & develops the claim, topic, &/or narrative elements minimally by using limited reasoning, details, textual evidence &/or description; the development is limited.

- The response demonstrates limited coherence, clarity, &/or cohesion, making the writer's progression of ideas somewhat clear.

- The response has a style that is limited in effectiveness, with limited awareness of the norms of the discipline. The response includes limited descriptions, details, linking or transitional words, indication of tone, or domain specific vocabulary.

The response provides an inaccurate analysis—or completely lacks any analysis, demonstrating little to no understanding of the main ideas in the text.

- The response is weak & underdeveloped. It is inappropriate to the task, purpose, &/or audience.

- The response demonstrates a lack of coherence, clarity, & cohesion.

- The response has an inappropriate style. The writing demonstrates little to no awareness of the norms of the discipline. There is little or no precise language.

### Writing

Academic Writing



## Writing

### Demonstration of Language and Conventions

- The response demonstrates a command of the conventions of standard English, which indicates efficient editing. There may be a **few minor errors** in grammar & usage, but meaning is clear throughout.

- The response demonstrates a command of the conventions of the English language & indicates editing. There may be a **few obvious errors** in grammar & usage, but meaning is clear.

- The response demonstrates erratic use of the conventions of Standard English. There are **few patterns of errors** in grammar and usage may occasionally impede understanding.

- The response expresses limited understanding of the conventions of Standard English. There are multiple errors in grammar & usage, demonstrating minimal control over language. There are multiple distracting errors in grammar & usage that **sometimes** hinder understanding.

- The response reveals little or no command of the conventions of Standard English. There are frequent & varied errors in grammar & usage, demonstrating little or no control over language. There are **frequent** distracting errors in grammar & usage that will impede understanding.