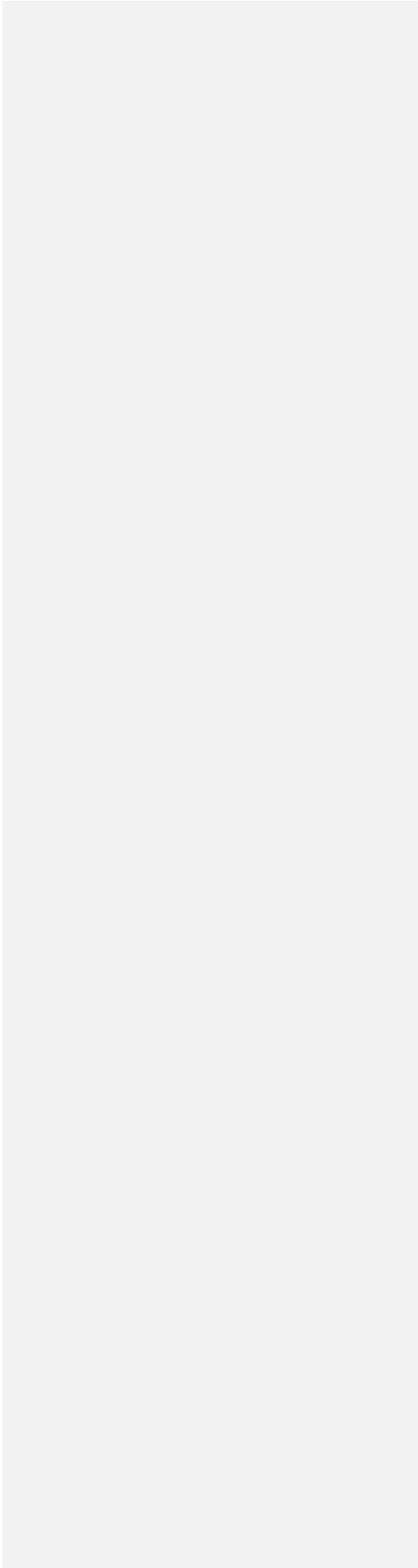
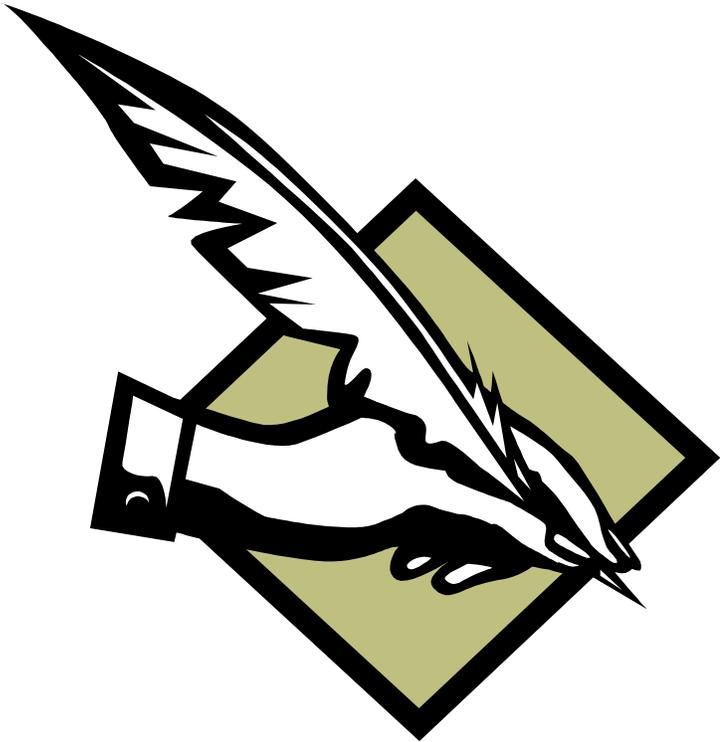
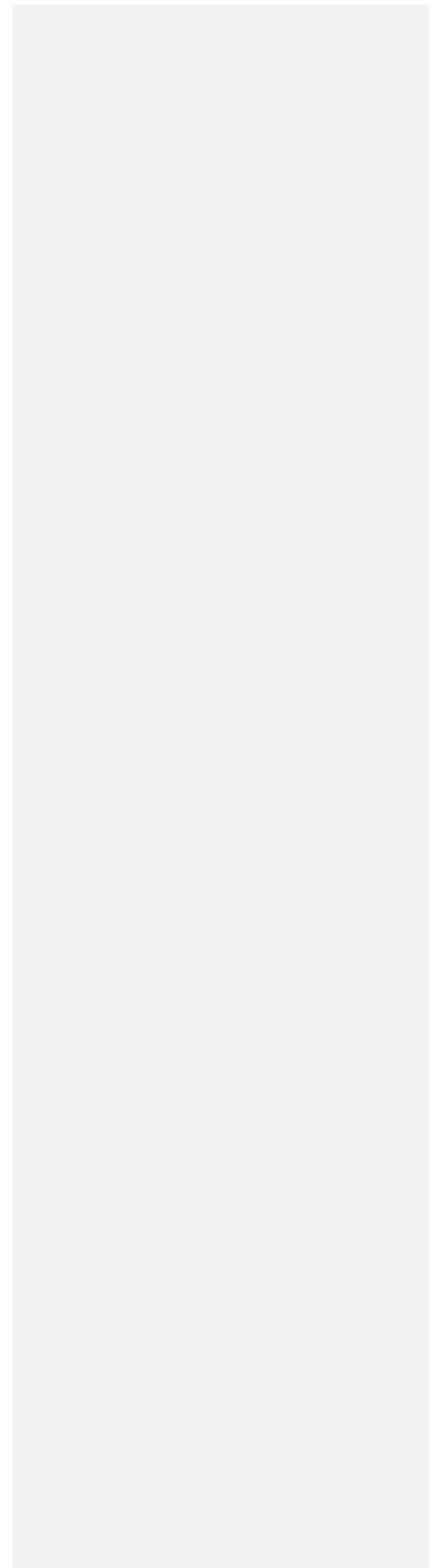
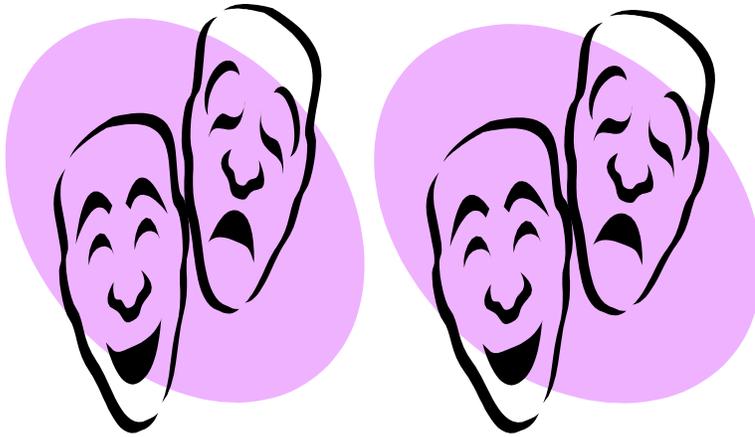


# SCPA Writing Style Guide



# Introduction

The purpose of this manual is provide guidance for students in writing formal papers in all of their academic and arts classes. Part One of this document displays and explains the format for all formal papers at SCPA. Unless otherwise instructed by your teacher, all formal papers at SCPA should use this format. Additionally, the remainder of the booklet discusses and explains a variety of topics related to the idea of producing great writing. Included in this information is a description of MLA citation and how to use it in your papers.



# Part One: Format of your paper

First and Last Name  
Date  
Period #  
Assignment Title

<space>  
**Unique Title of Work (especially if an Essay)**  
<space>

Use the **tab** key (.5") to indent all of your paragraphs. You should have your margins flushed on the left, which is called **left justified**. Your spacing for your essay should be **double space**, not single or one-and-a-half spacing. You should use **12-point font**, not 16 or 14 or 10 or anything above or below plain 12 point. In addition, you should use **Times or Arial** font, or other serif or sans serif font. Avoid fancy fonts like Marker Felt, Comic Sans, Stencil. We like it easy to read and pretty plain, because we have to read a lot and fonts that aren't Times or Arial get pretty hard on the eyes.

Again, anytime that you start a new paragraph, be sure to indent! DO NOT put an extra space between paragraphs. Notice that there is no white space between paragraphs. White space looks like this:

It's literally white space on the page and means that there is a break from topic to topic. It is only used for specific reasons. One paragraph to the next is not a reason for white space; so, don't use it!

Make sure that you put page numbers on each of your pages. It is expected that you follow **MLA format**, which requires you to have your **Last name** and the **page number** in the **Header** of each page. You can insert a header by going to the "View" menu and then "Header and Footer" to see the header in MS Word (other word processing software is similar). But, on the very first page, it is expected that you have all your school related information: **first and last name, date, period number, and**

**assignment title.** The assignment title is the generic title your teacher gives the assignment. For example, Essay #1, Unit 2 Essay, or Author-so-and-so Response.

In addition, to all the information, it is expected that you also give your assignment a unique and personal title. This should relate to the composition itself. If this response, analysis, or argument were to be found in a textbook, what would its title be? This is where you get to be creative and attach a title to your work.

Finally, be sure to have compositions that are checked for grammar and mechanics. Essays that have rely por speling or just, don't, make, sense, with the punctuation! are very hard to read. So, do your teacher a favor and have two or three people read and check it for grammar and mechanics before you turn it in.

By keeping to this format, you will be doing your teachers a favor because it's a standard way of submitting work in academics. By adhering to this model, you show consideration to format, discipline in your schoolwork, and increase your credibility as an author.

On a final note, to be completely professional, have your assignment typed out and stapled **before** class begins. The last thing your teachers want is you wasting valuable class time getting your assignment printed. If worse comes to worse and you can't type/print, neatly handwrite your assignment and turn it in to your teacher, but follow the same format: header (last name and page number), first page heading information (name, date, period # and assignment title), title, and indentation for paragraphs. Usually handwritten work does *not* need to be double spaced.

Hope that this handout helps you to succeed in turning in professional assignments.

**HINT:** *Your completed essay should look similar in format to this one*

## Part Two: Writing Great Sentences

Okay, so you've given some thought to the power of reading and its effect on writing. In this section, we want you to consider what kind of a writer you are. Before we look at such issues as grammar and punctuation, let's think about sentence style. Have you ever had one of the following comments written on your essays:

- **Use more sentence variety.**
- **Power up your writing with vivid verbs.**
- **Show us the action; don't tell us about it.**
- **Paint a picture with your sentences.**

In first-draft writing, it's very easy to write sentences that are flat and even boring, so let's think about the following great rules for writers: First off, keep your sentences clear, concise, and active. The reader should be able to tell what the subject and the verb of the sentence is (clarity). Also, the writing needs to be crisp and straightforward so that it's easy to follow (concise). Finally, the sentences should contain strong, active verbs. Try not to use forms of the "to be" verb (am, is, are, was, were) too often. Instead, select a verb that energizes your sentence and drives it along from start to finish. Remember that great sentences keep the reader reading!

**Take a look at the pairs of sentences below. Note how the first sentence lacks energy and variety. Then, see how the second sentence in the pair is stronger. Pay close attention to what the writer has done to transform the first sentence.**

- Dull:** *The Grand Theatre was filled with many students.*  
**Dynamic:** Their voices echoing against the proscenium, hundreds of students packed the Grand Theatre.
- Dull:** *He went to the library. He needed books for his research project.*  
**Dynamic:** He hurried to the library to get some much-needed books for his research project.
- Dull:** *The sky was dark. Clouds were forming. A storm was approaching.*  
**Dynamic:** Dark clouds loomed above, foretelling of a major storm.
- Dull:** *He reached for the phone. His heart raced as he got ready to ask her for a date.*  
**Dynamic:** With fingers crossed, he reached nervously for the phone, hoping that she would go on a date with him.
- Dull:** *Margaret was a lawyer. She was very successful, and she had many ambitions in life.*  
**Dynamic:** Margaret, a successful lawyer, had many ambitions in life.

## Part Three: Reviewing the Parts of Speech

Now that we've thought about great sentences, we need to back up and review some key aspects of grammar. Don't worry! As you review these parts of speech, you'll remember them from your elementary and middle school days. It's essential that you know these since many of the writing problems encountered by students stem from these basic elements.

### Noun

**A noun is the name of a person, place, object, or idea. Nouns may be either common or proper. A proper noun refers to a specific person or place and is always capitalized.**

**Common Nouns:** father, swimming pool, pencil, truth, success.

**Proper Nouns:** Mr. Urick, Emily Dickinson, San Diego, School of Creative and Performing Arts, Petco Park, San Diego Chargers

### Pronoun

**A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun. Pronouns are classified by case, gender, number, and person. Take a look at the following pronoun charts, much like the ones you've studied in world languages:**

#### Subject Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> Person	I	We
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	You	You
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	He, She, It	They

#### Object Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> Person	Me	Us
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	You	You
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	Him, Her, It	Them

### Possessive Pronouns

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> Person	My, Mine	Our, Ours
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	You, Yours	You, Yours
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	His, Her, Hers, Its	Their, Theirs

Possessive pronouns can work as adjectives (**MY** car; **YOUR** friend); they can also stand alone (That book is **MINE**).

#### Other types of pronouns are:

<b>Reflexive:</b>	myself, himself, herself, itself, yourself, themselves, ourselves
<b>Relative:</b>	who, whose, whom, which, what, that
<b>Indefinite:</b>	another, everything, many, nobody, several, someone, everybody
<b>Interrogative:</b>	who, whose, whom, which, what
<b>Demonstrative:</b>	this, that, these, those

## Adjective

An adjective is a word that modifies or describes a noun or pronoun:

#### Examples:

We visited the old, mysterious house. (modifies noun "house")

She is excited. (modifies pronoun "She")

## Verb

A verb is a word that shows an action or a state of being. A present tense verb shows an action that is happening now. A past tense verb shows an action that has already happened. A future tense verb shows an action that *will* happen.

#### Examples of Action Verbs

(Present tense)	The teacher walks across the campus.
(Past tense)	Yesterday, the teacher walked across the campus.
(Future tense)	Tomorrow, the teacher will walk across the campus.

#### Examples of State of Being Verbs

(Present Tense)	I <b>am</b> excited about the new movie.
(Past Tense)	I <b>was</b> thrilled to attend the party.
(Future Tense)	I <b>will be</b> interested to see what happens at the party.

## Examples of Linking Verbs:

- (Present Tense) I **feel** hungry right now.  
(Past Tense) I **became** tired after the game.  
(Future Tense) I **will appear** nervous before I step on stage.

*Quick note:* The verbs above are called linking verbs because they link the subject with the word that describes or explains it. The most common linking verbs are forms of the “to be” verb (am, is, are, was, were, being, been), but other linking verbs include such verbs as look, taste, smell, appear, sound, seem, and become.

## **Verb Tenses**

**Verb tenses show when the action occurred: in the past, during the present, or in the future. In English, we have six verb tenses that you need to know. The first three are easy, but the last three will require deeper consideration on your part.**

**1. Present tense** expresses an action that is happening at the present time or that happens on a regular basis:

Today, I **eat**.                      She **watches**                      The orchestra **performs**

**2. Past tense** expresses an action that occurred in the past:

Yesterday, I **ate**                      She **watched**                      The orchestra **performed**

**3. Future tense** expresses an action that will take place in the future:

Tomorrow, I **will eat**    She **will watch**                      The orchestra **will perform**

**4. Present perfect** tense expresses an action that started in the past but continues in the present:

I **have visited** (and will continue to)                      The orchestra **has performed**

**5. Past perfect tense** expresses an action that started in the past and was finished in the past:

I **had visited**                      She **had watched**                      The orchestra **had performed**

**6. Future perfect tense** expresses an action that will be completed in the future before some other future action or event:

I **shall have visited** my grandmother before I visit my aunt.  
She **will have watched** the football game before she goes to the party.  
The orchestra **will have performed** before they enter the final competition.

*Quick note:* These final three verb tenses are a bit tricky, but once you realize how they work in terms of time and continuance, they begin to make sense.

## Adverb

**An adverb is a word that, for the most part, describes another verb. However, sometimes it can be used to describe an adjective or another adverb. Adverbs usually tell us “how” or “when” something happens.**

### Examples:

He runs **quickly**. (adverb describes the verb *runs*)  
The actress is **very** glamorous. (adverb *very* describes adjective glamorous)  
He runs **very quickly**. (adverb *very* describes adverb quickly which modifies *runs*)

## Preposition

**A preposition describes a relationship between other words in a sentence. A preposition never stands by itself. The words that follow it make up the prepositional phrase. These words usually consist of an article, a possible adjective, and a noun.**

### Examples:

I haven't eaten since Tuesday.  
(since = preposition; since Tuesday = prepositional phrase)

We ran over the bridge and through the forest to escape the troll.  
(over the bridge = prepositional phrase; through the forest = prep. phrase)

**Oftentimes, a prepositional phrase is used to locate something in time and space, to describe a noun, or to tell where or when something happened.**

She threw the ball into the ancient well.  
He was born in the nineteenth century.  
The girl in the lovely dress caught everyone's attention.

The following are examples of prepositions: at, on, in, into, for, since, of, to, over, under, beyond, through, about, around, except, behind, beside, past, and like. This is only a partial list.



## Part Four: Irregular Verb Chart

The English language borrows from many other languages; as a result, many irregularities exist, especially in the area of verbs. The following are some of the standard irregular verbs that have bothered students for decades. Review the chart carefully and memorize those verb forms that give you trouble. By the way these are the types of irregular verbs that tend to show up on grammar sections of the SAT.

<u>Present (Today, I...)</u>	<u>Past (Yesterday, I...)</u>	<u>Present Perfect (I have)</u>
am	was	been
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
bend	bent	bent
bite	bit	bitten
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
deal	dealt	dealt
dive	dove/dived	dived
do	did	done
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
fling	flung	flung
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten
freeze	froze	frozen
get	got	gotten
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
hang	hung	hung
know	knew	known
lay (place)	laid	laid
lead	led	led
lie (recline)	lay	lain
mow	mowed	mowed/mown
pay	paid	paid

<u>Present (Today, I...)</u>	<u>Past (Yesterday, I...)</u>	<u>Present Perfect (I have)</u>
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
say	said	said
seek	sought	sought
sew	sewed	sewn/sewed
shake	shook	shaken
shine	shined	shined
shrink	shrank/shrunk	shrunk
sing	sang	sung
sleep	slept	slept
sling	slung	slung
sneak	sneaked/snuck	sneaked/snuck
speak	spoke	spoken
spit	spit/spat	spit/spat
spring	sprang/sprung	sprung
steal	stole	stolen
sting	stung	stung
swear	swore	sworn
sweep	swept	swept
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
tear	tore	torn
think	thought	thought
tread	trod	trodden/trod
wake	woke/waked	woken/waked
wear	wore	worn
wed	wed/wedded	wed/wedded
withdraw	withdrew	withdrawn
wring	wrung	wrung
write	wrote	written

**SAT Alert! These are the types of verbs that tend to show up on the grammar section of most standardized tests. Students that score well have memorized these.**

## Part Five: Fifteen Confusing Sets of Words

As teachers, we have seen the following sets of words misused again and again. Take a look at the following fifteen pairs of words and highlight any that have given you difficulty (or that you have had marked on your essays). These are standard flaws in writing, so see which ones apply to you and learn the difference between the words. Again, these are the types of words that tend to be “tested” on SAT and statewide English tests.

### 1. accept/except

accept = to take or receive (I accept your invitation.)  
except = to exclude (Everyone went except for Jane.)

### 2. affect/effect

affect = (a verb) to change or influence (Smoking will affect your health.)  
effect = (most often used as a noun) means the result (The effect of the double espresso was lots of energy.)

### 3. alot/a lot – There is no such word as alot. Use a lot instead.

### 4. all right -- two words. The word alright doesn't exist. (Everything is all right.)

### 5. among/between – Use among when referring to three or more people or objects. Use between when referring to two people or objects.

Among the four of us, Paul is the best athlete.  
Between Kathy and me, we have five hours of study time available.

### 6. bad/badly

Bad is an adjective. (He was a bad dancer.)  
Badly is an adverb. (He danced badly.)

### 7. further/farther

Further refers to depth, time, or degree. (The case needs further investigation.)  
Farther refers to distance. (I hope to travel farther next summer.)

### 8. have/of (Many students use “of” instead of “have” with contractions.)

“I should have visited her” instead of “I should of visited her.”  
“I could have gone” instead of “I could of gone.”

**9. it's/its**

It's = it is (contraction); its = possession (its foot)

**10. raise/rise**

raise = to lift (They will raise the flag tomorrow morning.)

rise = a person moves upward (I will rise at 7 a.m.)

**11. there/their/they're**

there = a direction or place (over there)

their = possessive pronoun (their dog)

they're = contraction of they are (They're going to the movies.)

**12. to/too/two**

to = preposition (I'm going to the movies.)

too = very (The mall is too busy.)

two = the number

**13. well/good**

good = adjective (describing a noun) He is a good student.

well = adverb (describing verb) She sings well.

\*well can also be used as an adjective with the verb "feel" -- I don't feel well.

**14. who/whom**

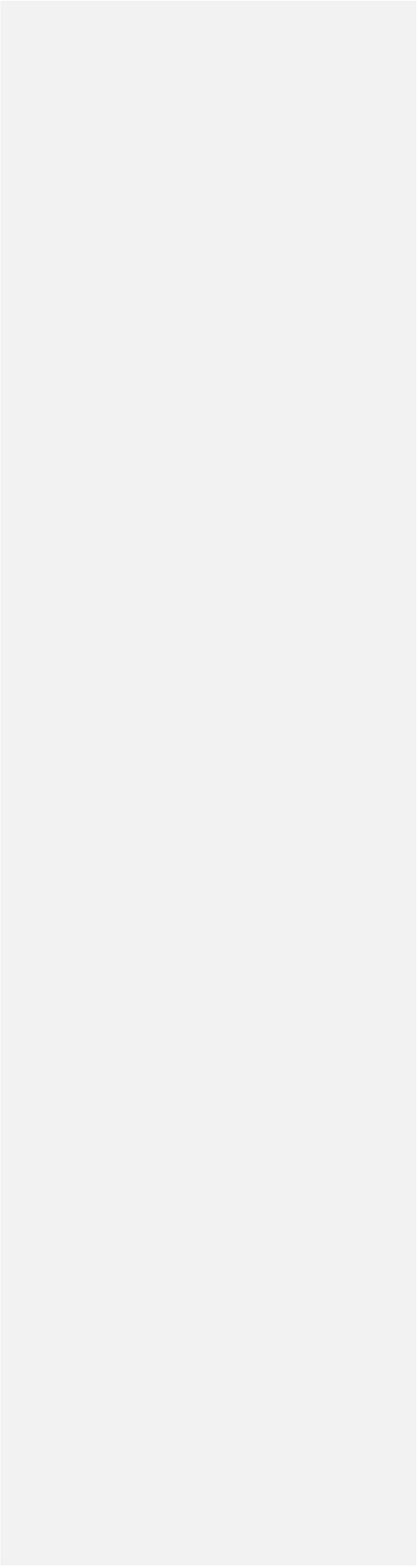
Who refers to person doing the action. Who is leading the parade?

Whom refers to person receiving the action. Whom will you take to the party?

**15. your/you're**

your = possessive pronoun (your dog)

you're = contraction (you are) – You're going to the party with us.



## Part Six: Phrases and Clauses

### **Phrase**

**A phrase is a group of words that does not contain a subject, or a verb, or both. A phrase cannot stand alone. It must be connected to a sentence. Here are some different types of phrases:**

<b>Prepositional phrase:</b>	in the beginning; at the stroke of midnight
<b>Participle (-ing) phrase:</b>	running through the street; singing a high note
<b>Past participle phrase:</b>	frightened by the sound of footsteps on the stairs; saddened by the death of her dog
<b>Infinitive phrase:</b>	to sing at the Metropolitan Opera; to perform in front of an audience
<b>Appositive phrase:</b>	Mr. Perkins, an influential lawyer, visited our class.

**The use of phrases in your sentences will improve your overall writing style and add sophistication to your sentence structures. Experiment and take a linguistic risk by using a variety of phrases in your sentences.**

### **Clause (Independent and Dependent)**

**An independent clause is a group of words that contains both a subject and a verb. It can stand alone and function as a sentence.**

Example: The airplane ride seemed endless. (complete sentence)

### **Dependent clause**

**A dependent clause is a group of words that contains a subject and verb, but it does not express a complete thought. Oftentimes, this dependent clause begins with what we call a “dependent marker word” (e.g., after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, in order to, since, though, unless, until, when, whenever, whether, and while).**

Example: Although the airplane ride seemed endless (cannot stand alone)

The clause above is dependent; it needs to be attached to an independent clause in order to become complete:

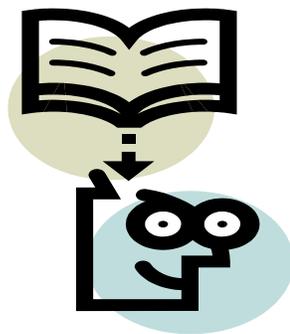
Example: Although the airplane ride seemed endless, we had a fun time anyway. (The second clause is independent; it can stand alone).

**Study Tip:** If you're having trouble distinguishing between dependent and independent clauses, try reading the two "sentences" out loud. You will be able to hear the dependent clause and its "incompleteness." Master this writing flaw and you're on the way to becoming a powerful writer!

Take a look at these sophisticated sentences below and notice how they use dependent and independent clauses:

Although she wanted to be a movie star, she knew she had years of study ahead of her.  
(dependent clause underlined)

She wanted to be a movie star, but she knew she had years of study ahead of her.  
(independent clause underlined)



## Part Seven: The Four Standard Sentence Types

Now that you understand independent and dependent clauses, let's look at the four standard sentence types used by writers. Once you've mastered these four, your understanding of sentence sophistication will reach a new height!

**1. Simple Sentence – This sentence uses one independent clause and no dependent clauses.**

- I've always wanted to visit China.
- My sister is a fantastic violinist.

**2. Compound Sentence – This sentence has multiple independent clauses and no dependent clauses.**

- I've always wanted to visit China, and I know I will go there someday
- My sister is a fantastic violinist, and she practices on a daily basis.

**3. Complex Sentence – This sentence contains one independent clause and at least one dependent clause.**

- Because my sister practices on a daily basis, she has become a fantastic violinist.
- Although I've always wanted to visit China, I know I'm going to have to save up for the trip.

**4. Complex-Compound Sentence – This sentence contains multiple independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.**

- My sister is a fantastic violinist, and although she practices everyday, I think she has natural-born talent in the area of music.
- Although I've always wanted to visit China, I'm know I'm going to have to save up for the trip, and I'm also going to research its culture before I make my first visit.

## Part Eight: Mastering the Problem of Run-Ons and Comma Splices

**Run-On: A run-on sentence is two sentences run together with no punctuation.**

Example: He liked to watch a great deal of television she preferred to read.

What you have above are two independent clauses that have been run together with no punctuation. This is a common writing flaw for many students, so let's look at how one can fix this problem.

1. Separate into two sentences.

He liked to watch a great deal of television. She preferred to read.

2. Combine these two short sentences with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet).

He liked to watch a great deal of television, but she preferred to read.

3. Use a semicolon to combine two short, related sentences

He liked to watch a great deal of television; she preferred to read.

**Comma Splice: Two complete sentences that have been connected with a comma.**

Example: He had a great deal of homework to do, there was no time to waste.

As with run-ons, comma splices occur regularly in student writing. Here are three quick ways to fix them.

1. Use a period in place of the comma.

He had a great deal of homework to do. There was no time to waste.

2. Keep the comma, but add a coordinating conjunction.

He had a great deal of homework to do, and there was no time to waste.

3. You can also use a semicolon since these are two short, related sentences.

He had a great deal of homework to do; there was no time to waste.

**Let's review. Here's a run-on sentence:**

I really like my biology class it is so interesting.

Let's fix the above sentence in a variety of ways:

- I really like my biology class. It is so interesting
- I really like my biology class because it is so interesting.
- Because it is so interesting, I really like my biology class.
- I like biology; it is really interesting.

**Here's a comma splice:**

Natalie Portman is my favorite actress, I've seen all her movies.

Better ways to write the above sentence:

- Natalie Portman is my favorite actress. I've seen all her movies.
- Because Natalie Portman is my favorite actress, I've seen all her movies.
- Natalie Portman is my favorite actress, and I've seen all her movies.

**If you understand run-ons and comma splices and know how to fix them, you are definitely on your way to becoming a masterful writer!**

**Part Nine: Two Major Writing Problems, and How to Fix Them**

**Pronoun Reference – This is perhaps one of the major problems occurring in writing. Remember that a pronoun has to agree with the noun whose place it takes. The agreement must be in number (singular vs. plural), person (first, second, or third), and gender (masculine vs. feminine).**

Standard Mistake: If a student buys a car, they must also purchase car insurance.

1. Rule: If you have a singular noun in a sentence, you must match it with a singular pronoun

If a **student** buys a car, he or she must also purchase car insurance. (Notice that student is singular; as a result, you must use a singular pronoun.)

2. Now, many writers don't like to have to use "he or she," and so they rewrite the sentence, making the original subject plural:

If **students** buy a car, they must also purchase car insurance.

3. Watch also for a shift in person when using a pronoun:

If a **student** buys a car, you must also purchase car insurance. (Notice the shift from third person to second person.)

4. **SAT ALERT:** The pronouns **everybody, anybody, anyone, each, neither, either, nobody, someone** are always singular! When you use them, you must match them with a singular pronoun.

Everybody should do his or her best on the test. (Don't write "everybody should do their best on the test.")

Each of the girls took her book to the library. (Each is singular and must have a matching singular pronoun. Also, your English teacher might have taught you that the subject of a sentence can never be in a prepositional phrase (e.g., of the girls). Many students hear the plural "girls" in their head and proceed to use a plural pronoun. The SAT test loves to get students on this grammatical point, so beware!)

### **Subject vs. Object Pronouns**

Many students get their subject and object pronouns confused and make some errors that just yell out "I haven't studied English grammar!" With that said, let's look at a few of the standard writing flaws:

#### **Subject Pronouns:**

I, You, He, She, It, We, You, They

#### **Object Pronouns:**

Me, You, Him, Her, It, Us, You, Them

Now, keep in mind that most English sentences are referred to as **S-V-O sentences**. That is, they follow a Subject-Verb-Object pattern.

For instance, most students would never say "Me went to the store." They would say "I went to the store" (thus using the subject pronoun).

However, we often hear students say "Kathy and me are going to the party."

Okay, so here's the dilemma. We tend to speak one way and write another. Many of us speak in a casual style with our friends, whereas we know that writing needs to be more formal, more grammatical. However, just know that when you speak in casual, informal English and you use a construction like the one above, some people are going to have doubts about your English capabilities. "

Here's another mistake. "They are giving the scholarships to Margaret and I." Break these in two and say separately: They are giving the scholarship to Margaret. They are giving the scholarship to me. No one would say "They are giving the scholarship to I."

So, the sentence needs to be "They are giving the scholarships to Margaret and me."

## Part Ten: A Short Review of Standard Punctuation

### The Comma

**The comma is one of the most misused pieces of punctuation, yet it's not that hard when you're familiar with some of the basics. Let's review them:**

1. Use a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or clause:

Yes, I'm going to the movies with you.  
In the beginning, I felt nervous about performing on stage.  
Under the house, the mysterious stranger lived.  
As soon as the bell rings, we're heading for the Edwards Cinemas.

2. Use commas to separate items in a series:

I need to visit my grandmother, clean my room, order books on Amazon, take out the garbage, and take my little brother to the park.

3. Use a comma in front of a conjunction (and, or, nor, for, but, yet, so) when joining two independent clauses:

I like going to Disneyland, but I hate riding the spinning teacups

4. Use commas to set off interrupters or parenthetical expressions:

He is, I hope, going to lead us to victory.  
The judge, scarier than most I've met, warned us of the dangers of speeding.

5. Use commas to separate two or more adjectives that describe the same noun:

We visited the old, dark, mysterious castle.

6. Nonessential means that the information in the phrase or clause is not necessary to the basic meaning of the sentence. On the other hand, essential (restrictive) phrases or clauses are necessary to the meaning; as a result, no comma is needed.

**Nonessential:** The monster, which has nine heads, scared the living daylights out of me.

**Essential:** The student that fell down the stairs was taken to the emergency room.

**Nonessential:** The People article was about Meryl Streep, who is my favorite actress.

**Essential:** Paul is receiving a book that was given to him by his favorite professor.

7. Use commas in addresses or dates:

10410 Treena Street, San Diego, CA 92131

Friday, October 13, 2007

8. Finally, as a rule of thumb, use a comma in a sentence where you hear a “natural pause” when you read it out loud.

### **The Semicolon**

**90% of students, young and old, have problems with the semicolon. Here are three quick rules to remember:**

1. Use a semicolon to connect two related independent clauses that are not connected with a conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet):

He ate way too many hot dogs; he became ill almost immediately. (Remember that if you use a conjunction with this sentence, you use a comma instead of a semicolon).

2. Use a semicolon when you join two independent clauses with a conjunctive adverb (besides, however, nevertheless, similarly, therefore, moreover, and the like):

He was a really strict teacher; nevertheless, students liked him. (Note that you need to follow the conjunctive adverb with a comma).

3. Finally, you can use semicolons when you’re listing various items in a series and you don’t want the reader to be confused. Take a look at the following example:

The football banquet featured such top athletes as John Parker, quarterback; William Smith, center; Peter Morgan, defensive end; and Albert Marshall, place-kicker.

## **The Colon**

**This punctuation mark is a snap to learn! Here are the standard rules:**

1. Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list.

The students were required to produce three types of writing: an essay, a short story, and a creative poem.

2. Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce some type of explanation or emphatic statement.

The magician was known for one amazing feat: making an elephant disappear on the theatre stage.

3. Use a colon in salutations, time notations, and titles.

Dear Professor Dickinson:

To: Principal Campbell

Switchblade: A Story of Violence in Los Angeles (Always underline book titles)

5:15 P.M.

## **The Period**

**Here's another easy punctuation mark!**

A period is used at the end of complete sentences and is also used to show abbreviations.

Mr. Mrs. Prof. p.m. a.m. U.S. B.A.

## **The Apostrophe**

**Lots of writers have difficulty with the apostrophe, but if you carefully study the rules below, you should have fewer problems with this important punctuation mark.**

1. Know that the apostrophe is used to create contractions (words that have omitted letters).

Examples of contractions: cannot = can't    will not = won't    did not = didn't  
does not = doesn't

The apostrophe in the above examples takes the place of the omitted letters.

2. Most of our problems with the apostrophe concern possession—showing that one object belongs to something else.
3. Use -'s for the possessive form of all nouns except those already ending in plural -s

The house of David = David's house  
The dog of Michelle = Michelle's dog

4. If the word is plural and ends in -s, just add the apostrophe

Books of the students = students' books  
cars of my friends = my friends' cars

5. If a singular word ends in -s, add -'s

(Note: you will often see the above done as Thomas' cat. The actual rule is that if the word ending in -s has a -z sound, you add just the apostrophe).

So, the cat of Charles = Charles' cat.  
The cat of Thomas = Thomas' cat

**SAT Alert!** Here, however, is one of the greatest mistakes in the English language: it's versus its. Do you know the difference?

It's = it is (the contraction)  
its = the possessive form of it (the cat hurt its paw)

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## Part Eleven: Numbers

**Students always ask teachers about numbers and when they should be written out or when they can be written as numerals. The rules for numbers vary across subject matters, but here are some standard conventions for writing in academic subjects:**

1. Use words to express numbers below ten and standard fractions (four, one-fourth).
2. Use numerals for numbers ten and above. In humanities classes one can also write out numbers that are not more than two words (e.g., thirty-three, three hundred).
3. Spell out numbers that appear at the start of a sentence (e.g., One hundred students attended the rally).
4. Use numerals in these specific instances:

Times and dates	6 P.M. on April 29, 1990
Percentages	50%
Statistics	median score of 44
Decimals	13.33
Exact amts. of money	\$43.54
Addresses	10410 Treena Street
Chapters and pages	Chapter 2; page 88
Abbreviations	6'1"
Scores	The Falcons beat The Unicorns 89-45

**Quick Tip: If you're writing about a decade, write "in the 1990s" and don't use an apostrophe!**



## Part Twelve: Key Terms in Essay Tests

Look over the following list of words and make sure you're familiar with their meaning. These are standard terms that show up in high school and college-level essays:

<b>Analyze</b>	divide into parts and discuss each part
<b>Argue</b>	express an opinion and outline your reasons
<b>Classify</b>	organize people, objects, or ideas into particular groups
<b>Compare</b>	write about the <u>similarities</u> of two people, objects, or ideas
<b>Contrast</b>	write about the <u>differences</u> between two people, objects, or ideas
<b>Define</b>	discuss the meaning of a particular concept
<b>Describe</b>	present a detailed and visual portrait of a key concept or event
<b>Discuss</b>	state important characteristics and main points
<b>Evaluate</b>	state criteria for your judgment and then examine your subject based on these criteria
<b>Explain</b>	give reasons or make clear by analyzing, defining, illustrating, and the like
<b>Illustrate</b>	give examples on a concept from personal experience and background reading
<b>Justify</b>	present detailed reasons and facts in support of a particular topic
<b>List</b>	present an itemized list of ideas/events, but be concise
<b>Outline</b>	present the key information about a particular topic in a clear, well-organized fashion
<b>Relate</b>	point out and make connections on a particular topic

## Part Thirteen: Some Thoughts on the Thesis Statement

**First off, know that the majority of students are frightened by the words “essay” and “thesis statement.” Don’t be! The word essay comes from the French verb *essayer* which means to try or to attempt. So, the word essay is an attempt on your part at gaining excellence. Secondly, the thesis statement is simply the point you’re trying to make in your essay. It’s the focus of your essay.**

Now, let’s get started on the thesis statement. Here are the key points that you should know:

*A thesis statement usually consists of two elements—your topic and the point, analysis, assertion, or claim that you’re making about your topic.*

**Topic:** Jay Gatsby in Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*

**Thesis:** Jay Gatsby is a man who lives in a world of illusions and dreams, and is ruined as a result of them.

The thesis is the point you’re trying to make. It should reveal your claim or opinion about the topic, and it should let the reader know what the main focus of your essay will be.

Keep in mind that since your thesis statement “forecasts” the structure and scope of your essay, you need to have a thesis statement that fits the projected size of your essay. Your thesis should not be so specific that you have too little to write about; likewise, your thesis should not be so broad that your essay runs on forever as you attempt to cover your thesis.

When planning your essay, come up with a working thesis statement and do a quick outline of your paper. Realize that writing is a process of discovery. You might find that after you write your essay you have to go back and adjust or fine-tune your thesis statement. Good writers know this and they don’t become filled with guilt and anxiety.



## Part Fourteen: Documenting Sources

As high school (and future college) students, you are going to be asked to write many research papers in which you make a claim or assertion (thesis statement) and support it with ideas from your research.

As learners, we are constantly encountering ideas from our reading—ideas that are not our own. As a result, when we use these ideas in our own academic writing, we need to be sure that we properly cite the sources of these ideas. Such documentation is the hallmark of academic writing, and all students need to be familiar with the basics of documentation. If you're not, you can be accused of plagiarism, which the Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines as the act of stealing and passing off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own." The act of plagiarism can have devastating effects on one's academic record, so it's vital that careful documentation of sources is done. This section will take you through the basics of proper documentation.

In liberal arts and humanities courses, instructors use the MLA (Modern Language Association) style of documenting sources. It's clear and fairly easy to follow, once you understand the basics. The standard text used at the university level is the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* (6th edition). Our style guide will focus on the key points, but know that our library has copies of this text; moreover, you can visit [www.mla.org](http://www.mla.org) for extensive discussion of this documentation style. In addition, an online citation generator can be found at the following link: <http://easybib.com/>

### **Key Points of MLA Format:**

1. When you are using quoted information in your paper, you need to always mention the author and the page number of the source used. This information is placed in parentheses in your writing. Here's how the quote might look within your own writing:

Harry Houdini, America's great magician, was influenced by events in his childhood. At a young age, he witnessed a stage show in which a volunteer from the audience appeared to have his head cut off by a magician dressed in black. "The boy was indeed hypnotized by this performance" (Brandon 25).

**Important Note: Even if you paraphrase a writer's ideas, you still have to give credit to the source. Usually, the citation is placed at the end of the paraphrased paragraph.**

2. We recommend that you keep the information within parentheses as short as possible. When applicable, mention the author of the quote within your own writing and then place just the page number within parentheses. Try to blend your quotes smoothly into your own writing. See how this looks below:

Harry Houdini, America's great magician, was influenced by events in his childhood. At a young age, he witnessed a stage show in which a volunteer from the audience appeared to have his head cut off by a magician dressed in black. The biographer, Ruth Brandon, writes that "the boy was indeed hypnotized by this performance" (25).

3. With the MLA documentation format, you don't use footnotes. Instead you use parenthetical documentation and your sources are placed on the final page of your research paper. This page is called the **Works Cited Page** (an example of which can be found at the end of this section).

### **MLA Works Cited Documentation**

When doing research, *always* keep track of the sources that you are using, whether they are reference books, encyclopedias, websites, magazine articles, or other types of material. Get into the habit of writing down the author, the title, the publisher, the place and date of publication, the page number, and any other vital information. You will need this information when it comes time to create your **Works Cited Page**. Because there are so many different types of research materials, there are quite a few documentation formats that you need to know. These are merely some of the basics; your teacher can review any that are not listed below or you can visit the websites mentioned at the beginning of this section.

**Here are a few quick tips before we look at citation formats:**

1. Each citation entry is alphabetized by its first letter.
2. Remember that titles of novels, books, magazines, films, and plays are underlined.
3. Remember that quotation marks are used with titles of poems, short stories, song titles, and magazine articles.
4. Reverse indentation is used with citations: that is, the first line is not indented, but all other lines are.
5. All citations in your **Works Cited Page** are doubled-spaced throughout.



## Standard Citation Formats (shown single-spaced here)

### 1. **Book (one author):**

Brandon, Ruth. *The Life and Many Deaths of Harry Houdini*. New York: Random House, 1993.

### 2. **Book (two authors):**

Alexander, John and Martin Perkins. *The Fantasy World of Tolkien*. New York: Avon Books, 1988.

### 3. **Book (one editor):**

Hellman, Lillian, ed. *The Selected Letters of Anton Chekhov*. New York: Barnes and Noble, 2007.

### 4. **Introduction, Preface, Foreword, or Afterword**

Doctorow, E.L. Introduction. *Sister Carrie*. By Theodore Dreiser. New York: Bantam, 1985. v-xi.

### 5. **Short Story in Anthology**

Cather, Willa. "Paul's Case." *Perrine's Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense*. Ed. Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson. New York: Heinle and Heinle, 2002.

### 6. **Poem in Anthology**

Plath, Sylvia. "Lady Lazarus." *Heath Introduction to Literature*. Ed. Alice S. Landy. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2003.

### 7. **Poem Online**

Dickinson, Emily. "Because I Could Not Stop for Death." Bartleby.com: Great Books Online. 5 August 2007.  
<<http://www.bartleby.com/113/4027.html>>.

### 8. **Encyclopedia (Signed article)**

Paulson, William. "Magicians." *World Book Encyclopedia*. 2001.

### 9. Encyclopedia (Unsigned article)

“Harry Houdini.” Encyclopedia Americana. 2003.

### 10. Film

The Illusionist. Dir. Neil Burger. Perf. Edward Norton, Jessica Biel. Bull’s Eye Entertainment, 2006.

### 11. Magazine Article

Mason, Neal. “Why We Love Magic.” Sept. 2005: 32. *U.S. News and World Report*.

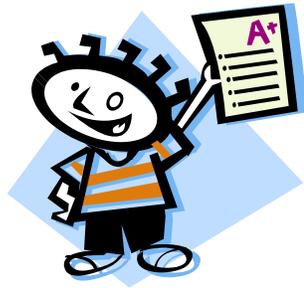
**These are some of the standard citation formats for the types of sources that many students use. Of course, many more types exist. We recommend the following online sites for further (and helpful) information on correct MLA documentation:**

#### **Purdue Online Writing Lab**

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

**Citation Generator** (you’ll need to have a detailed record of your sources to use it)

<http://easybib.com/>



## Works Cited

Carpenter, Humphrey. *J.R.R. Tolkien: A Biography*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 2000.

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Martins, John. *A Study of the Fantasy Novel*. New York: New Directions, 1988.

Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Fellowship of the Ring*. New York: Houghton-Mifflin, 1988.

The Tolkien Society. 2006. <<http://www.tolkiensociety.org/>> (4 Aug. 2007).

jerry urick

**Comment [1]:** Bold and Centered

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**Comment [2]:** Double spaced throughout the text

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**Comment [3]:** Book titles should be underlined

jerry urick

**Comment [4]:** Full URL needed

jerry urick

**Comment [5]:** Date you accessed the site

### Key reminders for all Work Cited pages:

- Center Works Cited title.
- All entries are double-spaced.
- Alphabetize entry by author's last name. If no author given, use first word of the title (disregarding a, an, the).
- Use reverse indentation on citations that are longer than one line.

## Part Fifteen: Paper Presentation Style

Most teachers like students to place a cover sheet on final-draft, word-processed essays being submitted for a major grade. Below is a standard format preferred by most.

**Title of your Paper**

Student Name  
Course name/Period  
Teacher's Name  
Date submitted

## Part Sixteen: Great Websites for Students!

We hope that this guide has been helpful as you become a masterful writer. We would like to leave you with some powerful websites that might assist you further on your journey.

1. The Purdue On-Line Writing Lab – Hands down, this is the best of the best for quick, thoughtful information on becoming a stronger writer.

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

2. Merriam-Webster Online – Place this site’s icon on your desktop for easy reference during your study sessions.

[www.m-w.com](http://www.m-w.com)

3. Developing Study Skills – As you move through high school and into college, you will undoubtedly need further assistance in developing stronger study skills. This site has it all.

[www.how-to-study.com](http://www.how-to-study.com)

4. Words Most Often Confused – For a full, in-depth look at those worrisome sets of words that tend to confuse writers, check out the following site.

[www.learnenglish.de/mistakes/CommonMistakes.html](http://www.learnenglish.de/mistakes/CommonMistakes.html)

5. Great Booklists for Self-Selected Reading – The American Library Association has an amazing website that introduces students to great booklists grouped by subject matter and interest. Visit the site and type in “booklists” in search engine.

[www.ala.org](http://www.ala.org)