

Olympus
High

Writer's
Guide

Olympus High Writer's Guide

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This writing guide, designed as a resource to help you improve your writing skills, is sponsored by Olympus High Foundation. Keep it, **USE** it, take good care of it. You will use it in all of your English classes at Olympus and in many other classes too. Every student receives a free copy thanks to the Foundation, but you will pay for replacements!

Olympus High Writer's Guide

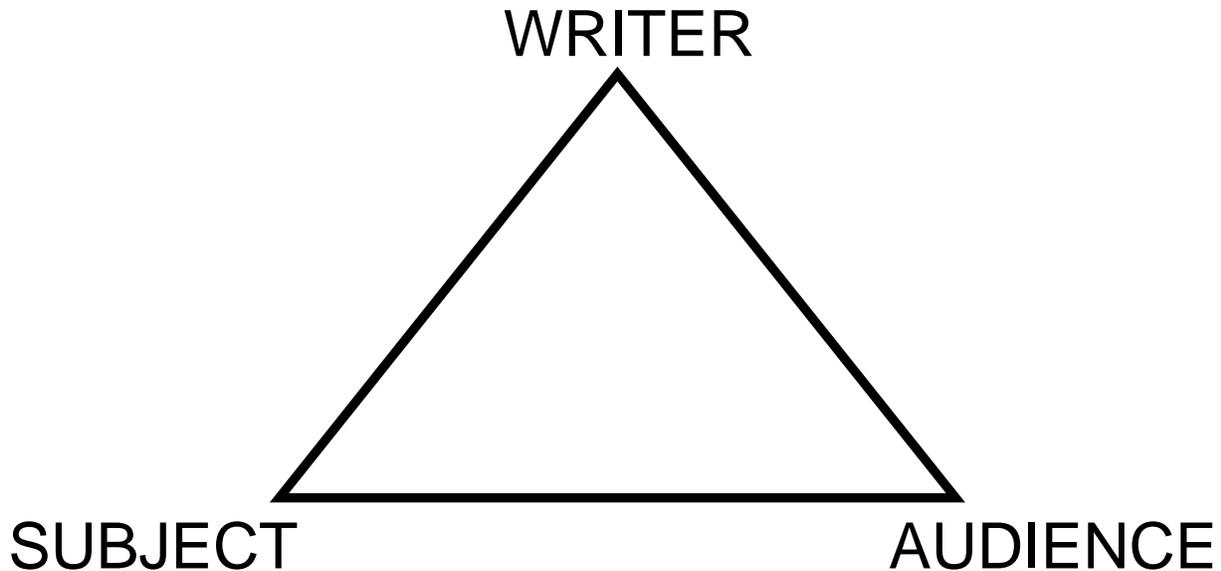
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Introduction

WHAT IS “GOOD” WRITING?

The Writer's Triangle



“Writing becomes real when it has an audience.”

– Tom Liner

The most important questions you can ask yourself as you write follow:

What do I know about my subject?

What is my purpose?

Who will read/evaluate my writing?

What do I want my audience to understand about the subject?

What is my relationship with the audience?

What’s “right” varies according to how you answer those questions. For example, words, sentence styles, even formats that would be “right” for a note to a friend may not be “right” for an explanation to a police officer. Even if you were telling both audiences the same story, you would probably use different grammar, words, explanations, details, etc.

Some standards of “good” writing always apply, though. The rubrics on the following pages show you how your teacher may grade your papers. The standards on them represent the basics of good writing (also known as the “six-traits” of effective writing).

A. IDEAS & CONTENT

/

1. answers the question and/or prompt completely
2. focuses on a clear, applicable thesis
3. does not stray from the thesis
4. develops original ideas
5. shows in-depth analysis and thinking
6. uses specific, concrete details and examples
7. explains relationships (connects) between examples and the thesis
8. demonstrates complete interpretations
9. has accurate information

B. ORGANIZATION

/

10. engaging introduction/opening
11. fully developed, focused paragraphs with clear topic sentences
12. strong, natural transitions
13. clear, easy-to-follow organization
14. appropriate conclusion/ending

C. STYLE (voice, sentence fluency, & word choice)

/

10. interested, knowledgeable voice, appropriate for audience
11. specific, appropriate diction (effective word choice)
12. predominately active verbs (writer “shows” not “tells”)
13. clear, fluent, concise sentences
14. excellent variety of sentence lengths and structures

D. CONVENTIONS (MECHANICS, FORMAT, & GRAMMAR)

/

15. perfect spelling
16. correct punctuation
17. no sentence fragments
18. no run-on sentences
19. correct subject-verb agreement
20. consistent verb tense
21. accurate pronoun-antecedent agreement
22. in assigned format

TOTAL POINTS

/

The rubric on this page, a DESCRIPTIVE rubric, helps you see exactly where your writing was strong and/or needed improvement. As this is just a basic template, your teacher may change or add specific information for individual assignments and will assign specific point values to the individual standards. Because the rubric is so specific, you may also find it helpful as a revision tool.

OLYMPUS HIGH SCHOOL WRITING ASSIGNMENT STANDARDS

	Ideas & Content	Organization	Style	Conventions
5 superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - answers the question and/or prompt completely - focuses on a clear, applicable thesis - does not stray from the thesis - develops original ideas - shows in-depth analysis and thinking - uses specific, concrete details and examples - explains relationships (connects) between examples and the thesis - demonstrates complete interpretations - has accurate information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - engaging introduction/opening - fully developed, focused paragraphs - clear topic sentences - strong, natural transitions - clear, easy-to-follow organization - appropriate conclusion /ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interested, knowledgeable voice, right for audience - specific, concrete, appropriate diction - predominately active verbs (writing "shows" not "tells") - clear, fluent, concise sentences - excellent variety of sentence lengths and structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has few or no editing errors (none serious)
4 excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - answers the question and/or prompt completely - focuses on a clear, applicable thesis - does not stray from the thesis - develops original ideas - shows in-depth analysis and thinking, but the discussion is more limited - uses specific, concrete details and examples - explains relationships (connects) between examples and the thesis - demonstrates generally complete interpretations, but less convincing explanations - has accurate information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interesting introduction/opening - developed, focused paragraphs - clear topic sentences - clear transitions - easy-to-follow organization - appropriate conclusion /ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interested, knowledgeable voice, right for audience - few lapses in diction - generally active, but some distracting passive, verbs - clear, fluent sentences - good variety of sentence lengths and structures - less concise syntax (wordiness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has few editing errors (few serious)
3 good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - answers the question and/or prompt adequately - has a clear thesis - focuses on the thesis - develops interesting, but less original ideas - analysis and/or thinking is clear but somewhat superficial - uses specific, concrete details and examples - explains relationships (connects) between examples and the thesis - demonstrates generally complete, but sometimes uneven or inconsistent interpretations and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - interesting introduction/opening, but may be less engaging or more predictable - generally well developed paragraphs - clear topic sentences - clear transitions - easy-to-follow organization - appropriate conclusion /ending 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appropriate, but less engaging voice - occasional lapses in diction - some active verbs, but more passive verbs - clear sentences - less variety of sentence lengths and structures - less concise syntax (wordiness) - some choppy or awkward phrases and/or sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has a few editing errors (some serious)
2 fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - merely touches on an answer to the question and/or prompt (inadequate thesis) - does not answer all of the main parts of the question or prompt - thesis is simplistic but clear - focuses on the thesis all or most of the time - develops interesting, but not original ideas - shows simplistic depth of analysis and thinking - uses specific, concrete details and examples some of the time - lacks convincing explanations of relationships (connections) between examples and the thesis - demonstrates generally simplistic interpretations - has mostly accurate information 	<p style="text-align: center;">may have a few of the following problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - predictable or clichéd introduction/ opening - paragraphs may wander from the topic or fail to show the topic with a clear topic sentence - transitions may be unclear or missing - organization may be inconsistent or wrong for the audience or topic - conclusion/ending may be missing or insufficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inappropriate and/or unclear voice - lapses in diction - generally passive verbs (writing tells not shows) - some unclear sentences - little variety of sentence lengths and structures - some redundant or unnecessarily wordy syntax - choppy or awkward phrases and/or sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has many editing errors
1 poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - does not specifically answer the question and/or prompt - thesis is unclear - strays from the thesis - states obvious or surface-level ideas - simply summarizes or lists facts, techniques, etc. - does not use specific, concrete details and examples or uses too few examples - fails to explain relationships (connect) between examples and the thesis - demonstrates incomplete interpretations - has inaccurate information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has <u>many</u> of the problems identified under "2" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - inappropriate and/or unclear voice - lapses in diction - mostly passive verbs (writing tells not shows) - many unclear sentences - little variety of sentence lengths and structures - redundant or unnecessarily wordy syntax - choppy or awkward phrases and/or sentences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - has many distracting editing errors

The rubric on the previous page is called a HOLISTIC rubric. Your teacher may copy the rubric and highlight the descriptions that fit your writing or simply assign your paper a score (1-5) and expect you to look up the details on your own. While you don't receive feedback as specific as that on a descriptive rubric, the grading process is much faster so you'll have your paper back more quickly. Moreover, grades are generally higher on a holistic rubric since your evaluator assigns the work as a whole the best possible overall score he or she can justify according to the criteria listed. For example, while spelling errors will definitely cost you a point or two on a descriptive rubric, they may not seriously affect your holistic score.

You may see a third grading rubric option:

IDEAS AND CONTENT . . .	1	2	3	4	5
ORGANIZATION	1	2	3	4	5
VOICE	1	2	3	4	5
WORD CHOICE	1	2	3	4	5
SENTENCE FLUENCY . . .	1	2	3	4	5
CONVENTIONS	1	2	3	4	5
TOTAL		_____			
		30			

This rubric is an abbreviated form your teacher may stamp on your assignment for quickest evaluation. You can use this guide, as well as the details on the other two rubrics, for clear information about what successfully reaching each standard means. This form, unlike the others, makes each of the six traits equally important in the grading. Overall, however, know that IDEAS AND CONTENT will always matter most in your pursuit of good writing.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE . . .

Each section is organized first by the six-traits of effective writing (the standards on the rubric Olympus teachers use to grade your work). Within the section for each of the six-traits, you'll find information about how to approach the trait at each step of the writing process: prewriting, drafting, revision, editing, and publishing.

WHEN SHOULD I USE THE GUIDE?

Use this for writing assignments in all of your classes, not just in English!

The Olympus High Faculty work together to teach you consistent writing standards, so this information should apply in all English classes and in other subjects as well.

Writing assignments in high school traditionally are essays, but there are many types:

essays (personal or formal)	stories	websites, webpages, blogs
narrative essays	poems	Power Point or other media presentations
descriptive essays	outlines	interview transcripts (real or imagined)
definition essays	personal responses	re-writes or updates
process essays	critiques	editorials
comparison/contrast essays	recommendations	resumés (real or imagined)
expository essays	paragraphs (all modes)	e-mail messages, telegraphs, or memos (real or imagined)
cause-effect essays	short answer questions on tests	photo or illustration captions
problem-solution essays	dramatic dialogues	explanations for maps, models, or visual aids
persuasive essays	scenes, scripts, plays	case reports, studies
literary analyses	monologues	lab reports, research, investigations
reports	tests or worksheets	portfolios
speeches	charts or posters	satires
book reviews	brochures	parodies
presentations	booklets	questionnaires, surveys
letters (real or fictional)	advertising campaigns	
journals & diaries (real or fictional)	advertisements	
logs	magazines or newspapers	
notebooks	magazine/newspaper articles	

WHAT IF I DON'T UNDERSTAND SOME OF THE CONCEPTS?

Your teachers will use this guide to help you understand their assignments and their grading standards more clearly. Of course, they can help you practice and apply these ideas too. Your English teacher is especially qualified and interested in helping you to write with skill and confidence and to use this guide successfully.

WHAT IF THE GUIDE DOESN'T COVER MY QUESTIONS?

Many great resources are available to help you (online; in other writing manuals; from peers, parents, and teachers; etc.). This guide may not contain some traditional references like citing works in MLA style or when to use a semi-colon; rather, we intend to show you concepts that meet the "Six-Trait" writing goals, that will help you develop stylistic maturity in your writing, that will apply to all of your writing pursuits, that will prepare you to write for college-level courses and programs. If you need help finding an answer to format, grammar, or other writing questions, your teacher can suggest other references.

THE WRITING PROCESS

1. PREWRITING is choosing your topic and gathering the details and information you'll need. In this step, search for a meaningful writing idea– one that will meet the requirements of the assignment AND truly interest you. If you don't care, it shows! Learn, review, and research as much as you can about your topic. Next, narrow your focus. Choose an interesting or important part of your topic and express it in a sentence that maps out your writing (a thesis sentence in the case of an essay).

PREWRITING INCLUDES . . .

thinking	brainstorming	freewriting	questions
reading	research	note-taking	interviews
bubbling	clustering	graphic organizers	outlines
journals	listing	time lines	Venn diagrams

2. DRAFTING means creating that first draft and developing your ideas. Approach this step with energy and enthusiasm– a chance to release the ideas you've been learning and pondering– and don't worry about making everything "right."

"The only true creative aspect of writing is the first draft.
That's when it's coming straight from your head and your heart."
– Evan Hunter

DRAFTING INCLUDES . . .

determining your audience	finely crafting a thesis statement
refining the purpose	choosing a presentation format
organizing your evidence	shaping a first draft

3. REVISION means "re-seeing" your work, improving your writing. In this step you'll review your ideas, organization, voice, word choice, and sentence fluency. You'll also begin to test your audience, having peers and others help you make your writing as meaningful, clear, and interesting as possible.

"Writing is really rewriting– making the story better, clearer, truer."
– Robert Lipsyte

REVISION INCLUDES . . .

evaluating content (accuracy, effectiveness)	testing word choice/language
appraising the gracefulness and variety of sentence structures	seeing focus and coherence of ideas
verifying correct paragraph structure	assessing voice

4. EDITING is checking for accuracy and preparing a neat final copy of your writing.

EDITING INCLUDES . . .

finalizing format choices	fixing grammar, spelling, and mechanical errors
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5. PUBLISHING, your final step, means sharing your writing. You may read it to others, perform it, turn it in for evaluation, submit it to a publication, or post it on a web site, for example.

IDEAS & CONTENT



This trait is the most important– and the hardest. To find success in this area you must work your brain! The best writing is interesting, vital, and specific. When you read good writing, you find elaborate, thorough ideas– HIGHER ORDER THOUGHTS– that hold your attention. The key? **ENGAGE YOURSELF AND YOUR READER IN YOUR TOPIC!** Avoid what is obvious.

Have you heard the story before? Don't write it!

Is your analysis an obvious conclusion? Don't pursue it!

“As soon as you connect with your true subject,
you will write”
– Joyce Carol Oates

PREWRITING FOR IDEAS & CONTENT:

brainstorm, review notes, read the assignment sheet carefully, talk to classmates and teachers, re-read information, play “what if?” games . . . push your thinking!

**Do you have an idea but you don't know where to start?
Then you don't really have your idea!**

If you base a whole piece of writing on something that's already obvious, it's boring. In other words . . .

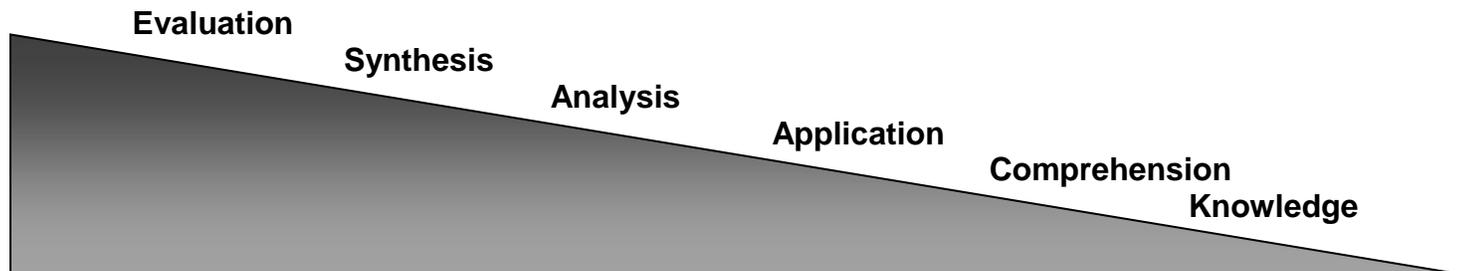
**IF YOU THINK ESSAYS ARE BORING, IT'S
BECAUSE YOU WRITE BORING ESSAYS!**

Ouch! I know that's tough to hear, but it's TRUE!
Do yourself (and your audience) a big favor by focusing your thesis or purpose on ideas that fit the highest levels of thinking.
So how do you know if you're thinking at a higher level? Read on . . .

WHAT ARE "HIGHER ORDER THOUGHTS"?

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom headed a group of educational psychologists who developed a classification of levels of intellectual behavior important in learning. Bloom identified six levels within the cognitive domain, from the simple recall or recognition of facts as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order which is classified as evaluation.

BLOOM'S TAXONOMY



LEVEL OF COMPLEXITY	MEANING (SKILLS DEMONSTRATED)	CUES (VERBS & QUESTIONS)
KNOWLEDGE (lowest)	observing and recalling information remembering dates, events, places recognizing major ideas absorbing subject matter	list, define, tell, describe, identify, show, label, collect, examine, tabulate, quote, recall, repeat, record, match, memorize, reproduce, name, duplicate <i>who?</i> <i>when? where?</i>
COMPREHENSION	understanding information grasping meaning translating knowledge into new contexts interpreting facts	summarize, describe, associate, identify, explain, discuss, review, locate <i>what?</i>
APPLICATION	using information using methods, concepts, theories in new situations solving problems using required skills or knowledge constructing models, diagrams, maps, illustrations	apply, demonstrate, calculate, complete, illustrate, solve, modify, relate, change, experiment, discover, translate, practice, interpret, dramatize, use, make <i>how?</i>
ANALYSIS	seeing patterns organizing parts recognizing hidden meanings identifying of components breaking down information into constituent elements	analyze, separate, order, explain, connect, classify, arrange, divide, compare, select, explain, research, examine, categorize, distinguish, investigate, diagram, contrast, criticize <i>how? why?</i>
SYNTHESIS	using old ideas to create new ones generalizing from given facts relating knowledge from several areas predicting, drawing conclusions	combine, integrate, modify, rearrange, substitute, plan, create, design, invent, compose, formulate, prepare, generalize, rewrite, imagine, estimate, create, infer, forecast, organize, hypothesize <i>what if?</i>
EVALUATION (highest)	comparing and discriminating between ideas assessing value of theories making choices based on reasoned arguments verifying value of evidence recognizing subjectivity	assess, decide, rank, grade, test, measure, recommend, convince, select, judge, explain, discriminate, support, conclude, compare, summarize, appraise, defend, choose, qualify, editorialize, dispute, verify, rate <i>so what?</i>

Adapted from Benjamin S. Bloom *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*

HOW TO WRITE A WINNING THESIS STATEMENT:

After exploring and collecting information about your general topic, you should develop a more focused interest: a thesis statement. If you work hard on developing a good thesis, the rest of the essay should be relatively easy to write since a good thesis statement introduces all of your main points and reveals the organization of the essay's body paragraphs.

THE FORMULA:

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{a FACT (your specific topic)} \\ + \text{ an OPINION (a particular feature, theory, feeling, or stand)} \\ = \text{ an effective thesis statement} \end{array}$$

AVOID COMMON THESIS MISTAKES

A thesis statement must . . .

1. Focus and give direction to your paper

☹!! *"War experiences in a novel can be very interesting."*

PROBLEM: lacks focus! Do you know what you'd talk about first in this essay?

Which novel is it? What does 'interesting' mean anyway? Note that this is simply an opinion— one that really doesn't risk anything or propose something new.

2. State your idea or argument concisely

☹!! *"Because the memoirs of Civil War soldiers are very similar to the experiences used by Stephen Crane in The Red Badge of Courage, one can assume that the things that happen in the novel make for a fairly accurate portrayal of the emotions and actions that were part of the soldier's experience in Civil War."*

PROBLEM: Yuck! This is way too wordy. Good writing is always CLEAR and ECONOMICAL!

3. Include an insight or opinion about the topic

☹!! *"Many men fought in the Civil War, which started in 1861."*

PROBLEM: Um, yes they did. (*YAWN*) This thesis is a simple fact.

The word ESSAY comes from the French verb *essayer* (to try, or to test). If your thesis does not need a trial, you're just writing facts, not an essay!

The word THESIS comes from the Greek *tithenai* (to place or make a proposition). Unless your statement proposes a theory that must be maintained or proved, it's just a fact, not a true thesis!

4. Focus on the topic, NOT on you as the writer or on the essay itself

☹!! *"I am writing this paper so that I can show how Stephen Crane wrote what I think is the truth about the Civil War experience."*

PROBLEM: If your name is on this paper, your audience already knows you wrote it. Additionally, "I think" always sounds a little timid, like you don't really know if you're right. Besides, your audience should be interested in your **IDEAS**, not in **you** (or that they are, in fact, reading a **paper**).

DRAFTING FOR IDEAS & CONTENT:

As you draft, include specific, exact details:

- * sensory descriptions
- * facts, statistics
- * examples
- * quotations from the text

These create CONCRETE DETAIL (CD), meaning details that can be seen, heard, smelled, tasted, touched, or measured. When you use concrete detail, you SHOW the readers your experience or your proof, rather than simply telling them about it.

“Don’t tell me the moon is shining;
show me the glint of light on broken glass.”
– Anton Chekov

WORDS THAT SCINTILLATE THE SENSES

SIGHT

angular	delicate	flared	loose	padded	skinny
arching	drab	fragile	lumpy	pale	scrolled
branching	desolate	hysterical	miniature	pallid	shabby
ballooning	dewy	hairy	marked	parched	scrubbed
billowing	empty	hazy	meandering	plaid	swollen
clustered	embossed	inert	murky	rolling	tufted
crinkled	flashy	intricate	nestling	rotund	tired
calm	frail	jutting	oval	ringed	tapering
chubby	fiery	jaunty	orderly	rooted	tearful
slumped	fresh	jerky	obscured	rocky	worn
curved	frilled	lean	opaque	scalloped	winged

SOUND

yap	squawk	gurgle	thump	bark	pop
rustle	echo	muffle	hum	hiss	zip
shriek	crunch	snap	whisper	thunder	ring
peep	stomp	piercing	boom	murmur	reverberate
crackle	sigh	slurp	buzz	twitter	hiss
crash	bang	blare	screech	whistle	pound

TOUCH

steamy	soft	silky	knobby	goeey	supple
gritty	furry	fleshy	slushy	oily	leathery
rubbery	moist	slippery	crisp	sharp	scalding
prickly	elastic	pulpy	clammy	icy	flaky

TASTE

ripe	moldy	burnt	flavorless	minty	rusty
stagnant	spicy	peppery	bitter	sour	metallic
bland	raw	tangy	crisp	salty	earthy
fruity	tart	flat	buttery	medicinal	bittersweet
sweet	mellow	alkaline	flat	pungent	piquant

SMELL

acid	dank	waft	perfumed	floral	lemon
putrid	burnt	stink	spicy	stagnant	menthol
fishy	hint	stench	sour	spoiled	rotten
savory	whiff	aromatic	earthy	acidic	smoky
mildewed	reek	moldy	damp	pungent	soapy

REVISING FOR IDEAS & CONTENT:

Begin your revision by evaluating ideas and content. Fixing misspelled words or adding transitions is pointless if you don't have an engaging thesis and/or sufficient proof. First you must check for depth, for level of details, for overall focus, for the focus of each supporting paragraph, and for clarity and completeness.

See the checklist (p. 39) for specific IDEAS & CONTENT revision steps.

“Essays are experiments in making sense of things.”
– Scot Russell Sanders



EDITING FOR IDEAS & CONTENT:

Be sure your facts and sources are accurate and reliable.

If you need to cite sources (MLA or APA style, for example) ask your teacher for guidelines, visit an online resource, or consult a writer's handbook.

NOTE: For **simple, one-source MLA documentation**, remember to put ONLY the page number (no “p.” or “pg.” even) in parentheses after the quotation and quotation mark. If you need to put a period, comma, colon, or semi-colon in the sentence at this point, put it AFTER the parentheses.

EXAMPLE: *Adah explains that “the lonely look down upon the hungry; the hungry look down upon the starving” and “the guilty blame the damaged” (174).*

Study style and format guidelines for using quotations as paragraph support (see page 13).



USING QUOTATIONS FOR PARAGRAPH SUPPORT

Sample Quotations

1. SHORT QUOTATION

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "All educated Americans, first or last, go to Europe."

2. SHORT QUOTATION WITH ELLIPSIS

Ralph Waldo Emerson said, "All educated Americans . . . go to Europe."

3. PARTIAL QUOTATION FUNCTIONING AS PART OF A SENTENCE

According to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "all educated Americans" travel to Europe.

4. LONG QUOTATION (four or more typed lines) SET OFF FROM TEXT BY INDENTING 10 SPACES. (Do not single-space long quotations. Note, also, that indented quotations do not require quotation marks.)

In "The American Scholar" Emerson urges Americans to throw off the intellectual shackles of Europe:

The world is nothing, the man is all; in yourself is the law of nature, and you know not yet how a globule of sap ascends; in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason We have listened too long to the muses of Europe.

GUIDELINES FOR QUOTATIONS:

- Keep them short.
- Quote phrases instead of full sentences if you can do so without changing meaning.
- When omitting part of the original material, use an ellipsis (three SPACED periods) in place of the omitted portion. If the ellipsis comes at the end of the sentence use four spaced periods instead of three.
- When quoting poetry, use a slash (/) to indicate the end of a poetic line.
- Use brackets [] around any explanatory material added to the quotation.
- **Do NOT use a quotation all by itself unless it fits the natural flow and meaning of YOUR sentences. In other words, tie quotations into your writing; avoid letting them "float" on their own without words or punctuation connecting them to your words. Write a lead-in that begins your quotation.**
- Most punctuation marks go INSIDE of (before) the end quotation mark. Periods and commas go inside about 95% of the time. Question marks and exclamation marks go inside if they are part of the quotation and outside of the quotation marks if they are part of your sentence. Colons and semi-colons go outside of the quotation marks. If you're unsure of the order of quotation marks and other punctuation marks, consult a handbook, a peer, your teacher. If you're feeling, lazy tuck the punctuation INSIDE the quotation mark– you'll usually be right!

ORGANIZATION

Simply, good writing has a developed beginning, middle, and end. Throughout the writing, transitions show relationships and provide unity. Good organization creates clarity and momentum for the reader.



“If any man wishes to write in a clear style, let him first be clear in his thoughts.”

—Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

PREWRITING FOR ORGANIZATION:

- Map out the structure of your writing first– then you can see where to place your ideas.
- Some prewriting organization tricks include outlines, notes, graphic organizers, webs, and clusters.

DRAFTING FOR ORGANIZATION:

- Many writing genres and modes have particular formulas to help you sort your ideas.
- A formula doesn't have to be boring!
- The traditional format for organizing a five-paragraph essay, for example, guides your writing, but doesn't limit your ideas.

ORGANIZING A TRADITIONAL FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY

I. INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH

- a. Start with a relatively broad statement which will grab the reader's attention and lead toward the thesis.
- b. Move toward the thesis, keeping sentences linked together with repeated words (hooks) and transitions.
- c. Include necessary background information (such as the author's name and the title of the novel).
- d. State the thesis (see page 10 for more information).

II. BODY (REPEAT FOR PARAGRAPHS II, III, and IV)

- a. Begin the paragraphs with a TRANSITION word or a hook, a word or phrase "echoing" the thesis and showing the relationship to the previous paragraph.
- b. State the central idea for the entire paragraph (the TOPIC SENTENCE) in your first or second sentence.
- c. Provide SUPPORT for the paragraph idea by offering a specific example, illustration, or quotation to back up the topic sentence (CONCRETE DETAIL).
- d. Provide an EXPLANATION (COMMENTARY) of *why* and *how* the example, illustration, or quotation proves the topic sentence and ties to the thesis. It is your job (NOT the reader's) to show how the thesis, topic sentence, and concrete detail relate.
- e. Go back and forth between CONCRETE DETAIL and COMMENTARY until the paragraph is fully developed and persuasive. Try for at least two concrete examples with accompanying commentary in each paragraph. (See page 17 for a good sample ¶.)
- f. Maintain FOCUS on the idea of the topic sentence throughout the paragraph. Do not wander onto another topic. At the end of the paragraph, you might want to add a "clincher" sentence which summarizes the idea of the topic sentence.
- g. Additional paragraphs should be even more convincing than the first body paragraph. Your discussion and enthusiasm should grow stronger as the paper evolves.

III. CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH

- a. Provide a transitional word then restate the thesis.
- b. Broaden your discussion, summarize your main points, or recommend action.
- c. Do NOT raise new points or introduce new evidence in the conclusion.

How can you improve your organization- and amuse yourself- while you write?

WRITING THE ROLLER COASTER!

Consider the organization of a traditional, five-paragraph essay like a roller coaster. Like the traditional, formulaic roller coaster, the formula is based on sound principles. You can't take a loop without building speed first, for example. That's being smart, not boring!

Compare:

THE COASTER	A FIVE-PARAGRAPH ESSAY
As you wait in line, you see the graphics and title of the ride. You're nervous, excited, convinced by the "fire" or "rock-n-roll" (or whatever dangerous word the park uses for the title) that this will be worth your time.	The TITLE and OPENING LINE of an essay should engage the readers and convince them that your essay is worth reading. Preview the "thrills" by using a brief title that refers to the subject and hints at the thesis. Provide an engaging opening line, preferably something that includes concrete detail.
Once you're in, the traditional coaster formula leads you on a slow, anticipatory climb up the first hill.	The INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH, in just a few sentences, leads you to the thesis (the most exciting spot, the top of the hill, from where you can see the rest of the coaster laid out in front of you). Take this "hill" too slowly and you'll lose the audience's interest. Go too fast and you might whip the audience around (they'll miss the anticipation and clarity). Skip it altogether and you throw your audience directly into the loops and twists! Ouch!
Now that you have momentum, the coaster may take any combination of descents, loops, turns, and twists. They'll happen in distinct sections so that the physics work, but the car will keep gliding smoothly along without dull spots.	What the BODY of the essay contains is up to the writer, but several solid features guarantee a good ride: concrete detail, commentary, transitions. The body will probably come in three distinct sections (paragraphs), but there should be smooth connections (TRANSITIONS) from one to the next. The sections will build momentum too, so that even the last part is exciting. As readers reach the best ideas, twisting and looping near the end, they have proof that the initial climb was worth the work.
The coaster doesn't just halt and eject you from the seat! Instead, you'll slow down and have a little "recovery" time. This is usually the part where you stop screaming, laughing, or crying, and turn to the person next to you. Even if he or she is a stranger, you suddenly begin to giggle and review all the highlights of the ride you just finished. As you return to the beginning, those still in line see your smiles of survival.	A CONCLUSION eases the reader into the end of your essay. It's slow, flat, and predictable (no new tricks), but that allows the readers time for review and reaction. You may also come "full circle," returning to your opening idea with new perspective.

WAIT!

Are you thinking that some of your favorite coasters don't fit the formula?

Ever been "shot up" that first hill, or maybe come to the end of the coaster just to have the track reverse and take you backward along the same track? Sure. Similarly, many great essays don't follow the formula.

However, those coasters- and those essays- must be designed and built by experts, people who have perfected the formula and know the rules. Of course, they also consider their riders (the audience): are they prepared for and wanting something different? If no, stick with the trusty formula! If yes, proceed only with skill and purpose.

REVISING FOR ORGANIZATION:

- ✓ Check the overall plan of your writing.
- ✓ Evaluate your opening.
- ✓ Rate the flow of your ideas.
- ✓ Judge the effectiveness of your closing.
- ✓ Evaluate your PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE (see below).
- ✓ Check for smooth, logical TRANSITIONS between paragraphs and ideas (see p. 18).

The worksheet on pages 19 & 20 may also help you revise for content and organization. It is a REVERSE outline, a way to check if the content and organization of your work is ready for style revision after you've already written a rough draft. You can do this alone or have a peer, tutor, or family member test your draft with the reverse outline. (NOTE: ¶ means 'paragraph')

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

“The paragraph [is] a mini-essay; it is also a maxi-sentence.”

– Donald Hall

This sample body paragraph comes from a literary analysis paper based on the thesis that Mark Twain attacked prejudice in his novel *Huckleberry Finn*.

Note how the writer used . . .

1. a topic sentence to “echo” this thesis,
2. concrete detail to prove the point,
3. a smoothly incorporated quotation,
4. commentary to document *why* and *how* the examples are valid, and
5. a “clincher” concluding sentence that restates the topic.

In a key scene between Huck and his father, Mark Twain attacks the racial prejudice so prevalent in the South at the time. Huck’s father has seen a stranger in town, a well-dressed, well-educated black man “that’s got fine clothes . . . and a gold watch and chain and a silver headed cane” (36). Infuriated by the man’s obvious success, Pap Finn rails against a government that would allow a “n----r” to earn his freedom, go to college, and even have the right to vote in his home state. While Twain allows Pap to express his bigoted sentiments, he does not intend for the reader to agree with Pap. Twain’s portrayal of Huck’s father as a liar, drunkard, thief, and child-beater, a thoroughly ignorant and vicious man, undermines the credibility of any statement Pap makes. In choosing Pap as the spokesperson for prejudiced views, Twain implies contempt for racial prejudice.

KEEP IT SMOOTH: USING TRANSITIONS

TRANSITIONS

- * link paragraphs
- * help the reader follow the line of thought
- * show the relationships among ideas
- * provide signals to direct the reader to important ideas

A HANDY LIST OF STANDARD TRANSITIONS

TO COMPARE	similarly, by comparison, likewise, like, just as, so . . . that, more than, less than, compared to, against, balanced with, also, as, in the same way
TO CONTRAST	in contrast, on the contrary, conversely, but, yet, however, where, nevertheless, still, although, whereas, except, against, even though, otherwise
TO EMPHASIZE	in fact, indeed, of course, surely, for example, for instance, especially, truly, to emphasize, for this reason
TO ILLUSTRATE, CLARIFY, OR SHOW RESULTS	thus, that is, in other words, which is to say, as has been, for instance, put another way, therefore, then, as a result, for this reason, consequently, hence, accordingly
TO SUMMARIZE	in short, in brief, finally, to conclude, on the whole, in summary, as a result, last, put simply,
TO SHOW LOCATION	above, away from, beyond, into, over, across, behind, by, near, throughout, against, below, down, off, to the right, under, on top of, in back of, in front of, inside, outside, beneath, beside, between, around, among
TO SHOW SEQUENCE/TIME	about, after, afterward, as soon as, at, before, during, finally, first, immediately, later, meanwhile, next, now, soon, then, till, today, tomorrow, until, when, yesterday, following, subsequently, simultaneously, hence, thereafter, once, as
TO REPEAT	as mentioned, namely, in this case, in another case, in this situation

EDITING FOR ORGANIZATION:

Only use transitions (from the list or otherwise) that you really know! Generally, the most precise and concise choice is best. Since you'll revise for style next, checking your spelling or grammar is still premature. Of course, the fewer mistakes you make now, the less work you have later, so always do your best.

ORGANIZATION

<p>I. INTRODUCTION (¶#1)</p> <p>A. Copy the line that introduces the TOPIC:</p> <p>B. Copy the THESIS STATEMENT:</p>	<p>Does the introduction include necessary background information (like the author's full name and the title of the book)? Y N</p> <p>Is the opening line engaging and promising? Y N</p> <p>Does the introduction move logically and quickly to the thesis? Y N</p> <p>Does the introduction avoid clichés like dictionary definitions, rhetorical questions, or unrelated stories/quotes/etc.? Y N</p> <p>Does the thesis promise an exciting, less-obvious discussion? Y N</p> <p>Does the thesis show possible organization patterns for the essay? Y N</p> <p>Is the thesis specific in its promise? Y N</p> <p>Does the thesis seem original and unique? Y N</p>
<p>II. BODY</p> <p>A. ¶#2- summarize the point of this paragraph:</p> <hr/> <p>1. Copy the words that create the TRANSITION:</p> <p>2. Copy the TOPIC SENTENCE</p> <p>3. List specific EXAMPLES cited:</p> <p>a.</p> <p>b.</p> <p>c.</p> <p>4. Copy EXPLANATIONS, COMMENTARY, or other ways the writer has <u>explicitly</u> connected each example to the thesis (or part of the thesis)</p> <p>a.</p> <p>b.</p> <p>c.</p>	<p>Does the topic sentence tie directly into the thesis statement? Y N</p> <p>Has the writer included a transition that reveals why this idea develops in the first body ¶? Y N</p> <p>Are all of the examples relevant to the subject? Y N</p> <p>Do you understand the examples based on the information given? Y N</p> <p>Does the writer refrain from simple summaries? Y N</p> <p>Has the writer chosen the best, most interesting, most convincing examples to prove his/her point? Y N</p> <p>Is EVERY example explained to show how it fits the thesis? Y N</p> <p>Are these the best examples to prove this point? Y N</p>

B. ¶#3-- summarize the point of this paragraph:

-
1. Copy the words that create the TRANSITION:
 2. Copy the TOPIC SENTENCE
 3. List specific EXAMPLES cited from the book:
 - b.
 - c.
 4. Copy EXPLANATIONS, COMMENTARY, or other ways the writer has explicitly connected each example to the thesis
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

C. ¶#4-- summarize the point of this paragraph:

-
1. Copy the words that create the TRANSITION:
 2. Copy the TOPIC SENTENCE
 3. List specific EXAMPLES cited from the book:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 4. Copy EXPLANATIONS, COMMENTARY, or other ways the writer has explicitly connected each example to the thesis
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

III. CONCLUSION (¶ #5)

- A. Copy the restatement of the THESIS here:

Does the topic sentence tie directly into the thesis statement? Y N
Has the writer included a transition that explains why this idea develops in the second body ¶? Y N

- a. Are all of the examples relevant to the subject? Y N
Do you understand the examples based on the information given? Y N
Does the writer refrain from simple summaries? Y N
Has the writer chosen the best, most interesting, most convincing examples to prove his/her point? Y N

Is EVERY example explained to show how it fits the thesis? Y N
Are these the best examples to prove this point? Y N
Does this paragraph say something different from the previous ones? (Is the essay DEVELOPING?) Y N

Does the topic sentence tie directly into the thesis statement? Y N
Has the writer included a transition that explains why this idea develops in the last ¶? Y N

- Are all of the examples relevant to the subject? Y N
Do you understand the examples based on the information given? Y N
Does the writer refrain from simple summaries? Y N
Has the writer chosen the best, most interesting, most convincing examples to prove his/her point? Y N

Is EVERY example explained to show how it fits the thesis? Y N
Are these the best examples to prove this point? Y N

Does the conclusion move quickly and last only briefly? Y N
Does the writer refrain from adding new information? Y N

STYLE:

VOICE/POINT OF VIEW

VOICE includes POINT OF VIEW (first-, second-, or third-person), the TONE or attitude of the writer, and the LEVEL OF FORMALITY in the language. In the best writing, the reader's voice—his or her way of expressing ideas and emotions—comes through. Voice gives writing personality: it shows that the writer sincerely cares about the topic and the audience.

*"Once you begin to hear your own voice,
it's easier to find it again and to sustain it longer."
— Vicki Spandel*

*"The best advice on writing I've ever received is
'write with authority.'
— Cynthia Ozick*

POINT OF VIEW

* TALKING ABOUT YOURSELF *

FIRST-PERSON (using "I," "me," "my," "myself," and "mine") is appropriate for informal writing like notes, e-mail, letters, and journals, and for personal essays. Generally, it is too informal for academic writing like expository essays or reports. For those, focus on your subject, not yourself!

* TALKING TO SOMEONE *

SECOND-PERSON (using "you," "your," "yours," and "yourself") has limited use. Because it is direct, only use it when writing directly to someone such as in notes, e-mail, and letters. *You* is a personal pronoun, not an indefinite pronoun. That means you should write in second-person only if "you" means an exact person or group of people. If you mean "people in general" then say "people" or "someone" instead. As a general rule, avoid second-person. Again, focus on your subject, not your audience.

* TALKING ABOUT SOMEONE/SOMETHING *

THIRD-PERSON ("he," "she," "they," "one," etc.) is the standard for formal, academic writing. Analyze your subject and stay focused on it!

VOICE/POINT OF VIEW

PREWRITING:

Choose a topic you actually care about. Take a risk in your analysis. Share a true story—one that still affects your feelings. The poet Robert Frost said, “No surprise for the writer, no surprise for the reader.” Don’t be afraid to “surprise” yourself. If you want to sound confident, authentic, and energetic, you must really feel that way. Writing that sounds interesting, innovative, and true requires risks.

DRAFTING:

Try to write your rough draft fluidly, without worrying too much about the “rules.” Pausing until you find the perfect word or stopping ten times per paragraph to look up grammar rules may cause you to lose your natural rhythm and expression. You will have plenty of time to perfect your style and conventions during revision and editing.

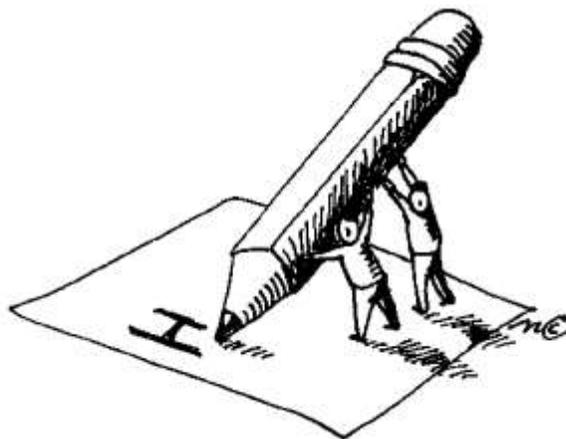
REVISING:

Check your purpose

- If your goal is to convince an academic audience, be sure your voice is sophisticated, formal, and confident.
- To share a personal experience, show more emotion and personality.

Check your enthusiasm

- Even formal writing needs sincerity and energy. Personal writing, of course, should express real feelings.
- Read your work aloud. If you’re feeling brave, ask someone to read it aloud TO you. You’ll hear if your personality, tone, and intent are coming through.



EDITING:

Voice is purely a style issue rather one governed by strict rules.

STYLE:

WORD CHOICE/DICTION

Write visually, write clearly, and make every word count.”

– Gloria D. Miklowitz

In good writing, NOUNS and VERBS are specific, MODIFIERS (adverbs, adjectives) are colorful and used sparingly, and the overall LEVEL OF LANGUAGE helps to communicate the message and set an appropriate TONE. All the right words are in all the right places!

PREWRITING:

- Learn new vocabulary and practice using it
- If someone uses a word you don't understand, ask him or her about it
- Look up unfamiliar words you encounter in your reading
- Practice using precise, interesting diction even in your everyday conversation

DRAFTING AND REVISING:

Consider your audience, subject, and purpose then choose the word that is most correct, most clear, and most effective.

1. Choose exact NOUNS and VERBS over MODIFIERS.

EXAMPLE: *The REALLY LARGE MAN moved awkwardly through the room.*

REVISED: *The GIANT bumbled through the room.*

2. Describe with CONCRETE NOUNS rather than ABSTRACT NOUNS.

A concrete noun names a thing that is tangible; an abstract noun names an idea, a condition, or a feeling– something that cannot be touched, smelled, tasted, seen, or heard.

EXAMPLE: *Despair surrounded us.*

REVISED: *Hungry children, crying mothers, and destroyed homes surrounded us.*

3. Avoid “DEAD” words (see page 25).

EXAMPLE: *She is a lot nicer now.*

REVISED: *She no longer kicks my dog.*

4. Choose ACTIVE, VIVID VERBS over PASSIVE (“to be”) VERBS (see pages 26 & 27).

EXAMPLE: *They are going to be happy.*

REVISED: *They will giggle and dance.*



5. Choose a LEVEL of LANGUAGE appropriate for your audience and purpose.

FORMAL	This level, a bit stuffy, is rarely used and only for particular audiences.	<i>We regret failing to attend today's educational opportunity.</i>
STANDARD	This level is, well, the standard. Because it fits the rules of grammar and usage, it is a safe, generally appropriate choice. Your teachers expect standard level in an academic essay, for example.	<i>We apologize for missing class today.</i>
BELOW STANDARD	This level may be used in fiction to add realism or in casual conversation with specific audiences. Because it falls below standards of grammar and usage, this level should be used very rarely in writing assignments (eliminate it from academic essays).	
	Archaic Diction (old-fashioned words or phrases which no longer sound natural)	<i>We <u>ask</u> for thy <u>pardon</u> regarding our absence.</i>
	Colloquialisms/Dialect (expressions used in certain geographical locations)	<i>Sorry we <u>sluffed</u>.</i>
	Cliches (overused words or phrases that give the reader nothing new or original to imagine)	<i>Don't <u>get all worked up</u>; we just had to <u>take a break</u>.</i>
	Slang (language used by youth. Still, <u>all</u> people use slang- the slang popular when <u>they</u> were young!)	<i>Sorry we <u>bolted</u> early on you.</i>
	Jargon (specialized language used by a specific group such as teachers, computer users, lawyers, snowboarders, etc.)	<i>We couldn't have any more <u>tardies</u> so we left.</i>
	Profanity/Vulgarity (language that shows disrespect for something held as sacred, or any crude or offensive term)	Uh, you don't really need an example, do you? ☺

6. Choose words that will convey the TONE or attitude you wish to create.

EXAMPLE:

*When teeth became touched with decay or were otherwise ailing, the doctor knew of but one thing to do--he fetched his tongs and dragged them out. If the jaw remained, it was not his fault.
- from Mark Twain's Autobiography*

Twain's specific words like "fetched" and "dragged" convey his attitude toward the dentist as a brutish animal.

EDITING:

Check your spelling.

Never use an unfamiliar word for the first time in an important document.

Consider the CONNOTATIONS (implications and suggestions) of a word, not just its DENOTATION (dictionary meaning). For example, *slender*, *skinny*, and *emaciated* all mean the same thing, but suggest different ideas.

“DEAD” words

Let them rest!



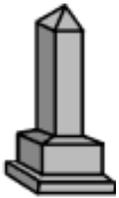
Words that don't belong in formal writing

CONTRACTIONS
ABBREVIATIONS

all forms of “you”
all forms of “I” and “me”

SLANG
CLICHES

Words too vague or otherwise lazy



nice	well	good	bad	great	horrible
awful	excellent	worse	better	fun	best
worst	terrible	terrific	fine	badly	strong
wrong	right	GET	THING	perfect	neat
it**					



Words which may indicate inexact, weak diction

so	a lot	very	really	truly
lots	completely	totally	just	about
positively	negatively	extremely	many	



Words that can cause verbosity

TO BE VERBS: is, be, am, are, was, were, been, being, become

amount	type	situation	factor	kind	one
aspect	area	which	that	it**	number

“Training Wheels”(words you might outgrow)



in conclusion/ to conclude	first	secondly	finally
My essay is about . . .	I think	in my opinion	
man/mankind*	The End		

“he/his” as a pronoun referring to a singular indefinite pronoun or a singular noun with unspecified gender* (As in “A student should always ask *his* parents before volunteering them for the sale.”)

**Today's writers consider these archaic or outdated. Instead, use "humanity," "humans," "humankind." Use both "he and she" in place of the archaic "he" OR simply change the antecedent to a plural noun or pronoun and say "they."*

*** without an antecedent*

Eliminating Passive Diction

STEP ONE: Mark all of the “TO BE” verbs in your work:

IS BE AM ARE WAS WERE BEEN BEING
BECOME

note: all forms of “to get” often imitate “to be” verbs

REASONS TO SAY “GOODBYE”

- ◆ Other verbs can provide images, sound, exact meaning (TO BE verbs tell not show).
- ◆ Most people use passive verbs only out of habit, not from informed, meaningful choices.
- ◆ Many passive verbs unnecessarily cause verbose (wordy) constructions.

STEP TWO: Identify each verb’s function.

Is it a LINKING VERB?

LINKING VERBS directly connect a noun to another noun or adjective

She IS my English teacher. She IS amazing.

REASONS TO SAY “GOODBYE”

- ◆ Pervasive use of linking verbs may indicate that a writer is “telling” instead of “showing.”
- ◆ Pervasive use of linking verbs may cause boring, repetitive, or oversimplified (immature) syntax.

HOW TO QUELL THEM

- * COMBINE SENTENCES (one is better than two). *She is my amazing English teacher.*
- * SHOW (add examples) INSTEAD: *Amazingly, my English teacher knows all of the state capitals.*
- * REVISE OR ELIMINATE THE WHOLE SENTENCE -- finding a new word for IS will NOT solve the problem!

Is it an AUXILIARY VERB?

AUXILIARY VERBS work with another verb to indicate mood, voice, or tense of the verb.

She IS working hard to teach us. Four testimonials will BE given on her behalf the night she accepts her Nobel Prize for Teaching (a category that WAS created just for her).

REASONS TO SAY “GOODBYE”

- ◆ Verb phrases usually create wordiness.
- ◆ Passive voice often obscures the subject (actor).

HOW TO QUELL THEM

- * If the auxiliary works with an “-ing” verb, eliminate the TO BE verb and change the participle (“-ing”) to a simple present, past, or future tense verb:
She is working hard to teach us. → She works hard to teach us.
- * If the auxiliary works with a past-perfective tense verb (usually “-ed” or “-en”), rework the order of the sentence: 1) identify the “actor”– who/what did the action? 2) begin the sentence or phrase with this noun, 3) change the past-perfective verb to a simple present, past, or future tense verb.
Four testimonials will BE given on her behalf the night she accepts her Nobel Prize for Teaching (a category that WAS created just for her). → Four former students will give testimonials on her behalf the night she accepts her Nobel Prize for Teaching (a category the Swedish Academy created just for her).

STEP THREE: Choose which TO BE verbs (if any) you will leave:

REASONS TO KEEP THEM

- ◆ Because thesis and topic sentences TELL (not show) on purpose, TO BE verbs may work there.
- ◆ In dialogue and/or first-person narration, people realistically use TO BE verbs.
- ◆ Linking verbs may provide powerful “punches” in short sentences after long, complex sentences.

VIVID VERBS

ache	croon	flop	kiss	mumble	sputter	trap	whistle
babble	crunch	flicker	leap	plop	slap	toss	whir
bonk	dribble	glisten	lumber	plot	sizzle	toddle	wink
batter	dazzle	grind	mock	peep	slash	tighten	whisk
blare	drift	glide	munch	quake	slip	thrust	wheeze
blister	engulf	glare	nail	roar	streak	thresh	yap
cackle	flail	glow	pop	rattle	shriek	tap	yell
chat	fume	groan	prod	romp	slosh	twinkle	yawn
chug	flop	hoot	patter	pounce	thump	vaporize	yank
cluck	flap	hiss	pile	shimmer	thunder	vanish	zoom
crackle	float	jump	pick	shine	tilt	vent	
creep	flare	jerk	pound	scatter	trample	vomit	
				scold		whip	

SUBSTITUTES for "SAID"

acknowledged	added	addressed	admitted	advised
affirmed	alleged	announced	answered	argued
asserted	assumed	assured	asked	attested
babbled	bantered	began	boasted	bargained
claimed	complained	confided	conveyed	contended
debated	declared	denied	dictated	directed
disclosed	divulged	drawled	droned	elaborated
emphasized	entreated	estimated	explained	expressed
faltered	flattered	fumed	foretold	giggled
grinned	grunted	held	insisted	inferred
indicated	instructed	laughed	lectured	lied
maintained	mentioned	mimicked	mused	muttered
noted	objected	observed	ordered	pleaded
prayed	predicted	prompted	proclaimed	quibbled
ranted	reassured	related	repeated	revealed
roared	scoffed	scolded	shouted	sobbed
sneered	specified	sputtered	stressed	taunted
threatened	urged	uttered	vowed	warned

STYLE:

SYNTAX/ SENTENCE FLUENCY

No writing technique makes you sound smarter faster than careful, informed manipulation of sentences! Effective writing flows, its sentences varying in length and structure. Careful syntax even creates rhythm.

Remember your first-grade readers?

*That is Sam. Sam is at school. Sam needs help.
He asks the teacher.*

You've grown up now, and so can your sentences!

At school, Sam needs help so he asks his teacher.



PREWRITING:

Notice the structure of your favorite sayings or quotes– they're likely quite complex, memorable sentences or phrases.

Learn the grammar of phrases, clauses, and sentences to develop greater skill and confidence in using a variety of sentence styles (see page 30).

Practice eliminating jargon and wordiness in all of your writing (even worksheet responses and notes to your mom).

DRAFTING:

Think about your sentences to avoid common traps:

- unintentional sentence fragments
- comma splices
- verbosity (wordiness)
- writing only simple sentences
- beginning sentences with the same word
- using too many “ands”– making piles of compound sentences
- writing sentences that are all the same length.
- writing only sentences of the same structure

REVISING:

**“Whatever sentence will bear to be read twice,
we may be sure was thought twice.”**

– Henry David Thoreau

The following worksheet and reference sheets will help you practice syntax revision.

SENTENCE REVISION CHECKLIST

Collect some information . . .

- Scan (don't read) the first few words of each sentence in your essay.
- Highlight any commonly repeated words or phrases at the beginnings of your sentences.
COMMON OBSERVATIONS: "The first passage . . ." "The writer . . ." "[Your subject] . . ."
- Highlight and circle in red any sentences that begin with a coordinating conjunction:
for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so
- Highlight and circle in red any sentences that begin with "there" (there are, there is, there were, etc.)
- Highlight and circle in red any sentences that begin with "it" (it is, it seems, it was, etc.)
- Find your longest paragraph. Count the number of words in each sentence of the paragraph and write these numbers in the margin.

Now do something about it . . .

- Eliminate repeated beginnings in your sentences.
You can do this by
 - combining related sentences,
 - using an occasional semi-colon, or
 - rearranging the order of some of your sentences.

Consider expressing relationships between sentences by beginning a few sentences with a subordinating conjunction (*although, since, when, because*).

You can also express complex relationships by starting with a participle (an "-ing" verb acting as an adjective) as in "*Describing the swamp as primeval, the writer suggests that even natural processes like evolution, inexorable in other settings, cannot happen in the Okefenokee.*"

- Anything highlighted AND circled in red probably needs to change.
- Any sentence that begins with a coordinating conjunction (see list above) is a fragment. You may fix it by simply dropping the conjunction; you may also fix the fragment by combining the fragment with another sentence- probably the one just before the fragment.

Verbs also suggest images. And these verbs, such as "fester" suggest a process of rot.

becomes . . . *Verbs also suggest images, and these verbs, such as "fester" suggest a process of rot.*

- Sentences that begin "There is," "There was," etc. have an expletive. Look for a verb 'hiding' later in the sentence. Eliminate the expletive and supply a real verb (action!) to create a complete sentence.
There are many examples where the visual images create exact, measurable pictures.

becomes . . . *Many of the visual images create exact, measurable pictures.*

- Sentences which begin with "it" may suffer from one of two problems: 1) they may contain an expletive, or 2) they may have an unclear antecedent. This example contains both problems: *It is clear that the writer wants to create a threatening mood.* You could fix this example as instructed above (*The writer wants to create a threatening mood*).

If you have created a sentence with only an unclear antecedent, look through the sentence for a clue to what "it" is and state exactly what you mean:

It is for this purpose.

becomes . . . *The auditory imagery serves this purpose.*

NOTE: If you can see clearly what "it" means based on a NOUN you used in a previous sentence, "it" may legitimately start the sentence.

- Now revise for sentence length . . .
Writers often find the length of their sentences does not vary more than five to ten words. Variety engages the reader and makes your thoughts seem more diverse, more complex. Revise, combine, and/or rearrange to include one significantly longer sentence in each paragraph and one significantly shorter sentence in each paragraph. Consider this: longer sentences often feel complex and deep, so use them when you want to "build up" the details or suggest the complexity of a thought. Conversely, short sentences add "punch"- they "drive home" the idea or point to a confident, assertive conclusion.

IMPROVING SENTENCE STYLE & VARIETY

Beginning writers tend to write short choppy sentences or to string sentences together using **COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) which make the sentences equal in importance.

CHOPPY SENTENCES: *I have to get up early. I usually set my alarm for 6:00. It takes me an hour to shower and get ready. School starts at 7:30.*

STRINGY SENTENCE: *I have to get up early so I usually set my alarm for 6:00 but it takes me an hour to shower and get ready and then school starts at 7:30.*

More skillful writers use **SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS** (after, although, as, because, before, if, since, though, unless, until, when, wherever, while) to join ideas, suggesting that some ideas are less important (subordinate).

IMPROVED SENTENCE: *When I have to be at school by 7:30, I usually set my alarm for 6:00 because it takes me an hour to shower and get ready.*

BASIC SENTENCE STRUCTURES

SIMPLE SENTENCE: *Olympus High starts at 7:30.*

**SIMPLE SENTENCE W/
A COMPOUND VERB:**

Olympus High starts at 7:30 and ends at 2:10.

COMPOUND SENTENCE: *Olympus High starts at 7:30, and classes end by 2:10.*

COMPLEX SENTENCE: *Because Olympus High starts at 7:30, classes end by 2:10.*

CREATING SENTENCE VARIETY

Spice up sentences with . . .

a participial phrase: *Starting at 7:30, Olympus High classes continue until 2:10.*

prepositional phrases: *At 7:30 in the morning, classes start at Olympus High.*

an appositive phrase: *Olympus High, my school, starts at 7:30 in the morning.*

an absolute: *My school starting at 7:30, I must get up early.*

an adjective clause: *The school day, which starts at 7:30, ends at 2:10.*

adjective modifiers: *Eager and wide-awake, the students arrive at school before 7:30.*

adverb modifiers: *Eagerly the students arrive at school, wide awake by 7:30.*

REVISING FOR ECONOMY

“The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.”
– Thomas Jefferson

1. Eliminate unnecessary repetition

Delete redundancies. Emphasize with repetition, but never simply repeat ideas.

EXAMPLES:

Throughout the ~~whole entire~~ book, the author speaks from ~~the perspective of various~~ points of view.

Gatsby is eager to reunite with Daisy ~~again~~.

Nick rents a house next to ~~the house where~~ Gatsby ^[S] lives.

2. Obliterate excess words.

Avoid using too many words for the job. Although such padding does not make your writing incorrect, it clutters the sentences and prevents you from expressing clear and concise ideas.

EXAMPLES: ~~The first way~~ Tom knows Nick is from Yale.

~~It seems~~ Daisy wants Nick and Jordan ~~to get together~~.

“Simplify, simplify, simplify!” – Henry David Thoreau

3. Reduce clauses to single words or simple phrases

Read your sentences carefully, searching for relative clauses; replace them with an adjective or adverb, a prepositional phrase, or a participial phrase.

HINT– relative clauses start with these words: that, which, who, whom

EXAMPLES: ADJECTIVE: “The paper **which is** blue has instructions.” → “The blue paper has instructions.”

ADVERB: “The runner **who is going slowly** broke her toe.” →
“The runner going slowly broke her toe.”

PARTICIPLES: (PAST) “The test **that is designed** to show your math skills doesn’t work.” →
“The test designed to show your math skills doesn’t work.”

(PRESENT) “The girl **who is sitting** next to me stinks.” → “The girl sitting next to me stinks.”

Gatsby, who was with Nick for lunch, introduced Nick to Meyer Wolfsheim which Nick knew was the name of the bettor who fixed the 1919 World Series. → At lunch, Gatsby introduced Nick to Meyer Wolfsheim, the bettor who fixed the 1919 World Series.

It is clear that when Tom answers the phone, an uncomfortable feeling affects the guests who had come for dinner.

→ When Tom answers the phone, an uncomfortable feeling clearly affects the dinner guests.

“Eschew surplusage.” – Mark Twain

4. Avoid “catch phrases” such as type, situation, factor, kind, one, aspect, area

EXAMPLES: Jordan ~~was the type of~~ woman who demanded Nick’s attention.

The story shows ~~one of those situations where the main aspect of~~ the central character’s personality ^[DECIDES] ~~[is the deciding factor in the area of]~~ her personal relationships.

“True eloquence consists of saying all that should be, not all that could be, said.”

– La Rochfoucauld

EDITING:

1. Fix fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences. A peer, family member, or other editor may help here— just be sure you are involved and know why and how the sentences need improvement.
2. Check accuracy of semi-colons, colons, dashes, and parentheses. Remember that overusing these strong punctuation marks is very easy to do.
3. Refer to the “10 Common Errors” pages (34 & 35) for more sentence editing concerns.
4. Use “grammar check” tools in a computer program WITH CAUTION. Never automatically assume the suggestion is correct!

AVOID COMMON SENTENCE ERRORS

FIX FRAGMENTS

DEFINITION: Like a sentence, a fragment is a group of words; however, it is not a sentence because it lacks a subject, a verb, or some other essential part. With this part missing, the thought is incomplete

Fragment:	<i>Glue all over the floor.</i>	(This fragment lacks a verb.)
Sentence:	<i>Glue oozed all over the floor.</i>	
Fragment:	<i>When Sarah stepped on the bottle.</i>	
		(This fragment has a subject and verb, but it does not convey a complete thought. We need to know what happened “when Sarah stepped on the bottle.”)
Sentence:	<i>When Sarah stepped on the bottle, glue oozed all over the floor.</i>	
Fragment:	<i>Shrieking about her new shoes. Emily cried, “You did that on purpose!”</i>	
		(A complete sentence follows this fragment. The fragment, a participial phrase, can join the sentence to form a complete thought.)
Sentence:	<i>Shrieking about her new shoes, Emily cried, “You did that on purpose!”</i>	

FIX COMMA SPLICES

DEFINITION: A comma splice results when only a comma connects (“splices”) two independent clauses*. The comma is not enough. This job requires a stronger mark: a period, semicolon, a comma AND a conjunction, a question mark, or an exclamation mark.

*NOTE: independent clause = a complete thought that can stand alone as a sentence

Splice:	<i>The teacher had repeated himself four times, he was losing patience.</i>	
		(Note that the comma is trying to separate two complete sentences.)
Corrected:	<i>The teacher had repeated himself four times, so he was losing patience.</i>	(The added coordinating conjunction “so” strengthens the comma)
Corrected:	<i>The teacher had repeated himself four times; he was losing patience.</i>	(A semicolon has the power to separate the independent clauses.)
Corrected:	<i>Because the teacher had repeated himself four times, he was losing patience.</i>	(Starting one clause with a subordinating conjunction turns it into a dependent clause.)

FIX RUN-ON SENTENCES

DEFINITION: A run-on is two (or more) sentences joined without adequate punctuation or connecting words. A comma splice is one type of run-on sentence.

Run-on:	<i>I thought we'd never finish rehearsing my mom was mad I was supposed to be home to babysit.</i>	
Corrected:	<i>I thought we'd never finish rehearsing. My mom was mad because I was supposed to be home to babysit.</i>	

Expletives

(an advanced syntax issue!)

aka the NULL SUBJECT, the DUMMY SUBJECT, or the EXISTENTIAL SUBJECT

The grammatical structure called an expletive is more often described by its function—the null subject, the dummy subject, or the existential subject—because it takes the part of subject in a sentence, referring to a real subject used later in the sentence.

It is a rhetorical device that is not really a part of speech because it carries no meaning itself.

The expletives *there* and *it* are used with a form of the verb *be* to postpone the subject until after the verb; however, avoiding the expletive is possible and usually preferable since revision will eliminate verbosity and passive diction.

Additionally, few people use the expletive on purpose so the sentence sometimes will have no exact subject at all! Revising the expletive out in this case actually fixes a grammatical error too, since IT would have no antecedent.

BEFORE: *It is* having the right skills that matters. [DELAYED SUBJECT—*having the right skills*]
AFTER: Having the right skills matters. [3 FEWER WORDS, NO PASSIVE DICTION, NO PRONOUN ERROR]

BEFORE: *It is* sad that no one listens to the teacher. [NO SUBJECT—OR ANTECEDENT-- AT ALL!]
AFTER: Sadly, no one listens to the teacher. [3 FEWER WORDS, NO PASSIVE DICTION, NO PRONOUN ERROR]

BEFORE: *There* were eighty people at the meeting last night. [DELAYED SUBJECT—*eighty people*]
AFTER: Eighty people attended the meeting last night. [2 FEWER WORDS, NO PASSIVE DICTION]

TRY IT! Can you revise the expletive out of these sentences? (*pun definitely intended!*)

1. It is strange how you look at him.
2. It is the way you never blink that freaks everyone out.
3. It is my advice that you should find a new way to let him know you like him.
4. There are so many ways you can try to get his attention.
5. It is possible to get him to see you without scaring him.
6. It is widely known that he loves his English class.
7. He also thinks it is fun to write essays.
8. Maybe it would be a good idea to write an essay about him and read it to your class?
9. Of course, maybe it would backfire and you'd look even weirder.
10. It might be best just to back off for a while and think about whether it is really a good idea to go after a boy who loves to write essays anyway.

Phrasal Verbs & Cliches

a.k.a. idiomatic expressions or two-part verbs

(an advanced syntax issue!)

A phrasal verb is a group of words that works together grammatically as one action (one verb).

English contains hundreds of these verbs so avoiding them altogether is unnatural and difficult.

However, many of these verbs are idiomatic, casual, even clichéd.

BEFORE: The crowd needs to cut it out with the screaming if they expect someone to listen.

AFTER: The crowd needs to stop screaming if they expect someone to listen.

BEFORE: The author never clears it up about how the first character dies.

AFTER: The author never clarifies how the first character dies.

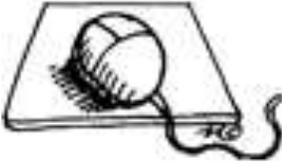
BEFORE: She needs to write it down if she expects to study her notes later.

AFTER: She needs to record her notes to study later.

TRY IT! Can you revise the cliché/phrasal verb out of these sentences?

1. I want to come with you, but I don't see how I can work it out to leave at 5:00.
2. If you're willing to try it out, you'll learn the steps quickly.
3. He has to think it through before he can answer the proposal.
4. The writer played it down a lot, but the first scene still matters most.
5. She made it clear that she no longer wanted to stay.
6. The students found it odd that the teacher had arrived in her pajamas.
7. The storm made it hard to get to school on time.
8. He finds it as a challenge when you suggest he may not make it through the test.
9. No one thinks it's funny when the coach makes fun of the last runner in.
10. After the reader adds it all up, the character's crimes are clear.

CONVENTIONS/FORMAT GRAMMAR AND MECHANICS



CONVENTIONS/FORMAT = how your document looks

GRAMMAR = how your writing fits the rules of standard, American English. These rules reflect the way educated people speak and write.

MECHANICS = how your writing fits the conventions of punctuation, spelling, capitalization, spacing, etc. These rules make writing consistent and clear.

USAGE = less binding rules about how language should be used in certain contexts. The rules of usage may allow the writer or speaker to break the rules of grammar in informal situations, for example.

WHILE PREWRITING:

- * Note format requirements for your assignment. Ask your teacher if they are not clear.
 - * Always follow your teacher's (or publisher's) guidelines first, general rules second.
 - * Certain types of writing (letters, memos, and resumes for example) have specific format rules. Consult an expert or a handbook for the rules and follow them first.
 - * **SOME GENERAL RULES:**
 - Type in a simple, readable, 10 or 12 pt. font
 - Use 1" margins
 - Print on regular white paper (unlined, 8.5" X 11") in black ink
 - Bind plural pages with one staple in the left-hand corner (no covers or book binding)
 - Double space
 - Indent new paragraphs about five spaces; do NOT add extra spaces between them**
- Traditionally, typists were taught to hit two spaces after a period (or other end punctuation mark) before beginning the next sentence. When using today's printers, one space is fine.

WHILE DRAFTING:

Your content and organization matter most while you're drafting, so don't let a comma question keep you from drafting. You can answer the question during editing.

WHEN REVISING:

As you make word choice and sentence fluency revisions, be sure your rewrites fit the rules of format, grammar, and mechanics.

EDITING:

This whole category IS editing! You're ready to edit after you've finished major revisions. Make a clean copy of the revised paper, and (if time permits) set the paper aside for a few days before you edit. You'll see it with "fresh eyes." Enlist someone else to check your editing too since you may now be too close to your writing to see even obvious mistakes and typos.

10 Common Errors

1. MISSING COMMA AFTER LONG INTRODUCTORY PHRASES

- * Place a comma after a long introductory phrase.

After the bell rang and the class settled down [^], the test began.

2. CONFUSING PRONOUN REFERENCE

- * Make sure the reader can tell to whom your pronoun refers.

[^] “Carrie” or [^] “Jessica” – whoever laughed!

*When Carrie told Jessica what happened, [**she**] started to laugh.*

3. MISSING COMMA IN A COMPOUND SENTENCE

- * Use a comma between two independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction– *and, but, or, no, so, for, yet.*

I liked the new album [^], but the last one was better.

4. MISSING COMMA(S) WITH A NONRESTRICTIVE PHRASE

- * Use commas to set off a phrase that is not a necessary part of the sentence.

The coach chose Kristen [^], the team’s best mid-fielder.

The role of Mr. Kennedy [^], the role I really wanted [^], went to Jason.

5. SHIFTING VERB TENSES

- * All verbs in an essay should be in present or past tense throughout. When writing about literature, choose present tense.

*Steinbeck’s colloquial language **offends** many readers, but its gritty, unrefined*

[^] Change “was” to “is” to stay in present tense.

*quality [**was**] realistic to the time, place, characters, and tone.*



6. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT ERRORS

- * Verbs must agree in number with their subjects. Singular subjects take singular verbs, and plural subjects take plural verbs. Beware of prepositional phrases that may separate the subject and verb and confuse you!

 change to “has” to agree with “William Faulkner” – a singular subject

William Faulkner, along with Hemingway and Fitzgerald, **[have]** shaped modern American literature.

7. MISSING COMMA IN A SERIES

- * Use commas to separate individual words, phrases, or clauses in a series.

The writing process includes prewriting [^], drafting [^], revising [^], and editing.

8. PRONOUN-ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT ERRORS

- * A pronoun must agree in number and gender with the word to which the pronoun refers.

 Change “their” to “his” to agree with the singular subject “either”

Either Eric or Ivan left **[their]** jacket in my car.

 Change “they” to “he or she” to agree with the singular subject “someone” and to include both genders.

Someone in the crowd had a camera, but **[they]** didn’t take a picture.

9. DANGLING OR MISPLACED MODIFIERS

- * MISPLACED MODIFIERS appear to modify the wrong word. Correct the problem by placing the modifier as close as possible to the word it actually modifies.

 Move “only” between “since” and “the boy” to clarify

The audience disappointed me since the boy with glasses stayed **[only]** until the end.

- * DANGLING MODIFIERS appear to modify the wrong word or no word at all. Fix them by rephrasing the modifier or by adding the missing word to the main clause.

 The couch isn’t tired! You could say “Tired from the long drive, we chose to sleep on the couch.”

Tired from the long drive, **[the couch]** seemed like the best place to sleep.

 Ouch! “The eggs” – not “you” – are being whipped here! Revision: After whipping the eggs, you can add them to the mix.

After being whipped, **[you]** can add the eggs to the mix.

10. MISUSING ITS and IT’S

- * ITS (without the apostrophe) is a possessive pronoun meaning “belonging or pertaining to it.”
- * IT’S (with the apostrophe) is a contraction of “it is” or “it has.”

 ITS = belonging or pertaining to “it”

Similarly, at the Old South Church, anyone who has spent the night in **[it’s]**

 IT’S = “it is” or “it has”

basement says **[its]** haunted.

Common Confusions

A LOT 🗣️ *A lot* (always TWO words) is a vague descriptive phrase to be used sparingly, if at all.

“You can observe a lot just by watching.” – Yogi Berra

ACCEPT, EXCEPT 🗣️ The verb *accept* means “to receive “ or “to believe”; the preposition *except* means “other than.”

I can accept his innocence, but I wonder why no one except him saw the real thief.

AFFECT, EFFECT 🗣️ The verb *affect* means “to influence”; the verb *effect* means “to complete, accomplish, produce.” The noun *effect* means “the result.”

The senator finally effected change in Social Security benefits which will affect many Americans.

The full effect may take generations to see.

ALL RIGHT, ALRIGHT 🗣️ *All right* is always correct. *Alright* is not a standard usage.

ALLUSION, ILLUSION 🗣️ An *allusion* is an indirect reference to someone or something; an *illusion* is a false picture or idea.

Under the illusion that he’s a great writer, John makes frequent allusions to the bestsellers he will write someday.

ALL READY, ALREADY 🗣️ *All ready* is a phrase meaning “fully prepared.” *Already*, an adverb, means “before this time” or “by this time.”

If you already put gas in the car, we’re all ready to hit the highway.

ALL TOGETHER, ALTOGETHER 🗣️ A phrase, *all together* means “in a group” or “all at once.” An adverb, *altogether* means “entirely.”

Thinking ten people could get through the revolving door all together was a ridiculous idea altogether.

AMONG, BETWEEN 🗣️ Use *among* when speaking of more than two persons or things. Use *between* when speaking of only two.

Among all of the students in our class, you and I have the most absences; you have the most between us.

AMOUNT, NUMBER 🗣️ *Amount* is used for bulk measurement (with things you can’t really count individually like “love,” “pain,” “joy,” and “oxygen”). *Number* is used to count separate units. (See also *fewer*, *less*.)

The original movie had the greater amount of profanity even though the number of really strong words was greater in the sequel.

BAD, BADLY 🗣️ *Bad* is an adjective (or predicate adjective). *Badly* is an adverb.

I’m not a bad putter, but I drive the ball very badly.

NOTE: Because of the linking verb “feel,” a predicate adjective should follow it, as in “I feel bad.” “I feel badly” is incorrect unless you mean you lack the skill or ability to feel things very well. Watch out for this overcorrection!

BESIDE, BESIDES ☞ *Beside* means “by the side of.” *Besides* means “in addition to.”

Put everything beside the luggage cart. Besides keeping us organized, that will give us more room to relax until the room is ready.

BRING, TAKE ☞ *Bring* suggests the action is directed toward the speaker; *take* suggests the action is directed away from the speaker.

If you bring good grades home, I'll let you take my car to the dance.

CAN, MAY ☞ *Can* suggests ability while *may* suggests permission.

Can I drive the car? = Do I have the skills to drive the car?

May I drive the car? = Do I have your permission to drive the car?

DIFFERENT FROM, DIFFERENT THAN ☞ Use *different from* in a comparison of two things. *Different than* should be used only when followed by a clause.

Jane is different from her sisters. Of course, everything is different than it used to be.

EACH OTHER ☞ This phrase is ALWAYS two words, never a compound word.

FARTHER, FURTHER ☞ *Farther* refers to a physical distance; *further* refers to additional time, quantity, or degree.

Mexico extends farther south than Cuba. Further information about both countries is available online.

FEWER, LESS ☞ *Fewer* refers to the number of separate, countable units. *Less* refers to bulk quantity of things you cannot physically count (happiness, water, light, anger, etc.).

Frozen yogurt has fewer calories and less fat than ice cream.

GOOD, WELL ☞ *Good* is an adjective; *well* is nearly always an adverb (when describing a state of health, *well* is a predicate adjective). See the “NOTE” under BAD/BADLY too.

I knew she was a good volleyball player, but I didn't realize she played well enough to make the team.

HEALTHFUL, HEALTHY ☞ *Healthful* means “causing or improving health”; *healthy* means “possessing health.”

Healthful foods and habits help us build healthy bodies.

IMPLY, INFER ☞ *Imply* means “to suggest or express indirectly”; *infer* means “to draw a conclusion from facts.” (A writer or speaker implies; a reader or listener infers.)

Mom's angry silence implied that she had seen the broken taillight, and I inferred that I would soon be grounded.

INSURE, ENSURE ☞ *Insure* means “to secure from financial harm or loss.” *Ensure* means “to make certain of something.”

My parents insured our new camera to ensure we won't have a problem replacing it if it is stolen.

LEND, BORROW, LOAN ☞ *Lend* means to GIVE; *borrow* means to RECEIVE; *loan* is a noun, never a verb.

Can you believe she asked me for another loan? I will not lend her another dime until she repays the money she already borrowed.

LOSE, LOOSE ☞ *Lose* has a “Z” sound at the end like “whose” or “nose”; it means “to misplace or misdirect.” *Loose* has an “S” sound at the end like “goose” or “noose”; it means “not tight.”

I worry I will lose my watch since the clasp is so loose.

PAST, PASSED ☞ *Past* can be a noun, adjective, or a preposition. *Passed* is a verb. Just past the playground, I passed a scene that reminded me of my own past.

QUIET, QUIT, QUITE ☞ *Quiet* is the opposite of “noisy.” *Quit* means “to stop.” *Quite* means “completely or entirely.”

Since I’m quite tired, I think we should quit working and find a quiet place to rest.

QUOTE, QUOTATION ☞ *Quote* is a verb; *quotation* is a noun.

I like to start my speech with a quotation. This time, I think I’ll quote Walt Whitman.

THAN, THEN ☞ *Than* is used in a comparison; *then* tells when.

She said she’d rather work with me than with Maria. She saw my grades then changed her mind.

THEIR, THERE, THEY’RE ☞ *Their* is a possessive personal pronoun. *There* is an adverb used to show location. *They’re* is a contraction for “they are.”

Their grandmother owns a condominium there so they’re staying for free.

THREW, THROUGH ☞ *Threw* is the past tense of “throw.” *Through* means “from beginning to end.”

She threw a shutout through six innings.

WEATHER, WHETHER ☞ *Weather* refers to the condition of the atmosphere. *Whether* refers to a possibility.

Because the weather is so unpredictable, he isn’t sure whether to plan a pool party or a ski trip.

WHICH, THAT ☞ Use *which* to refer to objects or animals in a nonrestrictive clause (set off with commas). Use *that* to refer to objects or animals in a restrictive clause.

The pencils, which you had already sharpened, were in the box of supplies that he lost.

WHO, WHOM ☞ Use *who* and *whom* to refer to people. *Who* is used as the subject of a verb in an independent clause or in a relative clause. *Whom* is used as the object of a preposition or as a direct object.

The character whom the readers admire most is the one who tells the truth.

WHO’S, WHOSE ☞ *Who’s* is the contraction for “who is.” *Whose* is a pronoun that can show possession or ownership.

Greg, whose pitch is perfect, will sing the solo. Who’s accompanying him?

YOUR, YOU’RE ☞ *Your* is a possessive pronoun. *You’re* is the contraction for “you are.”

If you consistently use your writer’s guide, you’re going to see improvement.

Revision Checklist

For best results, go through these revision and editing steps IN ORDER. STOP where you see stop signs. Revise, repeat the process, THEN continue through the remaining steps.

IDEAS & CONTENT

- Check your THESIS. Is it engaging? unique? important? relevant? somewhere between fact and opinion? Does it answer the question or prompt assigned? Revise, if necessary. 
- Check IDEAS & CONTENT. Are your examples specific/concrete and not obvious? Do you use commentary (explanation, analysis) to show explicitly why the example proves your point? Does each paragraph support the thesis or main point? (Document your thinking!) Revise, if necessary. 

ORGANIZATION

- Check your title. Is it engaging? (Concrete words are usually better than abstracts.) Does it hint at your thesis– not just the subject?
- Check your introduction. Is the opening line grabbing? Are the transitions to the thesis smooth?
- Check your conclusion. Keep it “no nonsense”– do NOT introduce new ideas here, yet try not to be exactly repetitive Don’t start with “in conclusion” or “to conclude.” Instead trust your audience to know essay structure then follow its rules. Revise, if necessary.
- Check your transitions. The beginning sentence of each paragraph should directly refer to the thesis AND introduce the specific topic of the paragraph. Also, see if the transitions suggest momentum; in other words, are your ideas in the best order? Is your thesis building, growing more exciting? Will your reader need the last body paragraph or will it just be another example?
- Check your paragraph organization. Remember: only ONE topic per paragraph. REVISE, IF NECESSARY. 

STYLE

- Check your sentence fluency (flow) and complexity. Reading aloud is the best way to see if your sentences are wordy, awkward, redundant, overly simplistic, or confusing. Revise by rearranging and combining sentences.
- Check for sentence variety. Scanning, not reading, is your best method here. Look for repetitive sentence openings and lengths. Rearrange and/or combine sentences for better variety (sophistication!).
- Check word economy. Eliminate redundancies, extra words, jargon, clichés, expletives, unnecessary relative clauses, etc. See page 31 for details.
- Check for “dead” words? For formal writing, avoid first-person, second-person, references to your paper itself, contractions, abbreviations, symbols, slang, etc. See page 25 for details.
- Check your verbs. Eliminate passive verbs and replace them with active ones. See pages 26 & 27.
- Evaluate the voice of your writing: does your voice fit the purpose of your writing? Do you sound interested in, and knowledgeable about, your topic?
- Ensure that the overall style you use shows an appropriate level of formality or informality for your purpose and audience. REVISE, IF NECESSARY.

MECHANICS (this is a good area for peer revision)

- Check your grammar for standard, academic usage: are your verbs consistent in tense and parallel structure? Have you avoided run-ons and fragments? Do your pronouns agree with their antecedents– do they have antecedents? 
- Check your mechanics for standard, academic usage: is your spelling perfect? Your punctuation marks (beware of colons, semi-colons, apostrophes)? Have you met the conventions of standard usage like italicizing titles of longer works, putting the titles of shorter works in quotation marks, citing an author by his or her last name, using documentation for quotations (if assigned), tucking commas and periods INSIDE quotation marks, etc.
- Check your format details. Above all, follow the rules of your “publisher” (most often, your teacher). Common format problems include not double-spacing, extra spaces between indented paragraphs, illegible font, uneven or nonstandard margins.

Proofreader's Marks

Instruction	Mark in Margin	Mark in Type	Corrected Type
Delete		the good word	the word
Inset indicated material	good	the word ^	the good word
Let it stand	(STET)	the good word	the good word
Make capital	(CAP)	the <u>word</u>	the Word
Make lower case	(LC)	<u>the</u> Word	the Word
Set in small capitals	(SC)	See <u>word</u> .	See word.
Set in italic	(ITAL)	The word is <u>word</u> .	The word is <i>word</i> .
Set in boldface	(BF)	the entry <u>word</u>	the entry word
Transpose	(TR)	the(<u>word</u>)good	the good word
Close up space	∩	the wo <u>rd</u>	the word
Delete extra word space	∪	the <u>word</u>	the word
Delete and close up space		the <u>word</u>	the word
Spell out	(SP)	② words	two words
Insert space	#	the <u>word</u>	the word
period	⊙	This is the word _^	This is the word.
comma	∧	words _^ words, words	words, words, words
hyphen	△	word _^ for _^ word	word-for-word
colon	⊙	the following words _^	the following words:
semicolon	∧	Scan the words _^ Skim the words	Scan the words; Skim the words
apostrophe	∨	John's words	John's words
quotation marks	↵/↶/	the word _^ word _^	the word "word"
parentheses	(/)/	The word _^ word _^ is in parentheses	The word (word) is in parentheses
asterisk	*∨	word _^	word*
Run in	(RUN IN)	The entry word is printed in boldface. ↳ The pronunciation follows.	The entry word is printed in boldface. The pronunciation follows.
Move left	⊔	⊔ the word	the word
Move right	⊓	<u>the</u> word	the word
Align		the word the word the word	the word the word the word