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*Note:* This handbook is intended for use by RCHS students completing high school writing assignments and is primarily directed toward persuasive essays, literary analysis essays, research papers, and most other expository or argumentative writing assignments. Because different types of writing have different guidelines and conventions, please see your teacher for specific instructions or clarification.
General Tips:
- Do not wait until the last minute. Try to start at least ten days before the essay is due.
- Set aside plenty of time, and find a quiet place to write where you will not be distracted.
- Make sure you have at least a working thesis before you begin your draft.
- Do not feel like you have to start with your intro and draft straight through. Feel free to start with whichever part of your essay you are prepared to write about.
- In literary analysis essays, avoid plot summary. Assume that your reader is already familiar with the works you are discussing. Stick to analysis.

Step One: Planning
- Look through your course texts and notes. Assemble a list of possible evidence and insights.
- Free-write about the essay prompt or topic.
- Do outside research as necessary, tracking all sources for your Works Cited page.
- Come up with a tentative thesis and tentative reasons to support it.
- Make sure your thesis is debatable rather than obvious, limited rather than broad, properly qualified rather than overstated. (See page 3)
- Use an outline or graphic organizer to visualize essay organization. (2, 26)

Step Two: Writing the Paper
- Craft an introductory paragraph that engages your reader and contains a clear thesis. (4)
- Order body paragraphs logically. (6)
- Start (most) body paragraphs with a topic sentence that includes a reason that supports your thesis. (5)
- Back up reasons with evidence from course texts, notes, and/or outside sources. (5, 6)
- Analyze all evidence and explain how it supports your reasons.
- Introduce all quotations and integrate them into your prose. (7)
- Properly cite all outside sources. (11, 12-17)
- While crafting body paragraphs, try to address any questions a skeptical reader might have. (8)
- If necessary, acknowledge and respond to major counterclaims in separate body paragraphs. (8)
- Write a conclusion that offers the reader some “food for thought.” (9)
- Avoid contractions and slang. Avoid overly long sentences and big words that you do not really know.
- Try to vary both the type and the length of your sentences.
- Use transitions between sentences and paragraphs. (18)

Step Three: Revising
- Try to finish the essay a week before it is due. Set it aside for a day or two then read it with fresh eyes.
- Read the essay aloud, listening to the flow of your prose. Fix any awkward or unclear sentences.
- Check content:
  - Do the thesis and conclusion match? If not, your argument drifted while you were writing. Revise your content accordingly, or reconsider your thesis.
  - Do your ideas flow logically, or do you need to rearrange your body paragraphs? (6)
  - Are there any very short body paragraphs? Any reasons without sufficient evidence? Any evidence without analysis?
  - Are there any major counterarguments that you have not addressed? (8)
  - Are all sources properly cited, both within your essay and in the Works Cited page? (12-17)
- Check formatting: header, page numbers, 1” margins, double-spacing, 12-point Times New Roman font.
- Print and proofread for mechanical errors.
- Print a final copy on crisp paper. Staple it.

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1 The “Essay Writing Checklist,” “Planning,” and “Writing a Thesis Statement” sections have been adapted with permission from the Miller School of Albemarle Writing Manual.
Planning

In a literary analysis or research essay, good writing begins with good reading. You should start planning your essay by going through your textbooks and class notes. Assemble a list of insights and potential evidence for the topic you are assigned.

Of course, this means you need to take good notes in the first place, and you need to thoroughly annotate course texts. If you are not allowed to write in the text you are annotating, you may either use post-it notes to make your notes within the text or write a running commentary (with page numbers!) in your notebook.

As you are annotating, mark important passages. Write down inferences, questions, predictions, or connections that come to mind as you are reading. In a non-fiction essay or textbook, be sure to mark passages that contain the thesis or central idea of the work, section, or chapter. Also mark supporting reasons or big transitions. Mark where the writer’s argument is least convincing and where it is most convincing. Mark passages where the author addresses counterclaims. Carry on a conversation with the author in your notes.

For fiction or poetry, mark meaningful images, symbols, figurative language, or recurring ideas. Mark descriptions of characters. Mark important new developments or shifts. Mark moments where you see a new side of a character. Mark passages that introduce or address important themes. Mark passages that are vivid and memorable. Mark anything that strikes you as important, and quickly scribble a note to help you remember why it struck you that way. If you do so, you will discover that constructing arguments and finding evidence for your essays is much easier. You will also discover that you remember more of what you have read.

Free-writing is another good strategy for planning an essay. Simply take out a sheet of paper or open a new blank document and start writing about the paper prompt or topic. Do not worry about organization or mechanics. You do not even need to punctuate. Just keep writing for as long as you can, putting down whatever comes into your head. Whenever you run out of steam (ten minutes is a good session length), your paper will look like a mess, but you will be able to gather good ideas, reasons, and evidence from it.

Eventually, you will want to draft an outline. Putting together an outline helps you identify holes in your argument. Notice that in the very basic sample outline to the right, Reason 3 (“Teachers would like it too”) and its supporting evidence are a bit weak. These weaknesses reveal areas that you need to research or give more thought. In some cases, you will realize that your claim or reasons need to be revised. An outline allows you to work through issues ahead of time instead of running into them when you draft the paper, which can lead to big organizational problems or even the grim realization that your argument is a dead end. Students often want to jump right into drafting, but an outline is a key step that should not be skipped.

Many students find that graphic organizers are a useful way to visualize their essays. See page 26 for a suggested example.

**Sample Outline:**

Thesis: The school day should start an hour later.

Reason 1: It would match teenagers’ natural schedules
   Supporting Evidence: Sleep studies, brain research

Reason 2: It would cut down on tardiness and other class disruptions
   Supporting Evidence: More time to get to school (also after rush hour), students more awake and focused

Reason 3: Teachers would like it too
   Supporting Evidence: Teachers could get more work done in the morning
Writing a Thesis Statement

As you are starting to write an essay, do not spend too much time agonizing over a perfectly crafted thesis. Feel free to write a preliminary thesis that states what you think you are going to argue. Once you are further along in your essay, you can go back and edit the preliminary thesis to create a precise thesis statement that aligns with your reasons and that meets the requirements of the checklist below.

A thesis statement pronounces a specific and significant main idea (or claim) about your topic. You will proceed to validate this idea in the body paragraphs of your paper. Your thesis should be stated in a sentence or two. It must be debatable; it cannot be a fact. It should also be limited in scope to fit the assignment, but not so limited that you leave yourself with little to say. Everything you write in your paper should support your thesis and consequently relate back to it. Your job as a writer is to prove your thesis is viable. Use the following checklist to make sure you have a good thesis.

Thesis Statement Checklist:

1. Your thesis is debatable, rather than a statement of fact. It would be too easy to argue something with which no one disagrees (e.g. cobras are dangerous). Your claim should be a challenge to develop and prove.

   **Bad thesis** (statement of fact): World War I was a major conflict that lasted from 1914 to 1918.
   **Better thesis** (open for debate): The brutal new weapons, dehumanizing trench warfare, and unprecedented casualties of World War I constitute a major break in military history and begin the era of modern war.

2. Your thesis also needs to be limited to fit the assignment. You cannot discuss all of Shakespeare’s tragedies in a three-page essay. You cannot explore all of the causes of the Civil War in ten. Think of your thesis as a microscope, focusing in on a manageable portion of what is often a much larger debate, problem, or topic.

   **Bad thesis** (too broad): Technology is bad for society.
   **Better thesis** (appropriate for a three- to four-page paper): Although modern technology has been developed to help people connect with each other, it often leads to isolation.

3. Your thesis should be properly qualified. Be careful not to overstate your claim. For example, if you are discussing the rising popularity of the NFL and the NBA, you do not want to claim, “Nobody watches Major League Baseball anymore, and everyone is watching professional football and basketball.” Plenty of people still watch MLB, and plenty of people care little about the NFL and the NBA. Your thesis should admit its own limits. It is usually better to use qualifiers like *many*, *some*, *often*, and *frequently*, rather than over-reaching absolutes like *all*, *every*, *never*, and *always*.

   **Bad thesis** (overstated—what about poverty, war, etc.?): Internet addiction is the problem that most threatens the world.
   **Better thesis** (properly qualified): Internet addiction is a serious problem that deserves greater attention.

**Note:** If you are stuck with a broad thesis that is not debatable, try posing a question about your topic. For instance, in the first pair of examples above, you might take your statement of fact and ask a specific question about it, such as, “What factors made World War I unique among major conflicts in history?” The answer to that question leads to a better thesis.
Writing an Introduction

Generally speaking, the introduction should identify the topic of your paper, establish the point you will make about that topic (thesis), arouse the curiosity of your readers, and set the tone of your essay.

The first sentence or two should broadly introduce the paper’s topic and grab the audience’s attention. Remember, you only have one chance to make a first impression while you also establish your topic and your voice. You can successfully accomplish all of these by relaying an anecdote, creating an image, proposing a scenario, revealing a startling statistic, or sharing a fascinating fact. Use language to your advantage—employ a poetic or literary device to help draw the reader’s attention, but be original. Do not open your paper with a cliché, definition, famous quotation, or a question—these rely heavily on someone else’s voice and ideas (definition or quotation) or create uncertainty (question). Remember to use citations as needed when you share any information that is not original to you.

In the sample introduction below, notice the order of information as it is presented:

- The topic of the woods is mentioned immediately in the first lines with a scenario, some alliteration, and then a contrasting image, the fun woods are contrasted to the dangerous woods in order to introduce an idea and capture the reader’s interest.
- Next, the specific story the essay will focus upon is named. (Always include the properly formatted title and author of any literary work that is the focus of your paper near the beginning of your introduction.)
- The introduction then moves on to make a connection between the broad topic of the first lines to some (but not too much) background from the story that will relate to the thesis. (Be careful not to write a plot summary in your introduction.)
- Finally that background transitions into the thesis.
- The thesis is stated in two sentences following the guidelines on page 3.

Sample Introduction:

Those seeking recreation, relaxation, and adventure often head for the woods. Think hiking, camping, and hunting. Those same woods, though, can also harbor danger and instill fear. Think bears, coyotes, and mountain lions. In Saki’s short story “The Interlopers,” Ulrich von Gradwitz goes hunting for his sworn enemy, Georg Znaeym, in the woods late one night to settle their long standing feud over a steep piece of forest “that was not remarkable for the game it harbored or the shooting it afforded…” (304). As hoped, von Gradwitz eventually comes face to face with his rival. Although they hate each other and would just as soon see each other dead, the men find themselves together confronting the perils that lurk in the deep, dark woods. Setting plays a pivotal role in Saki’s story, first as the source of conflict between the two neighbors but then as the conflict the two men must face together. Saki portrays the forest as “truly primeval… a place of survival of the fittest” (Korb 159) which leaves the reader, at the end of the story, to wonder at both man’s folly and the power of nature.

Note #1: Using quotations from the text of the story and outside sources in the introduction is acceptable. Doing so helps corroborate where you are going with your essay and leads the reader to think about why you are going there. The first quotation in the sample introduction reveals that these men are willing to kill each other over a worthless stretch of forest. The second hints as to the outcome of their hunt and the importance of that outcome.

Note #2: As you become a more practiced writer, your introductions may not necessarily follow this same pattern; introductions can take many forms. They will evolve, becoming longer and more sophisticated. Remember, your teacher may want you to use a different pattern from this one. Always follow your teacher’s instruction; however, this is a dependable pattern. When in doubt, use it.
Writing Body Paragraphs

The body paragraphs support and prove the thesis of the paper. They are the “meat” of your essay and support your thesis by including evidence. Think of each body paragraph as a miniature essay having its own beginning, middle, and end. Always begin a main body paragraph with a topic sentence and support the topic sentence with evidence and analysis.

Developing Body Paragraphs

The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph, just as the thesis statement states the controlling idea of the entire essay or research paper. In a persuasive essay, the topic sentence should contain a clear reason in support of your thesis. Think of each reason as a supporting point or “mini-thesis”; each reason should make a claim and be debatable, limited, and properly qualified.

The evidence and analysis in the body paragraph need to support the topic sentence. While a body paragraph has no prescribed length, it should be long enough to offer adequate evidence to support the topic sentence and to analyze that evidence, explaining its importance and relevance. As a general rule, each body paragraph in a literary analysis essay or research paper should include at least one quotation from an outside source (if you are writing a paper for English class, you will prove your thesis by including apt quotations from the essay, book, poem, or play that you are discussing).

When in doubt, follow the RCHS Body Paragraph Template:

| Topic Sentence including Reason (Point/Claim) | Introduces the main topic of the paragraph and makes the argument; states the focus of the topic. |
| Example | Provides descriptive example or evidence to back up the argument. |
| Quotation | Provides text support to further validate reason. (optional depending on the topic/assignment) |
| Elaboration | Expands on the examples and/or explains how the quote supports the reason. |
| Analysis | Illustrates the importance of the argument; develops the idea more fully or universally. |
| Conclusion | Ends the paragraph smoothly and creates a sense of completion, or transitions into the next paragraph or idea. |

Sample Body Paragraph (follows Sample Introduction):

Because they are so focused on each other, neither von Gradwitz nor Znaeym considers the possible consequences of making a foray into the forest on a cold winter night that Saki describes as “wild” and “wind scourged” (305). Saki furthers his ominous setting by creating an image of “unrest and movement” among the wildlife that are “running like driven things” (305). Finally, he depicts the landscape where the two men come upon each other as “far down the steep slopes amid the wild tangle of undergrowth” (305). The season, weather, and location are all inhospitable. The reader knows it and senses imminent danger. Any prudent person would be home, snug in bed, on such a tempestuous evening, but von Gradwitz, filled with loathing, is determined to find Znaeym, who, he is sure, is poaching on the disputed land. Znaeym, eager to get the best of his neighbor-enemy, is, in fact, hunting in the forest. Their mortal hatred of each other, which has been festering since they were young boys, drives each into the forest this night. When they do meet, “each had a rifle in his hand, each had hate in his heart and murder uppermost in his mind” (305). Their murderous obsession makes both oblivious to their surroundings; consequently they have absolutely no clue that they are about to fall prey to a much larger, more powerful force.
Notes:

- The first sentence introduces the topic, the setting of the story, which is not only where the story takes place but also the source of conflict for the characters.
- To stress its importance, the setting is described and elaborated upon with evidence from the text.
- Next, the paragraph analyzes the setting by explaining the mood/sense of danger that the quotations depict, by reminding the reader that this setting is also the source of conflict between the two characters, and by setting up a clear contrast between the men and their surroundings.
- Now, the reader understands or at least senses the importance of the setting to the story. This understanding is furthered with the additional details that focus on character, such as how long the men have hated each other and how much each wishes the other dead. Although these points are not setting specific, they support the focus of the paragraph without drifting off topic.
- Finally, the paragraph leads the reader to what will come next, how the men’s conflict transitions from a man versus man conflict into a man versus nature conflict and the significance of that change.
- Overall, the paragraph aligns with the thesis. It proclaims the setting as dangerous while describing the character of the men. It sets the reader up for the next two paragraphs, one which will explicitly show why the men are fools for pursuing each other in the “primeval” forest while ignoring their environs and the other which will illustrate who is the “fittest.”

Organizing Body Paragraphs

Body paragraphs need to build on each other and reach a culmination in the last body paragraph. Think about your main ideas and consider how to make them flow. You have learned how to use chronological order and spatial order to organize narrative and descriptive essays, but literary analysis and persuasive essays are not always so simple. One or more of the following principles of organization can help you order your paragraphs in a logical manner.

**Chronological Order:** Although literary analysis and persuasive essays rarely rely on straightforward chronological order, it is helpful to keep this method of organization in mind as you are writing. In a literary analysis essay, it often helps to present your main points in the order they appear in the text. In a persuasive essay, you may need to relay information about your topic’s development over time.

**Problem-Solution or Cause-Effect:** If you are explaining a problem and proposing a solution, make sure you do so in that order. Do not propose a solution and then backtrack to explain the problem it solves. Similarly, if you are writing about a cause and effect, organize your paragraphs to show the cause first and then the effect (and possible solutions).

**Logical Progression:** Sometimes an understanding of one main point will help your reader better understand a second main point. Order these points accordingly.

**Ascending Importance:** Leading with your less important (or less serious) reasons and ending with your most pressing reason is often best. For example, if you were arguing that energy drinks are dangerous to teenagers and should be more heavily regulated, you would probably want to save the reason “In extreme cases, overuse of energy drinks can lead to death” for the very end. This allows you to build your argument gradually and leave your reader with your strongest, most memorable point.

Choosing Strong Evidence

In literary analysis and research essays, strong evidence consists of accurate, appropriate, and ample examples from the text and/or outside sources that support your reasons. Your evidence is accurate if you have used it in the context the author intended—any quotes or evidence taken out of context will not support your reason. Your evidence is appropriate if it aligns with your reason. While it may be accurate, your evidence is ineffective if it does not directly align with your reason. For example, if you are analyzing a character, then your evidence should also be about that character and support whatever point you are making about that character. Your evidence is ample if it thoroughly satisfies any doubt the reader may have. For example, in the sample body paragraph
above, the writer uses **accurate, appropriate, and ample** quotations to support the idea that the cold winter night of the story is an ominous setting that the characters should acknowledge (but do not).

### Evaluating Sources

In a research paper or a literary analysis essay that incorporates secondary sources, you will want to make sure your evidence comes from **reliable sources**. Use the basic checklist below to guide your research, or see your teacher for more extensive criteria. Even after you use this checklist, your teacher may direct you to specific websites to use or avoid.

#### Reliable Source Checklist:

1. **Date of Publication or Last Update** – Notice when your source was published or last updated. You want to make sure you are using the most up-to-date information, especially when writing about a current topic.

2. **Author/Publisher Credibility** – Make sure the author or publisher of your source is a reliable authority on your topic. If an author is listed, look up his or her credentials. Do not just look for “smart people”—make sure an author has expertise in the topic you are researching. For example, an author with a Ph.D. in psychology might inspire confidence, but do you really want to cite him in your paper on nuclear power? Evaluate publishers in the same way. An article published in a peer-reviewed journal will be more reliable than an article on About.com. Even though many websites have strong name recognition (everyone has heard of Wikipedia), that does not necessarily guarantee reliability.

3. **Purpose and Bias** – While you are evaluating the author and publisher of a source, try to identify the purpose for writing and any potential bias in the piece. Look closely at the language the writer is using. Is the piece filled with persuasive rhetoric and loaded words or is it written in objective, academic prose? Consider whether there is a sponsoring organization with a political agenda or whether the source is simply trying to impart educational information.

4. **Citations and Agreement with Other Sources** – Try to find sources that cite their sources. In both print and online articles, look for a bibliography or Works Cited listing at the end. Online sources may also use hyperlinks to direct you to additional information or sources that were consulted in writing an article. In addition to citing references, make sure your sources agree with other sources. You do not want to base your argument on a key piece of information from one source only to find that it is incorrect. If a fact is reliable and true, you should be able to find it in more than one place.

### Incorporating Quotations

Strong writers do not simply “drop” quotations into their essays. Instead, they incorporate them into their own prose. Quotations should never stand alone in a sentence; they should be integrated into your words. Use the following patterns to incorporate quotations in your essays:

**Colon:** If a quotation is supporting an assertion you made in the preceding sentence, you may simply join it to that sentence using a colon.

Examples:

At the beginning of the novel, Jack supports the creation of an orderly, civilized society on the island: “I agree with Ralph. We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything” (Golding 42).

Daisy marries Tom because she wants her life to have a definite direction right away, and she is not powerful enough to give it that direction herself: “She wanted her life shaped now, immediately—and the decision must be made by some force” (Fitzgerald 159).

**Introductory Phrase:** Use an introductory phrase to tie a quotation to your argument.
Examples:

Jack tells the boys, “I agree with Ralph. We've got to have rules and obey them. After all, we're not savages. We're English, and the English are best at everything” (Golding 42).

According to Fitzgerald, Daisy “wanted her life shaped now, immediately—and the decision must be made by some force” (159).

**Full Integration:** Incorporate shorter pieces of quoted material into your own sentence structure.

Examples:

Although Jack first asserts that the boys “[have] got to have rules and obey them” and are “not savages” (Golding 41), he quickly abandons this position as he morphs into a bloodthirsty hunter.

Daisy marries Tom because “[s]he wanted her life shaped now, immediately”; she is not strong enough to shape it herself, so “the decision must be made by some force” (Fitzgerald 159).

**Acknowledging Counterclaims**

The best writers always try to address counterarguments, alternate interpretations, and problems in their reasoning. When writing, they are constantly thinking about questions a skeptical reader might have and wrestling with counterarguments. This shapes their prose from beginning to end. They are less likely to overstate a claim or assertion (Nobody watches baseball anymore.) because they know a skeptical reader will call them out on it. They are more likely to thoroughly explain why their evidence does indeed support their reasons because they are thinking of other ways in which the same evidence could be interpreted. In this way, acknowledging and responding to counterclaims is a mindset, a constant dialogue with that hypothetical devil’s advocate reader. It requires sophisticated thinking because you have to be able to recognize both the strengths and weaknesses of your argument.

Acknowledging and responding to counterclaims is a mindset, but it is also something you can point to on the page, just like a thesis, reason, or piece of evidence. Often, it will be a phrase or a sentence in one of your body paragraphs (It costs a lot of money [acknowledgment], but buying you a car will save your parents money in the end because you can get a job [response]). Other times, you will take a whole body paragraph or more to tackle an important counterargument (whether or not you are responsible enough to take care of a car).

Whatever you do, **make sure to end each paragraph with a return to your own argument.** Do not simply make the counterargument for your devil’s advocate reader. State the counterargument and respond to it, convincing the reader that your argument is still valid.

**Note:** In literary analysis essays, you will not necessarily address counterclaims. While you are taking a position (Setting plays a pivotal role in Saki’s short story “The Interlopers.”), you are not necessarily trying to change your reader’s opinion. Instead, you are trying to broaden your reader’s understanding and appreciation of the text you are writing about. Consequently, you will defend your thesis by showing a deep understanding of the text and by thoroughly explaining and analyzing all of your evidence, leaving no room for doubt that it supports your reasons.
Writing the Conclusion

The conclusion is your final opportunity to convince the audience that your point of view is valid. It should be the climax of your essay, showing the audience the significance of your work and giving them a launching point from which they can consider its broader implications. The conclusion should point the reader to the “so what?” of your essay.

Your writing must remain strong in your conclusion, so don’t just let your ideas fizzle out. Be careful not to introduce any new topics or major ideas either. Instead, show your readers that your work has universal value by being able to apply what they have learned from your essay to other subjects, novels, history, or even contemporary life. The conclusion should bring your paper full circle, leaving the reader satisfied and thoughtful.

Steps in Writing a Conclusion

1. Begin with a good transition to hook the final paragraph to the previous body paragraph. In doing so, avoid trite phrases such as “In conclusion” or “In this paper it has been proven…”
2. Go back to your introduction and link the ideas presented there to the ideas in your conclusion, creating a full circle of your essay. This means to expand upon, not repeat, the ideas you introduced in your first paragraph. (Note: Make sure you have not stated your thesis for the first time in your conclusion. If you have, move it to your introduction.)
3. Finalize for your reader the significance of your thesis—make sure you address the question, “So what?” You want to leave a lasting impression. Depending on your topic/thesis, you might want to suggest a course of action or illustrate a universal or broader application for your ideas. Keep your readers thinking long after you have finished writing.
4. Avoid introducing new major ideas, repeating or summarizing what you have already said (even if you reword it), and moralizing (don’t tell people how to act or behave).
5. In a long essay, you may need to summarize the major points that you made in the body paragraphs. An essay three pages or fewer does not typically require this step.

Sample Conclusion (follows Sample Body Paragraph):

Because Von Gradwitz and Znaeym have lost their power of logical reasoning to greed and hatred when they decide to hunt each other down in the dark of night, nature takes this three generations’ feud into her own hands. By depicting the forest as menacing and powerful, Saki reminds readers that nature—which both men have overlooked—is each man’s most formidable nemesis. He furthers this point by creating a wicked twist of fate. When pinned under the felled beech tree, the men actually take the opportunity to resolve their perceived differences and, therefore “harness the better part of their human nature” by “embrac[ing] their human ability to reason and to forgive” (Korb 158). Sadly, though, nature does not provide them with the happy ending they (or readers) envision. Instead, she further proves her might and command by sending in the wolves. With this ending, Saki emphasizes the power of nature while at the same time revealing where petty greed and hate can lead. For Von Gradwitz and Znaeym, resolution comes too late. Although the neighbors do replace their rancor with alliance, doing so does them no good. Von Gradwitz and Znaeym go into the forest “in their attempts to assert their ownership of it” (“The Interlopers” 153), but nature triumphs when the men, the true interlopers, are eaten by wolves.

Note: By asserting the image of the menacing and powerful forest, the conclusion links back to the introduction. Then, it explains the significance of this image and the role of the forest in the story, expanding on the ideas from the introduction: man’s folly—he can be greedy and hateful, even over something worthless, and those traits can lead to dire consequences—and the power of nature—while man can try and impose his dominion over nature, in the end, nature rules. Again, quotations are used to strengthen the writing.
When you are writing an essay, you must be careful to give credit to any outside sources you quote, paraphrase, or consult for ideas. If you do not do this properly, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism is taking words, knowledge, or ideas that are not yours and presenting them as your own. There are two kinds of plagiarism: **Intentional and Unintentional**. Both types of plagiarism will result in a zero on the assignment and a disciplinary referral.

<table>
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<th>Intentional Plagiarism</th>
<th>is plagiarism done deliberately with intent to deceive. Examples include the following:</th>
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<td>• Buying a paper off the internet</td>
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<td>• Having a friend write your paper</td>
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<td>• Using a paper written by a previous student</td>
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<td>• Recycling a paper you wrote for another class</td>
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<td>• Copying/Pasting information or direct quotes without citing them</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Taking your ideas from a source without giving it credit</td>
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<th>Unintentional Plagiarism</th>
<th>is plagiarism done accidentally, through carelessness or oversight, without a malicious intent to deceive. <strong>Note: This still counts as plagiarism!</strong> Examples include the following:</th>
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<td>• Paraphrasing improperly</td>
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<td>• Forgetting to properly cite information or ideas you got from another place</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reading about a subject to get ideas before you start thinking about your own ideas, then incorporating these ideas into your argument without citing them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How to Avoid Unintentional Plagiarism**

1. **Paraphrase Properly.** “Paraphrase” means to convey the information or ideas of others using your own words, voice, and style. It does *not* mean to replace every word with a synonym. It *does* mean to think about the idea and incorporate it into your own writing. Note: **You still must cite your source!**

   For example, think about how you might paraphrase this sentence from a critical essay:

   “The play presents more than one version of love, and the writer must be aware of this multiplicity. As you approach the romantic elements of this play, do not be seduced by custom into believing that *Romeo and Juliet* offers a unified, unqualified vision of love as bright and good.”


   The *wrong* way to “paraphrase” is to replace each word with a synonym. Even though this example is properly cited, it is still plagiarism:

   *Romeo and Juliet* offers more than a single type of love, and the author has to be conscious of this profusion. As you look at the romantic parts of the play, do not be tricked by convention into thinking that it provides a single picture of love as happy and positive (Gleed 5).

   The *correct* way to paraphrase is to convey the author’s idea using your own words, voice, and style (still properly citing the source!):

   According to Gleed, *Romeo and Juliet* reveals both the positive and negative aspects of love (5).

2. **Put Direct Quotations in Quotation Marks.**

---

² This section is indebted to Judith Davis’s presentation “Beating Plagiarism in an Electronic Age.”
Any words or phrases that are directly taken from your source must be put in quotation marks. The author’s last name and the page number must appear beside the quote in parenthesis. If either the author’s last name or the page number appears within the introductory elements, you do not have to include it in the parenthetical citation (see below).

Examples:

*Romeo and Juliet* “presents more than one version of love, and the writer must be aware of this multiplicity” (Gleed 5).

According to Gleed, *Romeo and Juliet* “presents more than one version of love, and the writer must be aware of this multiplicity” (5).

3. Cite Direct Quotations and Paraphrases Properly.
   Every source you use will be cited at least twice (or more if you use more than one quotation or piece of information from it):
   
a. **In the text of your paper**, when you are quoting/paraphrasing the information from your source
   
i. You must note every time you use someone else’s ideas or information, whether or not you use their exact words.
   
   ii. You must always include both the author’s last name and the **page or paragraph number** of the information in this format: (Author #).

b. **In your Works Cited page**, when you are giving the full citation in MLA format (see page 12 for more information on creating a Works Cited page)

4. Do not use outside sources “just to get an idea” without permission and proper citation.
   When you get an assignment, browsing for ideas online can turn into plagiarizing if you aren’t careful. Follow the steps outlined in the planning section (2) to come up with your own ideas based on the text and your own notes. If your teacher gives you permission to look up your topic online, you must give credit to your sources for any ideas you include in your paper. Any idea in your paper that you do not cite must be something you thought of by yourself.

Do not do this:

Matched and contrasting pairs form the apparatus through which the book’s thematic conflicts play out, as the differences between opposed characters and themes force their way and development. Some of the pairs include: the two manor houses, Wuthering Heights and Thrushcross Grange; the two loves in Catherine’s life, Heathcliff and Edgar; the two Catherines in the novel, mother and daughter; the two halves of the novel, separated by Catherine’s death; the two generations of main characters… (SparkNotes)
Creating a Works Cited Page

Once you have completed your paper, you will compile an alphabetized list of all the sources you cited in your paper. This section will be titled “Works Cited” and should be located on its own page at the end of your paper.

Here are some important rules to follow when completing the Works Cited section of your paper. These rules apply to ALL of your classes, not just English.

• Begin your Works Cited on a new page.
• If you are creating a separate document from your essay, put your last name and page number in the upper right hand header, continuing your page numbers from your essay.
• Continue to use 1” margins top, bottom, left, and right.
• Continue to use Times New Roman 12 point font for the entire document.
• Use **Works Cited** as the title, centered on the top of the page. Capitalize the W and the C. Do not bold, italicize, or underline these words.
• **Double-space** the entire document.
• Begin each new entry at the left margin. All the following lines of the same entry are **indented** five spaces (hit the “Tab” key once) from the left margin.
• Do not number or bullet entries.
• **Alphabetize** entries using the **first** word of the entry, but not *A, An,* or *The.*
• Use the author’s last name to alphabetize. If the author’s name is unknown, use the first word in the title, but again, not *A, An,* or *The.*
• Format titles correctly and punctuate after each section of the entry as required.
• See sample entries below to guide you.

**Note:** Several sources are available online that claim to format your Works Cited entries correctly once you put in all the requested information. One such example is *EasyBib.* Be advised that these websites are not always accurate; therefore, using them may cause you to lose points unnecessarily on your paper. Please consider learning basic MLA format, doing your own work, and asking your teacher or librarian for help if you need it. You may also consult the best source, the *MLA Handbook, 8th edition.*

**Sample Works Cited Page:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Last Name 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

3 This section and the following sections on citation and mechanics are indebted to the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th Edition,* and the *MLA Handbook, 8th Edition.*
# Formatting Works Cited Entries

## Works Cited Entry Template

When citing any source, begin by going through the following template and filling in each part that applies to your source. A good source should, at a minimum, provide an author, title, and publication date (and usually a publisher as well). Don’t stop there, though. If your source provides more information, you must include it all!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Information:</th>
<th>Notes:</th>
<th>Example:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Author.</td>
<td>Begin with the author’s last name, followed by a comma and the rest of the name.</td>
<td>Hughes, Langston.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Title of source.</td>
<td>Italicize the title of a source that is self-contained (for example, a book or a collection of essays); put quotation marks around the title of a source that is part of a larger whole (for example, a short story in an anthology or a newspaper article).</td>
<td>“Salvation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Title of container,</td>
<td>If your source is part of a larger whole, identify the larger whole that contains it (its “container”). <strong>Note:</strong> A work may be nested in more than one container (for example, you may find a short story in an anthology posted on a website). If this is the case, repeat items 3-9 for each container.</td>
<td>Fifty Great Essays,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Other contributors,</td>
<td>If your source is translated or edited, credit those contributors here.</td>
<td>edited by Robert Diyanni,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Version,</td>
<td>If your source contains a notation that it is a revised version, often called “editions” for books, include it here.</td>
<td>4th ed.,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Number,</td>
<td>If your source has a specific volume or issue number (or both), include it here. Season and episode numbers for TV shows also go here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Publisher,</td>
<td>Include the main publisher of your source. See notes on locating and formatting publisher names on pages 14 and 16.</td>
<td>Pearson Education,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Publication date,</td>
<td>If your source provides more than one publication date (books often do), cite the most recent one.</td>
<td>2011,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Location.</td>
<td>If you are citing a range of pages in a book, include the page numbers here. If you are citing a website, include the URL or permalink here.</td>
<td>pp. 169-71.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EXAMPLE FROM ABOVE, FORMATTED FOR A WORKS CITED PAGE:**

EXAMPLE OF A WORK WITH TWO CONTAINERS:
Often, your source will be nestled in more than one container. For example, you may cite an article from a journal (container one) that you accessed through a database (container two). As noted above, simply cite the source and its first container, then repeat sections 3-9 for the second container.


*Note:* In the example above, the source (“Education and the Art of Minibike Maintenance”) is nestled in the *Wall Street Journal* (container one) and the *SIRS Issues Researcher* database (container two).

EXAMPLES OF WORKS WITH NO CONTAINER:
Stand-alone sources, such as a novel, do not have containers, but you need to include as much information as you can find for sections 4-9 in the template.

Walls, Jeannette. *(author, followed by a period)* *Half Broke Horses: A True-Life Novel*. *(title in italics, followed by a period)* Scribner, *(publisher, followed by a comma)* 2009. *(publishing date, followed by a period)*

*O: A Presidential Novel.* *(This book has no author, so start with the title, followed by a period)* Simon & Schuster, *(publisher, followed by a comma)* 2011. *(publishing date, followed by a period)*

**Works Cited Entry Examples – Print Sources**

Print sources vary and include novels; encyclopedias, dictionaries, multi-volume scholarly works, and other reference materials; anthologies (like English textbooks); magazines; newspapers; periodicals; academic journals; etc. Many of these will require many pieces of information in the Works Cited entry, so make sure to use your template to guide you.

*Note #1:* If the publisher is a University Press, abbreviate each “University” and “Press” by first letter. Ex. University of Virginia Press = U of Virginia P; Oxford University Press = Oxford UP

*Note #2:* Differentiate among publishing company, division, and imprint—Some publishing companies have divisions and/or imprints under which they publish their books.

*Example #1* - Vintage International is an *imprint* of Vintage Books which is a *division* of Random House, Inc., the parent company. In this case, use the division, Vintage Books, in your Works Cited. If the book has both an imprint and a parent company, use the parent company. If the book has a division and a parent company, use the division.

*Note #3:* Use the publisher’s (or division’s) full name; however, you may leave off *Inc., Company*, etc.

*Note #4:* When showing the page or page range of a cited source, use *p.* for a single page, and *pp.* for a page range.

**ONE AUTHOR and TWO BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR:**


Note: for two books by the same author, list the full name of the author, last name first, in the first entry. In the second entry, use three hyphens followed by a period (---.) to indicate this entry is by the same author. Alphabetize by last name but for two or more books by the same author, alphabetize by title within those entries.

A BOOK WITH TWO AUTHORS:

A BOOK WITH THREE OR MORE AUTHORS:

A BOOK WITH AN AUTHOR AND AN EDITOR:

A BOOK WITH A TRANSLATOR:

EDITED OR CRITICAL EDITIONS:

Note: If you are using primarily the editor’s notes, criticism, commentary, etc., then the editor should be listed first.


SINGLE WORK FROM AN ANTHOLOGY:

ARTICLE IN A MULTI-VOLUME REFERENCE WORK:


AN INTRODUCTION, PREFACE, FORWARD, OR AFTERWARD

SACRED TEXT:

A GOVERNMENT PUBLICATION:
Works Cited Entry Examples - Web Sources

Note #1: URLs are required. However, some web sources also offer permalinks, which is a URL that will never change. If a permalink is available, use it. Permalinks can be found on the article’s “share” icon.

The example below under “Article from an On-line Newspaper” uses a permalink (nyti.ms/1KWf9fm) instead of the URL (www.nytimes.com/2015/08/09/opinion/sunday/at-sea-with-joseph-conrad.html?_r=0).

Note #2: Do not include http:// or https:// in your URL.

Note #3: All months are abbreviated by their first three letters followed by a period except for September (Sept.) and May, June, and July (spelled out).

Note #4: Dates are always written as day, month, and year with NO punctuation separating them except the period after the month abbreviation. Ex: 5 Apr. 2016.

Note #5: Publishers need not be included for the following web sources: newspapers, magazines, or other periodicals; any work published by its author or editor, any website whose title is essentially the same as its publisher, or any website that does not also produce the content it carries (for example, YouTube).

Note #6: Many Databases will have “How to Cite” instructions at the end of the article, offering a choice of MLA or APA style. While these citations are sometimes correct, they are not always correct. Do not just copy and paste them into your Works Cited page. Be sure the information is correct and follows the correct format.

EXAMPLES:

ARTICLE FROM AN ONLINE NEWSPAPER:


ARTICLE FROM A DATABASE:


ENTRY FROM AN ONLINE ENCYCLOPEDIA:


ONLINE EDITORIAL CARTOON:

Parenthetical Documentation (In-Text Citations)

In your paper, every time you use a quotation, paraphrase, summary, or piece of information from an outside source, you need to include a parenthetical in-text citation beside it.

1. Usually you will need only the author’s last name followed by a space (no mark of punctuation) and the page number. If your citation appears at the end of the sentence, place a period outside the parenthesis:

   Example: It is clear that “Hamlet is caught tragically between the Christian and the classical world” (Cantor 63).

2. If you cite the author’s name in your text, however, omit it in the parenthetical documentation and put only the page number:

   Example: Cantor suggests that “Hamlet is caught tragically between the Christian and classical world” (37).

3. To document a book with two authors, include both names: (Fiedler and Nohrnberg 43-49).

4. To document a long (over four lines) block quotation, continue to double space as you have been. Place a colon at the end of your own words then begin your quoted text on the next line, indented as if for a paragraph. Indent all of the lines of the quotation in this way. End the quote with the punctuation in the quoted text and then follow that punctuation with your citation. Do not use quotation marks and do not put any punctuation after your citation.

   Example Block Quotation:

   Coats of Arms quickly began slipping into the social marketplace. They were bought and sold in the highest levels of society as bread and butter were in the lower-class world. During this period the duties and expectations of the gentry turned away from the traditional military virtues of previous eras:

   The title of knight originally involved military obligations, and even in the sixteenth century it preserved some vestiges of its ancient function in that it was often given under royal commission by military commanders in the field. But now, however, this aspect was falling into the background, and in 1583 Sir Thomas Smith could observe that knights were usually made according to the yearly revenue of their lands. (Stone 39)

5. Cite all relevant page numbers if you are paraphrasing or quoting from different parts of a work: (Maclean 34-39, 79-89).

6. If the documented source appears on the Works Cited page by title rather than by author, use the whole title (properly formatted) if it is brief or an abbreviation of it if it is long: (“Running” 28).

7. For two or more works by the same author, you will need to inform your reader which work you are citing. Include the author’s last name, a comma, the whole or an abbreviated title (properly formatted), a space, and a page number: (Hemingway, A Farewell 234). If you have already mentioned the author’s name or the title within in the context of your sentence, you can omit it in the citation.

8. For works by two or more authors with the same last name, include both the first initial and last name with the page number: (B. Smith 27).

9. To cite epics, classic plays, and poems, do not provide page numbers. Instead, give act, scene, and line numbers separated by periods. For instance, in an essay about Romeo and Juliet wherein you have quoted lines 30-37 from act 5, scene 3, follow the quote with the act, scene, and line numbers: (5.3.30-37).
Mechanics of Writing

Transitions

Much of an essay’s flow will depend on how well you have organized your ideas in an outline and other pre-writing activities. Nevertheless, using transitional devices within the essay is a key ingredient of reader-friendly prose.

Chose appropriate linking expressions to show relationships between ideas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similar Ideas:</th>
<th>Examples:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-likewise</td>
<td>-for instance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-moreover</td>
<td>-for example</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-in addition</td>
<td>-in fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-at the same time</td>
<td>-in other words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-further</td>
<td>-in a typical instance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-more particularly</td>
<td>-more specifically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-similarly</td>
<td>-namely</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paralleling Coordinators:</th>
<th>Argument For or Against:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-not only…but also</td>
<td>-incidentally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-either…or</td>
<td>-besides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-both…and</td>
<td>-after all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-neither…nor</td>
<td>-in fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-as well as</td>
<td>-otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-in any case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-certainly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-needless to say</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause and Effect:</th>
<th>Showing Sequential Order:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-consequently</td>
<td>-at first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-accordingly</td>
<td>-next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-subsequently</td>
<td>-at last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-therefore</td>
<td>-meanwhile</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-thus</td>
<td>-soon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-hence</td>
<td>-simultaneously</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-because</td>
<td>-shortly thereafter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-by this time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-so far</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-finally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-first, second, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regardless:</th>
<th>Opposite Ideas:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-nevertheless</td>
<td>-on the other hand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-however</td>
<td>-on the contrary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-in spite of</td>
<td>-instead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-nonetheless</td>
<td>-despite this fact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-despite</td>
<td>-by contrast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanations:</th>
<th>-in effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-in other words</td>
<td>-in other words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-under the circumstances</td>
<td>-under the circumstances</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Punctuation

Use punctuation in writing to ensure clarity and readability. Punctuation clarifies sentence structure. Good punctuation will add meaning to written words and guide your reader through a sentence. When writing an essay, follow the rules of punctuation—there is no poetic license in formal writing. Here is a quick reference guide to punctuation.

Commas

1. Use commas before coordinating conjunctions (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) joining **independent clauses** in a sentence.

   Mr. Baker assigned an essay, so the class went to the computer lab.
   The epic poem is heroic, for it tells the stories of great warriors.
   The juniors had their class meeting yesterday, and we have ours today.

2. Use commas to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series.

   **WORDS**
   The cafeteria is serving pizza, corn on the cob, and fruit.
   **CLauses**
   On Halloween, students dress up in costumes, teachers hand out candy, and the NHS runs an excellent trick-or-treat fair.

3. Use a comma between coordinate adjectives—adjectives that separately modify the same noun.

   The teacher complimented the painting’s unaffected, unadorned style.  *(The adjectives unaffected and unadorned each modify style.)*

   Note: See if you can add “and” between the adjectives. If you can, you need a comma.

4. Use commas to set off a parenthetical comment, or an aside, if it is brief and closely related to the rest of the sentence.

   Homer’s *Iliad*, for example, was likely performed orally before it was written.

   The drama production, I’m sorry to say, has been rescheduled.

5. Use commas to set off a nonrestrictive modifier.

   John Grisham, the best-selling novelist, spoke at a fundraiser for the presidential candidate.
6. Use commas to set off nonrestrictive clauses and phrases.

**Clauses that begin with who, whom, whose, which, and that**

**NONRESTRICTIVE**

The Italian sonnet, which is exemplified in Petrarch’s Canzoniere, developed into the English sonnet.

**RESTRICTIVE**

The sonnet that is exemplified in Petrarch’s Canzoniere developed into the English sonnet.

Note: *Which* is often used to introduce nonrestrictive clauses and *that* is often used to introduce restrictive clauses.

**Adverbial phrases and clauses**

**NONRESTRICTIVE**

The novel takes place in China, where many languages are spoken.

**RESTRICTIVE**

The novel takes place in a land where many languages are spoken.

**Use a comma after a long introductory phrase or clause**

**PHRASE**

After years of working as a traveling salesman, Gregor transforms into a giant cockroach.

**CLAUSE**

Although he was insignificant before the transformation, Gregor is literally a bug in an apartment after.

7. Use a comma in a date whose order is month, date, and year. If such a date comes in the middle of a sentence, include a comma after the year.

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on January 15, 1929, and died on April 4, 1968.

**Do not use commas with dates whose order is day, month, and year.**

Martin Luther King Jr. was born on 15 January 1929 and died on 4 April 1968.

**Do not use a comma between a month and a year or between a season and a year.**

The events of July 1789 are as familiar to the French as those of July 1776 are to Americans.
Semicolons

1. Use a semicolon between two closely related independent clauses not linked by a conjunction.

   Hemingway’s novel was published in 1937; it was an immediate success.

   Grand Theft Auto is an extremely violent video game; still, some critics claim that it is great work of art.

2. Use semicolons between items in a series when the items contain commas.

   My favorite Shakespeare plays are Richard III, a history; Othello, a tragedy; and A Midsummer Night’s Dream, a comedy.

Colons

The colon is used after an independent clause that creates a sense of anticipation about what follows in the remainder of the sentence.

1. Use a colon to introduce a list, an elaboration of what was just said, or a formal rule.

   LIST
   The reading list includes three epic poems: The Iliad, The Aeneid, and Paradise Lost.

   RULE
   The Olympic Committee has taken a clear stand on performance-enhancing drugs: No trace of any banned substance is allowed in an athlete’s body in or out of competition.

2. Use a colon to introduce a quotation that is independent from the structure of the main sentence.

   In his analysis of American literature, Fiedler argues that darkness lurks in the undercurrents of popular American novels: “Our literature as a whole at times seems a chamber of horrors disguised as an amusement park fun house” (27).

Hyphens

1. Use a hyphen in a compound adjective beginning with an adverb such as better, best, ill, lower, little, or well when the adjective precedes a noun.

   better-prepared student
   best-known play
   ill-informed jury
   lower-priced ticket
*Do not use a hyphen in a compound adjective beginning with an adverb ending in –ly or with too, very, or much.

thoughtfully presented thesis
very contrived plot
too hasty judgment
much maligned performer

*Do not use a hyphen when the compound adjective comes after the noun it modifies.

The ambassador was better prepared than the other delegates.

2. Use a hyphen in a compound adjective ending with the present participle (e.g. running) or a past participle (e.g. baked) of a verb when the adjective precedes a noun.

    gold-winning ride
    ill-conceived plan
    love-filled letter

3. Use a hyphen in a compound adjective formed by a number and a noun when the adjective precedes a noun.

    eighteenth-century literature
    second-semester grade
    third-floor classroom

4. Use a hyphen in other compound adjectives before nouns to prevent misreading

    jogging-organization program  (The hyphen indicates that the term refers to a program of a jogging organization and not an organization program that is jogging.)

    Spanish-language student  (The hyphen makes it clear that the term refers to a student who is studying Spanish and not a language student who is Spanish.)

5. Do not use hyphens in familiar unhyphenated compound terms.

    social security tax
    high school reunion
    liberal arts major
    show business agent

6. Use a hyphen to join coequal nouns.

    scholar-athlete

7. But do not use a hyphen in a pair of nouns in which the first noun modifies the second.

    father figure
    poetry lover

8. In most cases, do not use hyphens after prefixes (e.g., anti-, co-, multi-, non-, over-, post-, re-, semi-, sub-, un-, under-)

    Semiretired, unambiguous, reinvigorate, etc.
Apostrophes

The primary function of the apostrophe is to indicate possession (Sara’s ball rolled into the street). They are also used to form a contraction (can’t, shouldn’t); however, contractions are not appropriate in a formal essay.

1. To form the possessive of a singular noun, add an apostrophe and an s.
   - the manager’s special
   - a teacher’s advice
   - the play’s cast

2. To form the possessive of a plural ending in s, add only an apostrophe.
   - students’ bikes
   - climbers’ ropes

3. To form a possessive of an irregular plural noun not ending in s, add an apostrophe and an s.
   - Children’s concert
   - Women’s studies

4. To form the possessive of nouns in a series, add a single apostrophe and an s if ownership is shared.
   - Peter, Paul, and Mary’s new album

5. If ownership is not shared, place an apostrophe and s after each noun.
   - Peter’s, Paul’s, and Mary’s cars

6. To form the possessive of singular proper nouns that already end in s, add an apostrophe and another s.
   - H.G. Wells’s novels

7. To form the possessive of plural proper nouns already ending in s, add only the apostrophe.
   - the Vanderbilts’ estate

8. To form the possessive of a classical or biblical figure’s name already ending in s, add only the apostrophe.
   - Achilles’ wrath
   - Jesus’ mercy
   - Aeneas’ sacrifice

Italics (Underlining)

1. Italics are used to indicate the titles of magazines, newspapers, books, pamphlets, plays, films, radio and television programs, book-length poems, ballets, operas, lengthy musical compositions, record albums, CDs, legal cases, and the names of ships and aircraft. Use italics when using a word processor and underline when writing by hand.

   Consumer Report (magazine)
   Kite Runner (book)
   Zoolander (movie)
   Romeo and Juliet (play)
   New York Times (newspaper)
2. Italics are used to indicate a foreign word that has not been adopted into the English language; they also denote scientific terms.

Dante’s *Inferno* is written in *terza rima*.

**Quotation Marks**

1. Quotation marks are used to punctuate titles of songs, poems, short stories, lectures, episodes of radio or television programs, chapters of books, unpublished works, and articles found in magazines, newspapers, or encyclopedias.

   “Imagine” (song)
   “Snows of Kilimanjaro” (short Story)
   “Pop Culture in the Age of Television” (lecture)
   “Ticket to the Top of the World” (magazine article)
   “The Novel and America” (chapter in book)
   “Wrath of Achilles” (book in epic)

2. Quotation marks are used to signal quoted or spoken material.

   Robert Frost writes, “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood.”

   “If you finish this novel,” she told him, “I’m sure we can find you another.”

   **Use single quotation marks to enclose quoted material within other quoted material:**

   “I think ‘The Road Less Traveled’ is a good poem,” observed the teacher, “but my favorite is ‘Design.’”

   Note: According to American conventions, periods and commas *always* go within quotation marks. Other punctuation is placed inside the quotation marks if it belongs with the quoted material or outside the quotation marks if it is part of the overall sentence.

**Parentheses**

Parentheses are used to enclose explanatory or supplementary material that interrupts the normal sentence structure.

Few high school sophomores (or even high school juniors) are as familiar with American literature as college freshmen are, so they may not have read any of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s short stories.
Writing the SOL End of Course Essay

The SOL End of Course Writing Test is a two-day test that contains two parts: multiple choice questions and an essay. The essay is a persuasive essay; it requires you to take a position on a topic and support that position with reasons and evidence. While you are not required to write five paragraphs, you should aim for a clear position supported by three reasons and detailed evidence. One of the easiest ways to tackle this is to write a short introduction, three paragraphs addressing one reason each, and a short conclusion.

Unpacking the Prompt

The first challenge in the SOL essay is to figure out exactly what you are being asked to do. Use the highlighter tool to mark key words and phrases, and then underline any specific verbs or questions that indicate your task. Finally, try to rewrite the question in your own words.

Example: Author Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment.” Do you agree or disagree with Emerson’s statement about individuality? Take a position on this issue. Support your response with reasons and specific examples.

In your own words: “Do I agree or disagree that to be yourself (have individuality) when the world is trying to change you is the greatest accomplishment?”

Notice that you do not need to know who Ralph Waldo Emerson is to unpack the prompt successfully. Do not be frightened by unfamiliar names; focus on what the prompt is asking you to do.

Planning the Essay

When you are writing the SOL essay, you will not have a specific text or set of notes to draw upon. Brainstorm insights and potential evidence by thinking of examples from your classes (characters or events in literature or history, milestones and achievements by important figures in any discipline) and from your personal experiences.

When you are trying to take a position on a topic for the SOL essay, write down potential evidence for both sides of the argument using a T-chart:

Example T-Chart for a prompt asking whether schools should require students to volunteer in their community as a requirement for graduation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Require students to volunteer</th>
<th>Do not require students to volunteer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-Teaches students to be active citizens (may not learn in school)</td>
<td>-Many students already have full schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-May introduce students to potential career fields</td>
<td>-Required “volunteering” is no longer voluntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Builds character</td>
<td>-Unwilling volunteers might bring more trouble than benefits to organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Allows students to work with adults</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25
Once you have chosen a side, you should create an outline showing your preliminary thesis (stating your position) and the reasons (supporting points) and evidence in support of it. You may create a written outline (see page 2) or use a graphic organizer, such as Four-Square or the sample outline format below:

**Sample Essay Outline**

**Thesis:**

**Reason 1:**

**Reason 2:**

**Reason 3:**

**Evidence:**

**Evidence:**

**Evidence:**
Writing the Thesis

A good thesis statement for an SOL essay meets the requirements on page 3: it must be debatable, limited, and properly qualified. Most importantly, though, it takes a position (picks a side). Because the SOL prompts have no single right answer, you will often feel like you can argue for either side of the argument. Still, you must choose one or the other. If you are stuck, use your T-Chart (page 25) to identify the side for which you have the best evidence.

While a simple statement of your position will get the job done, the thesis is often a good place to acknowledge the counterargument (another requirement of SOL essays). Beginning your thesis with the word “although” will allow you to do this in one sentence.

Example:

[Counterargument] Although healthier school lunches might provide more nutritious options for students, [Author’s argument] these lunches would actually harm students’ health because many students would refuse to eat them, athletes would be unable to meet their calorie requirements, and students who are able would turn to even less healthy convenience store and fast food options.

Writing the Introduction

For persuasive essays such as the SOL essay, the following Anatomy of an Introduction is a useful format to follow:

**Hook/Background:** Introduce your topic in one or two sentences. You may try to grab your reader’s attention (the “Hook”) by relaying an anecdote, creating an image, proposing a scenario, revealing a startling statistic, or sharing a fascinating fact. You should also provide just enough background information to introduce your topic to the reader. Do not spend a lot of time going into description or detail here; get right to your argument.

**Stable Context:** Address a commonly held belief that your essay is trying to change. This should be the main counterargument to your thesis.

**Destabilizer:** Point out a problem, connection, or key piece of information that a reader who currently believes the counter argument has overlooked (this will “destabilize” the “stable context”).

**Thesis:** Clearly state your position on the topic.

Example:

[Background] Several cultures around the world expect their youth to decide their exact future before graduating high school. [Stable Context] They believe that doing so aids students in working towards careers and preparing for life after school. [Destabilizer] In forcing students to make this life decision too soon, these cultures do not consider the variables of the job market, the mental development that takes place in the teens and early twenties, or the personal interests and creativity of individual students. [Thesis] Although choosing a career path early may give students a slight advantage in certain occupations, they should be allowed to explore many options and interests while they are in high school.

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4 The “Anatomy of an Introduction” has been adapted from Joseph M. Williams and Gregory G. Colomb’s Little Red Schoolhouse writing program.
5 The example has been adapted from “Virginia Standards of Learning High School Writing: Composing and Written Expression Anchor Set with Annotations.”
Quick Reference: Works Cited Template

Use this blank template as a guide in creating your own Works Cited entries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core Information:</th>
<th>Notes:</th>
<th>Your Entry:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Author.</td>
<td>Begin with the author’s last name, followed by a comma and the rest of the name.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Title of source.</td>
<td>Italicize the title of a source that is self-contained (for example, a book or a collection of essays); put quotation marks around the title of a source that is part of a larger whole (for example, a short story in an anthology).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Title of container,</td>
<td>If your source is part of a larger whole, identify the larger whole that contains it (its “container”). <em>Note: A work may be nestled in more than one container</em> (for example, you may find a short story in an anthology posted on a website). If this is the case, repeat items 3-9 for each container.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Other contributors,</td>
<td>If your source is translated or edited, credit those contributors here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Version,</td>
<td>If your source contains a notation that it is a revised version, often called “editions” for books, include it here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Number,</td>
<td>If your source has a specific volume or issue number (or both), include it here. Season and episode numbers for TV shows also go here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Publisher,</td>
<td>Include the main publisher of your source. See notes on locating and formatting publisher names on pages 14 and 16.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Publication date,</td>
<td>If your source provides more than one publication date (books often do), cite the most recent one.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Location.</td>
<td>If you are citing a range of pages in a book, include the page numbers here. (See Note #4, p. 14) If you are citing a website, include the URL or permalink here. (See Note #1, p. 16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Remember to repeat parts 3-9 for each additional container (see pages 13-14).
Works Cited


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