

HOLMDEL HIGH SCHOOL STYLE GUIDE



A note about this guide:

This is the Holmdel High School Style Guide for Compositions and Research Papers. It covers all content areas and applies to students in grades 9–12.

This document is designed as a tool to assist students in writing the many varieties of academic papers required for high school. Its goal is to provide a single source for writing academic papers at Holmdel High School. This manual reflects the standard by which all academic papers should be formatted.

It must be noted, however, that there may be some instances where there is a variation from this style manual (at the discretion of the classroom teacher both here at Holmdel and in college). It is the student's responsibility to write correctly and accurately to reflect the demands of a particular course.

This Style Guide is based upon the *MLA Handbook for the Writers of Research Papers, 7th Edition* and contains modifications and additions to better serve the students of the Holmdel Township School District.

Additional information on any of the topics in this guide may be found by going to OWL at Purdue: (<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>)

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Standard MLA Formatting of Papers

- A. All papers will use **1" margins** on the left, right, top, and bottom.
- B. All papers will be **left aligned**, not justified or centered.
- C. All papers will use **Times New Roman, 12 pt font**.
- D. All papers will use an MLA style header as illustrated below.
- E. Papers will **NOT include** a separate **cover page** (unless requested by the teacher).
- F. Papers will be **double-spaced** throughout. There should NOT be an extra space in between paragraphs.
- G. For papers that require an original title, the **title** should be **centered**. The title should **not** be bold, italics, underlined, in quotations, or in all caps.
- H. After the title, hit return once, hit tab (an additional $\frac{1}{2}$ " from the preset left margin) and begin writing your first paragraph. **Indent** each **paragraph**.

Sample First Page:



Parenthetical Citations

MLA format follows the author–page method of citation. This means that the author's last name and the page number(s) from which the quotation is taken **must appear** in the text, and a **complete reference** should appear in your works cited list (see Your Works Cited Page, below). The author's name may appear either in the sentence itself or in parentheses following the quotation or paraphrase, **but** the **page number(s)** should always appear in the parentheses, **not** in the text of your sentence.

For example:

Wordsworth stated that Romantic poetry was marked by a "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (263).

Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

If the work you are making reference to has no author, use an abbreviated version of the work's title. For non–print sources, such as films, TV series, pictures, or other media, or electronic sources, include the name that begins the entry in the Works Cited page.

For example:

An anonymous Wordsworth critic once argued that his poems were too emotional ("Wordsworth Is A Loser" 100).

Sometimes you may have to use an **indirect quotation**. An indirect quotation is a quotation that you found in another source that was quoting from the original. For such indirect quotations, use "qtd. in" to indicate the source.

For example:

Ravitch argues that high schools are pressured to act as "social service centers, and they don't do that well" (qtd.in Weisman 259).

Sometimes more information is necessary to identify the source from which a quotation is taken. For instance, if two or more **authors have the same last name**, provide both authors' **first initials** (or even her or his full name if different authors share initials) in your citation. If you cite more than one work by a particular author, include a shortened title for the particular work from which you are quoting to distinguish it from the other works by that same person.

For example:

Two authors with the same last name:

Although some medical ethicists claim that cloning will lead to designer children (R. Miller 12), others note that the advantages for medical research outweigh this consideration (A. Miller 46).

Two works by the same author:

Lightenor has argued that computers are not useful tools for small children ("Too Soon" 38), though he has acknowledged that early exposure to computer games does lead to better small motor skill development in a child's second and third year ("Hand-Eye Development" 17).

Quotations

When you directly quote the works of others in your paper, you will **format quotations differently depending on whether they are long or short quotations.**

Here are some basic guidelines for incorporating quotations into your paper.

Short Quotations

- To indicate short quotations (fewer than four typed lines of prose or three lines of verse) in your text, enclose the quotation within double quotation marks and incorporate it into your text.
- Provide the author and specific page citation (in the case of verse, provide line numbers) in the text, and include a complete reference in the works-cited list.
- Punctuation marks such as periods, commas, and semicolons should appear after the parenthetical citation.
- Question marks and exclamation points should appear within the quotation marks if they are a part of the quoted passage but after the parenthetical citation if they are a part of your text.

For example:

According to some, dreams express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184), though others disagree.

According to Foulkes's study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (184).

Is it possible that dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulkes 184)?

Cullen concludes, "Of all the things that happened there/ That's all I remember" (11-12).

Long Quotations

- Place quotations longer than four typed lines in a free-standing block of typewritten lines, and omit quotation marks.
- Start the quotation on a new line, indented one inch from the left margin, and maintain double-spacing.
- Your parenthetical citation should come after the closing punctuation mark. When quoting verse, maintain original line breaks. (**You should maintain double-spacing throughout your essay.**)

For example:

Nelly Dean treats Heathcliff poorly and dehumanizes him throughout her narration:

They entirely refused to have it in bed with them, or even in their room, and I had no more sense, so, I put it on the landing of the stairs, hoping it would be gone on the morrow. By chance, or else attracted by hearing his voice, it crept to Mr. Earnshaw's door, and there he found it on quitting his chamber. Inquiries were made as to how it got there; I was obliged to confess, and in recompense for my cowardice and inhumanity was sent out of the house. (Brontë 78)

In her poem "Sources," Adrienne Rich explores the roles of women in shaping their world:

The faithful drudging child
the child at the oak desk whose penmanship,
hard work, style will win her prizes
becomes the woman with a mission, not to win prizes
but to change the laws of history. (23)

For long quotes, the citation comes **after** the punctuation!!!

Adding or Omitting Words In Quotations

If you **add a word** or words in a quotation, you should **put brackets around the words** to indicate that they are not part of the original text.

For example:

Jan Harold Brunvand, in an essay on urban legends, states: "some individuals [who retell urban legends] make a point of learning every rumor or tale" (78).

If you **omit a word** or words from a quotation, you should indicate the deleted word or word by using **ellipsis marks surrounded by brackets**.

For example:

In an essay on urban legends, Jan Harold Brunvand notes that "some individuals make a point of learning every recent rumor or tale [...] and in a short time a lively exchange of details occurs" (78).

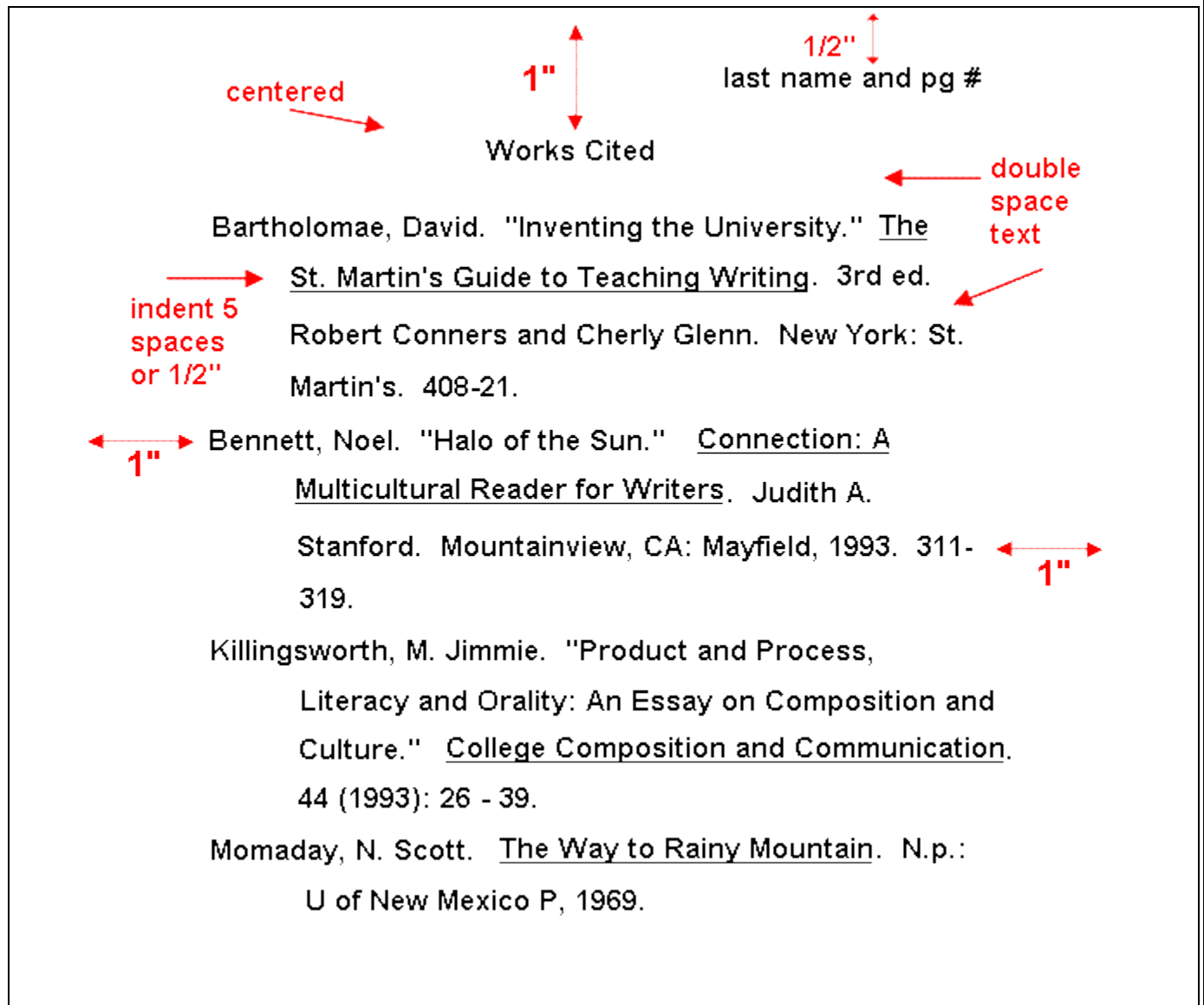
If there are ellipsis marks in the quoted author's work, do not put brackets around them; only use brackets around ellipsis marks to distinguish them from ellipsis marks in the quoted author's work.

Works Cited

According to MLA Style, the Bibliography, or list of sources are organized as a “Works Cited” page. Follow the rules below to complete this part of your paper properly. There are many sites available to help you format this page correctly. Please utilize these tools to ensure that you include all of the pertinent information (remember to use MLA 7th edition).

- The words *Works Cited* are **centered** at the top of the page.
- The materials you used in preparing your paper are **listed alphabetically** by the **author's last name**. If there is no author, list the material by title, ignoring the words *a*, *an*, and *the*.
- The **first line of each entry starts at the left margin**. The **second** and any subsequent lines are **indented five spaces**.
- An entry in a list of works cited generally has **three main divisions**-- **author**, **title**, and **publication information**-- and each is followed by a period and two spaces.
- Each entry ends with a period.
- The entire page is **double-spaced**.
- No source should appear on the works cited page that is not referred to in the text of the paper.
- **Pay close attention** to format: **order**, **spacing**, and **punctuation**.

SAMPLE WORKS CITED:



Useful sites to help you create and format a works cited page:

<http://citationmachine.net/index2.php?reqstyleid=1&newstyle=1&stylebox=1>

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

MLA Format for Annotated Bibliographies

For an annotated bibliography, use standard MLA format for the citations, then add a brief abstract for each entry, including:

- 2 to 4 sentences to **summarize** the **main idea(s)** of the item, and
- 1 or 2 sentences to **relate** the **article** to your research **topic**.

Basic MLA Style Format for an Annotated Bibliography

Format your citations in the same manner as for a normal reference list, then follow these instructions for adding an annotation.

1. **Hanging Indents** are required for citations in the bibliography, as shown below. That is, the first line of the citation starts at the left margin. Subsequent lines are indented...look below for an example
2. As with every other part of an MLA formatted essay, the **bibliography** is **double spaced**, both within the citation and between them. Do not add an extra line between the citations.
3. The **annotation** is a **continuation** of the **citation**. Stay on the lone to start the annotation.
4. The right margin is the normal right margin of your document.
5. In a **bibliography**, **organize** your entries **alphabetically**.
6. To view these **annotations** with correct formatting, set your preferences so that the **font size is 12**.

Sample Annotated Bibliography:

Smart 1

Pat Smart

English 112-72b

Professor I.M.A. Sage

November 21, 2001

Annotated Bibliography

Jarrell, Randall. "Robert Frost's 'Home Burial.'" *Critical Reading and Writing Across the Disciplines*. Ed. Cyndia Susan Clegg. New York: Holt, 1988. 468-488. Randall Jarrell, a respected poet himself, analyzes the dramatic dialogue and action of Robert Frost's "Home Burial," showing how the rhythms of the lines and the word choices illustrate the separate ways of grieving and the failure of the couple to reach an understanding of each other's pain at the loss of their child. Jarrell's emphasis on the husband's domineering manner will support my own view that the husband attempts to devalue his wife's feelings, suggesting a pattern in their relationship that has caused previous anguish and explains her rejection of his efforts to appease her.

Malinski, Sean. "Anger and Sorrow in 'Home Burial' by Robert Frost." *Journal of American Poetics* 57.4 (1993): 27-49. Malinski offers an alternative view about the husband's

This is where the
annotation
begins!!

Outline Format

TITLE OF OUTLINE

Thesis

I. Main topic

A. Important subtopic

B. Important subtopic

(1) Detail

a. Sub-detail

b. Sub-detail

c. Sub-detail

(2) Detail

(3) Detail

a. Sub-detail

b. Sub-detail

II. Main topic

A. Important subtopic

B. Important subtopic

(1) Detail

(2) Detail

Sample MLA Formal Outline:

Smart 1

Pat Smart

English 111-77b

Professor Donna Reiss

May 12, 2000

No More Traffic Jams on I-64:

Mass Transit for South Hampton Roads

Thesis statement: Instead of further road construction, which will only increase the amount of traffic in South Hampton Roads, the cities of Norfolk, Portsmouth, Chesapeake, and Virginia Beach should develop a modern mass transit system of light rail and park-and-ride express buses.

- I. Current traffic problems
 - A. Morning rush
 - B. Afternoon rush
- II. Proposed solutions
 - A. More highways and lanes
 - (1) Virginia Department of Transportation
 - (2) City of Norfolk
 - (3) City of Portsmouth
 - B. Light rail
 - (1) City of Virginia Beach
 - (a) City Council
 - (b) Citizens for Rapid Transit
 - (c) Environmental Protection Agency
 - (2) City of Norfolk

Helpful Hints – Follow these guidelines to complete an outline:

1. **Title the outline** – write the title of your paper at the top of the page.
2. Follow the **sample outline format** for numbering and lettering. Main ideas are chief points. Label them I, II, III, etc. Each main topic must include at least two subtopics.
3. **Subtopics** for each main topic are labeled A, B, C, etc.
4. Details for subtopics are labeled 1, 2, 3, etc.
5. **Sub details** or examples for details are labeled a, b, c, etc.
6. Use a **period after** each division **letter or number**. Do not place periods after topics or subtopics not stated in the form of a sentence.
7. Begin the main topic, subtopics, and details with capital letters.
8. **Maintain a parallel structure** throughout the outline; if you start with phrases, don't switch to complete sentences.
9. **Indent** as shown in the example. You should be able to draw a line through all the periods after Roman numerals, another through all the periods after capital letters, etc.
10. If you have an [A], [1], or [a] **then** you must have a [B], [2], or [b]. **

**Remember that *Microsoft Word* will
autoformat your outline for you!!**

The following site offers valuable information for how to use Word to create an outline:

<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/word-help/create-a-document-outline-RZ006105145.aspx>

Evaluating Sources

Much of what makes research so much work is the fact that all sources are not created equally. In order to produce a well-supported paper, begin with sources that are accurate, current, of good quality, and well-supported. For instance, a paper on Alzheimer's disease would benefit more from an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* than from an article in *People* magazine. **A paper's credibility depends upon the quality of the sources used.**

Here are some areas to examine:

- When was the source written? Some topics may depend upon current information.
- How reliable is the publication or location in which the source was found?
- Is the author an expert on the topic? Look for doctoral degrees and biographical information about the author which give a better idea of how well he/she knows his/her subject area.
- What is the purpose of the source? Does it have an obvious slant or bias in order to persuade the reader?
- Will the source provide only information that is common knowledge?
- How technical is the language? Too hard? Too elementary?
- Is the source too focused on one area, or is it an overview of a topic?
- Does the author document sources well? What are these sources like?

Primary and Secondary Sources

Another way to evaluate sources is to determine whether the sources are primary or secondary. Some essays or reports may need documentation from the original source. A critical essay on a literary work or a report on a government document would require that literary work or document as a source. **Primary sources** are the original works and are the sources from which others are derived. Here are a few examples:

- letters journals interviews poems
- novels speeches art dissertations
- news reports surveys observations musical compositions

Secondary sources take primary sources and interpret, summarize, or analyze them for a purpose. These sources may include reviews, discussions, annotated bibliographies, critical analyses of literary works, commentaries, and basic essay responses.

Electronic Sources

The Internet and other electronic sources have made information easier to obtain. However, these sources are also very difficult to evaluate. Web pages can be created by anyone from corporations to non-profit organizations to individuals. This can make it difficult to filter and sort out the sites that are going to prove helpful in writing the paper. Therefore, it is important to **develop skills that help discern the good from the bad. Begin with the suggestions for primary and secondary sources**, and then consider the following aspects:

- What type of web page is being viewed? **Addresses** that end in **.edu** are from educational institutions and may **offer the best information** for many topics. Addresses ending in **.org** are from non-profit organizations, those ending in **.gov** are generated by the United States government, and **.com** signifies a business.
- Companies from **.com** sites may be selling something and may not be reliable and unbiased.
- Who created the page? Credentials can help one judge the site's purpose or bias.
- Check the accuracy of the information. Compare what was found with information from paper-based sources and see if it matches up.
- How current is the information? **The Internet can offer the most up-to-date data, but this data could just as easily be outdated. One should not accept everything seen on the web. Check carefully.**

Plagiarism

Before beginning any research, you must understand the meaning and seriousness of plagiarism. According to Webster's New Ninth Collegiate Dictionary, plagiarism is defined as "To steal and pass off as one's own the ideas or words of another."

Because plagiarism is dishonest and a form of stealing, it is an extremely serious offense.

The following forms of plagiarism are most common:

1. Using the exact words of an original source without quotation marks or documentation.
2. Using the exact words of an original source without quotation marks is plagiarism even if you document the source.
 - You need quotation marks if the words are not yours.
3. Using someone else's ideas in a research paper without citing the source, even if you put the ideas into your own words.
 - You must give credit to the original source.
4. Using information from the Internet and passing it off as originally yours.
 - You must cite the source.
5. Engaging in "patchwork plagiarism".
 - "Patchwork plagiarism" occurs when a writer begins to paraphrase a source but does not do a thorough enough job. Merely changing a word or two from time to time does not make a passage yours. Paraphrased notes must be completely in your own words, not a few of yours and a lot of someone else's.
6. Failing to provide a list of works cited.
7. Using another student's work and passing it off as your own.

Please refer to the Student Handbook for Holmdel High School's full Academic Integrity Policy:

http://www.holmdelschools.org/schools/hs/pdf/hs_student_handbook.pdf

How to Avoid Plagiarism

Avoid plagiarism by giving credit to any sources used in the writing of the paper.

Giving credit to the sources used in research is a **two step process**, both of which are necessary.

- 1.) **Citation** – Within the paragraph it is necessary to identify the exact place from which the quotation, paraphrase, or data was taken. A citation tells a reader the author and page number (if known) where that specific material was found. With regard to citing a direct quotation, it is necessary to place the citation immediately following the quotation.
- 2.) **Works Cited Page** – This page lists only the works that were used to write the paper. The Works Cited page provides complete source information about any material cited. It lists all sources used in alphabetical order by author's last name and is placed at the end of the paper on a separate piece of paper. It is paginated as the last page of the paper but does not count toward the length of the paper itself. (See section on Works Cited page– page 10.)

Things to think about when writing:

- Make a list of writers and viewpoints that are used and use this as a checklist for citations and documentation.
- Identify the sources of all materials that are borrowed—exact wording, paraphrases, ideas, and facts.
- Keep track of information gained through interviewing or talking with another person face to face, over the phone, or in writing.
- Take plenty of notes.
- Always ask a teacher when unsure about the use of sources.
- Divide the gathered information into three categories: ideas, summaries of others' ideas, and words copied directly.

Common Knowledge

Information that can be found in multiple credible sources can be considered “common knowledge.” Information, however, must be found in exactness. It may also be “common” if the information is widely known or could be easily found in general reference materials. This information does not need to be cited.

However, it is expected that all information created or owned by an author or researcher is properly cited. Rule of thumb: when in doubt, cite. If it is, in fact, unnecessary, the corresponding teacher will note it.

Paraphrasing and Summarizing

When writing a paper, a good idea is to vary the way in which you use researched information. In other words, you should not use direct quotes only. However, in order to avoid plagiarism, you must properly cite the source when using information that is not your own.

How to Paraphrase

1. To write a paraphrase, use your own words and sentence structure. However, be careful: the intent of the original passage must remain the same, which means that the writer does not distort the author's meaning with his/her own opinions.
2. A paraphrase should be approximately the same length as the original.

Example of Paraphrasing

Original Text from Source: "Students (36 percent) concur that lack of parental supervision at home is the major factor contributing to violence in schools. However, 34 percent of them cite as a second major factor to the presence of gang or group membership or peer group pressure (The American Teacher, 1993)" (Futrell and Powell, par. 9).

Your Paraphrased Sentence: Statistics from The American Teacher reveal that roughly one third of the interviewed students felt that school violence resulted from poor supervision, and another one third of the students felt that peer pressure was another major cause of school violence (Futrell and Powell, par. 9).

How to Summarize

1. Like a paraphrase, a **summary** puts the original passage into the writer's own words and sentence structure without changing the meaning.
2. Since a **summary shortens** the **original passage** and focuses on its main points, partial quotes may be used along with the writer's own words in order to **highlight** the most important information.

Examples of Summarizing

Original Text from Source: “America’s children are exposed to a steady diet of verbal and physical violence that begins early and continues throughout their lives. [. . .] Most of what children watch, including cartoons, is unsupervised and much of it is filled with scene after scene of unadulterated sex and violence. All too often children who behave violently are themselves victims of an overdose of violence” (Futrell and Powell, par. 2).

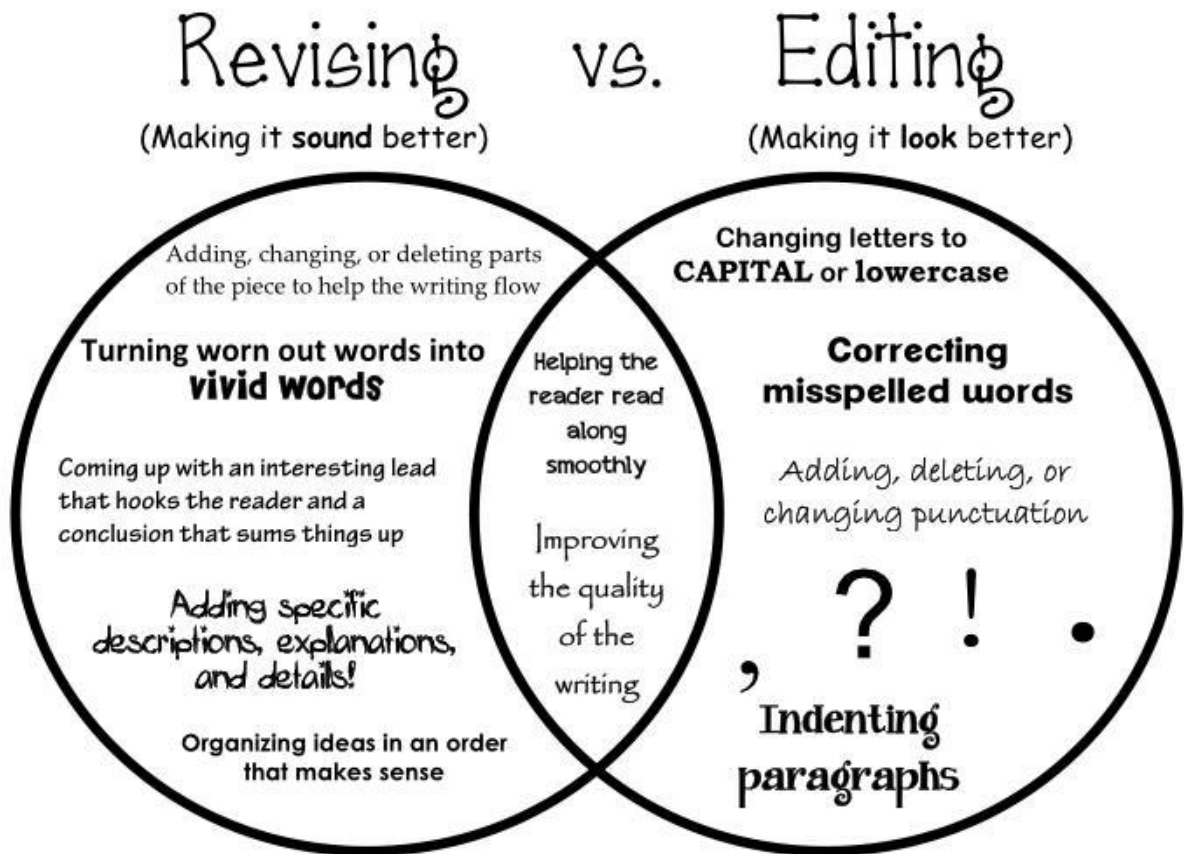
Your Summary: 1. Too much television watching exposes children in the U.S. to violence, which may be a factor in their own violent behavior (Futrell and Powell, par. 2).

Revising and Editing

What's the difference?

Revision is comprised of locating and correcting problems with **content** to change **ideas** in writing to make them clear, strong, and more convincing.

Editing is locating and correcting problems with grammar, word choice, usage, punctuation, capitalization, etc...



REVISING AN ESSAY:

A BASIC CHECKLIST

Organization

- Is there a clear introduction, body, and conclusion?
- Does the introduction provide sufficient background for the reader? Are the "who," "where," "why," "what," and "how" questions addressed?
- Is there a thesis sentence? Is the purpose of the essay clear?
- Does the essay move from general to specific?
- Are there sufficient transitions between related ideas?
- Is the overall organization murky or clean? In other words, does the writer avoid introducing new material in the conclusion or switching subjects in the middle of a paragraph in the body?
- Does every paragraph address the subject matter of the thesis in some way?

Content and Style

- Does the essay show that the writer has a knowledge of the audience?
- Is the length appropriate and adequate?
- Has the writer used sufficient examples and detail to make his or her points clearly?
- Has the assignment been addressed?
- Is the tone of the essay appropriate?
- Is the tone of the essay professional and appropriate?
- Is the language convincing, clear, and concise?
- Has the writer used fresh language and a creative approach?

Research and Sources

- Are all sources credible?
- Is the research accurate, unbiased, and complete?
- Has the writer fully interpreted the findings?
- Is the analysis based on hard evidence?
- Is the analysis free of faulty reasoning?
- Is the documentation in the Works Cited page and body of the essay correct?
- Have all quotations been checked against the original?
- Are all quotations introduced? Is the flow of the essay seamless?
- If material was paraphrased, are the sources still mentioned?
- If included, are recommendations based on accurate interpretations?
- Have all facts been checked for accuracy?

EDITING AN ESSAY:

A BASIC CHECKLIST

Opening

- first paragraph includes a clear thesis statement
- opening discussion leaves the reader with a good idea of the subject and scope of my essay
- opening touches briefly on the major points that will be raised later

Body

- the body of the essay forms a structured line of argument supporting my thesis
- each paragraph has a topic sentence that indicates its overall main point

Conclusion

- the reader is reminded of my thesis and main points
- there is a well developed closing discussion about what my essay has proved

Language

- the style of language is suitable (usually this means no slang, abbreviations, no contractions)
- phrasing is clear and concise, without repetitions or awkward passages
- spelling and word usage have been checked

Sentences and Punctuation

- all my sentences are complete (sentence fragments have been eliminated)
- run-on sentences (two or more sentences written as one) have been corrected
- punctuation has been checked, with special attention to commas

Grammar

- pronoun agreement and subject-verb agreement have been checked
- all verbs are in the right tense, without any unnecessary tense shifts
- possessives are correctly formed, with apostrophes in place

Mechanics

- all proper nouns, titles, and headings are capitalized
- titles of brief works (essays, articles, short stories, etc.) are in quotation marks
- titles of books, plays, newspapers, magazines, etc. are in italics or underlined
- quotations are properly indicated (brief ones in quotation marks, long ones set off and indented)

Writing Effective Paragraphs

A paragraph is a sentence or group of sentences set off as a unit. Usually all the sentences in a paragraph can be related to a single main idea.

The main problems affecting paragraphs are focus and development. A poorly focused paragraph is difficult to understand because there seems to be no relation between the individual sentences. A paragraph may appear to be poorly focused because it is (the writer tries to cover too many ideas instead of focusing on the single important idea), or because the writer has not provided transitions to connect the ideas together.

A poorly developed paragraph can be well-written, but it is usually ineffective and unpersuasive. Poor development usually results from an over-reliance on generalization (and a parallel lack of specific detail), and a misunderstanding of audience. Often, the writer leaves out important information, such as background and context for someone else's idea, description of setting, definition of a key term, or evidence to support an assertion. The writer omits such information because she or he believes the reader already knows it and would be "bored" by seeing it again.

This section contains some basic advice for good paragraphs.

Focus on a Main Idea

Most paragraphs have recognizable main ideas. The main idea is simply what the paragraph is about, and may be stated in a topic sentence which occurs at the beginning of the paragraph, or may be so obvious that it is implied.

All other sentences in the paragraph should be related to and contribute to the main idea.

Use Specific Details

An effective paragraph develops the main idea with enough detail to hold the reader's attention and explain the writer's ideas. Too little detail produces boring and abstract paragraphs. Too much detail produces unfocused paragraphs that overwhelm the reader.

Develop using a Pattern

The structure of a paragraph can take almost an infinite variety of forms. However, certain patterns occur frequently.

Narration	A narrative paragraph uses a story or part of a story to develop the main idea. Often the story serves as anecdotal evidence in support of the main idea, producing a paragraph similar to the example and illustration pattern.
Description	A descriptive paragraph uses specific details to create a clear idea of a place, time, person, or object. Descriptive paragraphs show rather than tell, and use details such as sensory details to help the reader construct a "picture" of the scene.
Definition	A definition paragraph provides a detailed definition of a key term in the essay.
Example and Illustration	An example or illustration paragraph illustrates a point with one or more examples.
Division and Classification	A classification paragraph groups items into categories according to some specific principle. A division paragraph breaks a single item into its parts according to some specific principle.
Comparison and Contrast	A comparison paragraph looks at the similarities between two or more items. A contrast paragraph looks at the differences between two or more items. Sometimes items are both compared and contrasted.
Analogy	Occasionally, analogies can be used to develop an idea. An analogy draws a comparison between two items, usually for the purpose of showing some surprising similarity.

Cause and Effect A cause and effect paragraph develops an idea by explaining the causes of something or by showing the effects of something. The paragraph might move from cause to effects or from an effect to its causes.

Process A process paragraph depicts or explains a process, often using chronology to order the individual stages in the process.

Make Paragraphs Coherent: A paragraph has coherence, or flows, when the details of the paragraph fit together in a way that is clear to the reader. Coherence is partially the product of choosing an appropriate paragraph pattern for your ideas, and partially the product of sentence-level control.

Here are some ways to improve paragraph coherence:

- **Repeat key words or phrases**—or pronouns that point to them—to link sentences (and alert them to the importance of the ideas represented by those words and phrases).
- **Use parallelism.** Parallelism can be applied to parts of a sentence. It can also be applied to sentences within a paragraph.
- **Maintain consistency** of tone, register, and point of view.
- **Provide transitions.** See "Transition Words and Phrases" below.

Transition Words and Phrases

To signal relationships or shifts in meaning, **a transition connects one paragraph, sentence, clause, or word with another**. A transition also identifies what kind of connection exists, helping readers anticipate how the next paragraph or sentence will relate to the meaning of what they have just read.

Following are the groups of transitions, what they signal, and examples of each:

1. Chronological Transitions. . .Relationship in time:

presently	meanwhile	the next day
thereupon	at length	thereafter
immediately	soon afterward	following this
afterward	after that	by that time
next	beforehand	later
soon	at that moment	at last
within an hour	shortly	from then on
earlier	when I returned	first
second	then	with that finished

2. Spatial Transitions. . .Relationship in space:

a little farther on	at the edge of the clearing
in the next room	at the center of the circle
at that altitude	across the way
between those cities	about a foot to the left
	just to the right

3. Comparison Transitions. . .What follows is similar to what precedes:

likewise	once again	similarly
in the same way	in like manner	at the same time
once more		

4. **Contrast Transitions.** . . . A contradiction or contrast:

however	conversely	nevertheless
whereas	still	even so
surely	unlike	on the other hand
nonetheless	on the contrary	in spite of this
notwithstanding	for all that	in contrast

5. **Middle Paragraph Transitions.** . . . What follows is an illustration, a qualification, or an example:

for example	for instance	likewise
specifically	frequently	in particular
similarly	to illustrate	whenever
that is	in general	occasionally
generally	especially	usually

What follows is additional or supplementary:

furthermore	besides
moreover	as if that were not enough
and	indeed
in fact	first, second, third. . .
in addition	also
then, too	again

What follows is quite expected, quite natural, or obviously true:

to be sure	it follows, then, that
of course	for that matter
naturally	as a matter of fact
surely	without a doubt

6. **Cause-Effect Transitions.** . .What follows is a result of what precedes:

as a result	as a consequence	so
thus	consequently	another
therefore	then	hence
in other words	wherefore	at last
for this reason	and that is why	first
second	on the whole	accordingly

7. **Counterargument Transitions.** . .For concession:

of course	certainly
doubtless	to be sure
to doubt that	granted that
it may be true that	

8. **End of Paragraph or Conclusion Transitions.** . .What follows is a repetition or intensification of that which precedes:

in other words	indeed
to repeat	in any case
as we have seen	in fact
as noted earlier	besides
to put it another way	

9. **Conclusion Transitions.** . .What follows is a summary:

therefore	all in all	in short
in a word	on the whole	in conclusion
what we have, then	in sum	to summarize
in summary	in brief	finally
to conclude		

Cohesion and Coherence

Cohesion: Readers must feel that they move easily from one sentence to the next, that each "coheres" with the one before and after.

Coherence: Readers must also feel that sentences are not just individually clear but constitute a unified passage focused on a coherent set of ideas.

Cohesion

Cohesion refers to how a group of sentences "hang together." Sometimes, to achieve better cohesion we have to "violate" other writing "rules" we think are sacrosanct. Take for example the following two sentences:

- a. The collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble creates a black hole.
- b. A black hole is created by the collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble.

Given a choice between these two sentences we would **probably choose the first** since it **uses an active verb** while the second uses a passive verb. But the passive does have its uses, such as helping readers create that sense of flow that characterizes a coherent passage. **Which of the following two passages "flows" better?**

- A. Some astonishing questions about the nature of the universe have been raised by scientists studying black holes in space. The collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble creates a black hole. So much matter compressed into so little volume changes the fabric of space around it in puzzling ways.
- B. Some astonishing questions about the nature of the universe have been raised by scientists studying black holes in space. A black hole is created by the collapse of a dead star into a point perhaps no larger than a marble. So much matter compressed into so little volume changes the fabric of space around it in puzzling ways.

The **second passage reads more coherently** because the concept introduced by each new sentence follows from the previous sentence. This technique is called "old-to-

new" and is one of the most important principles of a cohesive writing style. The principles of old-to-new are:

1. Begin your sentences with information familiar to your readers.
2. End your sentences with information your readers cannot anticipate.

Coherence

However, writing can have a cohesive "flow" and be almost indecipherable. Consider the following passage:

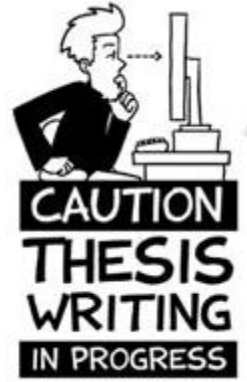
Saner, Wisconsin, is the snowmobile capital of the world. The buzzing of snowmobile engines fills the air, and their tanklike tracks crisscross the snow. The snow reminds me of Mom's mashed potatoes, covered with furrows I would draw with my fork. Mom's mashed potatoes usually made me sick, that's why I play with them. I like to make a hole in the middle of the potatoes and fill it with melted butter. This behavior has been the subject of long chats between me and my analyst.

This passage is cohesive, moving from Saner to snowmobiles to snow to Mom's mashed potatoes to behavior, but it certainly is not coherent.

To understand coherence we need to consider how readers make sense out of larger groupings of sentences. Readers feel a passage is coherent when the writer helps them accomplish two tasks:

1. Identify the topics (what the sentence is about) of individual sentences quickly.
2. Recognize how the topics form a connected set of ideas.

Thesis Statements



The Easiest Way To Generate A Thesis Statement

Almost all assignments, no matter how complicated, can be reduced to a single question. Your first step, then, is to turn the assignment into a specific question. For example, if your assignment is "Write a report to the local school board explaining the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class," turn the request into a question like "What are the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class?" After you've chosen the question your paper will answer, compose one or two complete sentences answering that question.

Q: "What are the potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class?"

A: "The potential benefits of using computers in a fourth-grade class are"

OR

A: "Using computers in a fourth-grade class promises to improve"

The answer to the question is the thesis statement for the essay.

How to Tell a Strong Thesis Sentence from a Weak One.

1. A strong thesis takes some sort of stand.

Remember that your thesis needs to show your conclusions about a subject. For example, if you are writing a paper for a class on fitness, you might be asked to choose a popular weight-loss product to evaluate. Here are two thesis statements:

There are some negative and positive aspects to the Banana Herb Tea Supplement.

This is a weak thesis. First, it fails to take a stand. Second, the phrase "negative and positive" aspects" are vague.

Because Banana Herb Tea Supplement promotes rapid weight loss that results in the loss of muscle and lean body mass, it poses a potential danger to customers.

This is a strong thesis because it takes a stand.

2. A strong thesis expresses one main idea.

Readers need to be able to see that your paper has one main point. If your thesis expresses more than one idea, then you might confuse your readers about the subject of your paper. For example:

Companies need to exploit the marketing potential of the Internet, and web pages can provide both advertising and customer support.

This is a weak thesis statement because the reader can't decide whether the paper is about marketing on the Internet or web pages. To revise the thesis, the relationship between the two ideas needs to become clearer. One way to revise the thesis would be to write:

Because the Internet is filled with tremendous marketing potential, companies should exploit this potential by using web pages that offer both advertising and customer support.

This is a strong thesis because it shows that the two ideas are related. Hint: a great many clear and engaging thesis statements contain words like "because," "since," "so," "although," "unless," and "however."

3. A strong thesis statement is specific.

A thesis statement should show exactly what your paper will be about, and will help you keep your paper to a manageable topic. For example, if you write a paper on hunger, you might say:

World hunger has many causes and effects.

This is a weak thesis statement for two major reasons. First, "world hunger" can't be discussed thoroughly in five or ten pages. Second, "many causes and effects" is vague. You should be able to identify specific causes and effects. A revised thesis might look like this:

Hunger persists in Appalachia because jobs are scarce and farming in the infertile soil is rarely profitable.

This is a strong thesis because it narrows the subject to a more specific and manageable topic and it also identifies the specific causes for the existence of hunger.

Introductions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. Usually when you sit down to respond to an assignment, you have at least some sense of what you want to say in the body of your paper. You might have chosen a few examples you want to use or have an idea that will help you answer the question: these sections, therefore, are not as hard to write. But these middle parts of the paper can't just come out of thin air; they need to be introduced and they need to be concluded in a way that makes sense to your reader.

1. Why bother writing a good introduction?

- ✓ You never get a second chance to make a first impression.

The opening paragraph of your paper will provide your readers with their initial impressions of your argument, your writing style, and the overall quality of your work. A vague, disorganized, error-filled, off-the-wall, or boring introduction will probably create a negative impression. On the other hand, a concise, engaging, and well-written introduction will start your readers off thinking highly of you, your analytical skills, your writing, and your paper. This impression is especially important when the audience you are trying to reach (your instructor) will be grading your work. Do you want that audience to start off thinking "C+" or thinking "A"?

- ✓ Your introduction is an important road map for the rest of your paper.

Your introduction conveys a lot of information to your readers. You can let them know what your topic is, why it is important, and how you plan to proceed with your discussion. It should contain a thesis that will assert your main argument. It will also, ideally, give the reader a sense of the kinds of information you will use to make that argument and the general organization of the paragraphs and pages that will follow. After reading your introduction, your readers should not have any major surprises in store when they read the main body of your paper.

- ✓ Ideally, your introduction will make your readers want to read your paper.

The introduction should also capture your readers' interest, making them want to read the rest of your paper. Opening with a compelling story, a fascinating quotation, an interesting question, or a stirring example can get your readers to see why this topic matters and serve as an invitation for them to join you for an interesting intellectual conversation.

2. Strategies for Writing an Effective Introduction

- ✓ Start by thinking about the question.

Your entire essay will be a response to the assigned question, and our introduction is the first step toward that end. Your direct answer to the assigned question will be your thesis, and your thesis will be included in your introduction, so it is a good idea to use the question as a jumping off point. Imagine that you are assigned the following question:

Education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. Drawing on The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, discuss the relationship between education and slavery in 19th century America. Consider the following: How did white control of education reinforce slavery? How did Douglass and other enslaved African Americans view education while they endured slavery? And what role did education play in the acquisition of freedom? Most importantly, consider the degree to which education was or was not a major force for social change with regard to slavery.

- ✓ Try writing your introduction last.

You may think that you have to write your introduction first, but that isn't necessarily true, and it isn't always the most effective way to craft a good introduction. You may find that you don't know what you are going to argue at the beginning of the writing process, and only through the experience of writing your paper do you discover your main argument. You will need to revise your paper to make sure that the introduction, all of the evidence, and the conclusion reflect the argument you intend. Sometimes it

helps to write up all of your evidence first and then write the introduction -- that way you can be sure that the introduction matches the body of the paper.

✓ **Don't be afraid to write a tentative introduction first and then change it later.**

Some people find that they need to write some kind of introduction in order to get the writing process started. That's fine, but if you are one of those people, be sure to return to your initial introduction later and rewrite if need be.

✓ **Open with an attention grabber.**

Sometimes, especially if the topic of your paper is somewhat dry or technical, opening with something catchy can help. Consider these options:

1. **an intriguing example** (for example, the mistress who initially teaches Douglass but then ceases her instruction as she learns more about slavery)
2. **a provocative quotation**, (Douglass writes that "education and slavery were incompatible with each other")
3. **a puzzling scenario**, (Frederick Douglass says of slaves that "[N]othing has been left undone to cripple their intellects, darken their minds, debase their moral nature, obliterate all traces of their relationship to mankind; and yet how wonderfully they have sustained the mighty load of a most frightful bondage, under which they have been groaning for centuries!" Douglass clearly asserts that slave owners went to great lengths to destroy the mental capacities of slaves, but yet his own life story proves that these efforts could be unsuccessful.)
4. **a vivid and perhaps unexpected anecdote** (Learning about slavery in the American history course at Frederick Douglass High School, students studied the work slaves did, the impact of slavery on their families, and the rules that governed their lives. We didn't discuss education, however, until one student, Mary, raised her hand and asked, "But when did they go to school?" That modern high school students could not conceive of an American childhood devoid of formal education speaks volumes about the centrality of education to American youth today, and also suggests the meanings of the deprivation of education to past generations.")

5. **a thought-provoking question** (Given all of the freedoms that were denied enslaved individuals in the American South, why does Frederick Douglass focus his attentions so squarely on education and literacy?)

These attention-grabbing openers might get your reader interested and also help your reader connect to what might otherwise seem a pretty obscure topic. Essentially, you can use attention-grabbers to help your readers see why your topic is relevant and to help them begin to care about your findings and perspectives.

✓ **Pay special attention to your first sentence.**

If any sentence in your paper is going to be completely free of errors and vagueness, it should be your first one. Start off on the right foot with your readers by making sure that the first sentence actually says something useful and that it does so in an interesting and error-free way.

✓ **Be straightforward and confident.**

Avoid statements like "In this paper, I will argue that Frederick Douglass valued education." While this sentence points toward your main argument, it isn't especially interesting. It might be more effective to say what mean in a declarative sentence. It is much more convincing to tell that "Frederick Douglass valued education" than to tell us that you are going to say that he did. Assert your main argument confidently. After all, you can't expect your reader to believe it if it doesn't sound like you believe it!

3. Five Kinds of Less Effective Introductions

- **The Place Holder Introduction.**

When you don't have much to say on a given topic, it is easy to create this kind of introduction. Essentially, this kind of weaker introduction contains several sentences that are vague and don't really say much. They exist just to take up the "introduction space" in your paper. If you had something more effective to say, you would probably say it, but in the meantime this paragraph is just a place holder.

Weak Example: *Slavery was one of the greatest tragedies in American history. There were many different aspects of slavery. Each created different kinds of problems for enslaved people.*

- **The Restated Question Introduction.**

Restating the question can be an effective strategy, but it can be easy to stop at JUST restating the question instead of offering a more effective, interesting introduction to your paper. The teacher or teaching assistant wrote your questions and will be reading ten to seventy essays in response to them--they do not need to read a whole paragraph that simply restates the question. Try to do something more interesting.

Weak Example: *Indeed, education has long been considered a major force for American social change, righting the wrongs of our society. The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass discusses the relationship between education and slavery in 19th century America, showing how white control of education reinforced slavery and how Douglass and other enslaved African Americans viewed education while they endured. Moreover, the book discusses the role that education played in the acquisition of freedom. Education was a major force for social change with regard to slavery.*

- **The Webster's Dictionary Introduction.**

This introduction begins by giving the dictionary definition of one or more of the words in the assigned question. This introduction strategy is on the right track--if you write one of these, you may be trying to establish the important terms of the discussion, and this move builds a bridge to the reader by offering a common, agreed-upon definition for a key idea. You may also be looking for an authority that will lend credibility to your paper. However, anyone can look a word up in the dictionary and copy down what Webster says - it may be far more interesting for you (and your reader) if you develop your own definition of the term in the specific context of your class and assignment. Also recognize that the dictionary is also not a particularly authoritative work -- it doesn't take into account the context of your course and doesn't offer particularly detailed information.

Weak Example: *Webster's dictionary defines slavery as "the state of being a slave," as "the practice of owning slaves," and as "a condition of hard work and subjection."*

- **The Dawn of Man Introduction.**

This kind of introduction generally makes broad sweeping statements about the relevance of this topic since the beginning of time. It is usually very general (similar to the place holder introduction) and fails to connect to the thesis. You may write this kind of introduction when you don't have much to say--which is precisely why it is ineffective.

Weak Example: *Since the dawn of man, slavery has been a problem in human history.*

- **The Book Report Introduction.**

This introduction is what you had to do for your fifth-grade book reports. It gives the name and author of the book you are writing about, tells what the book is about, and offers other basic facts about the book. You might resort to this sort of introduction when you are trying to fill space because it's a familiar, comfortable format. It is ineffective because it offers details that your reader already knows and that are irrelevant to the thesis.

Weak Example: *Frederick Douglass wrote his autobiography, Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave, in the 1840s. It was published in 1986 by Penguin Books. He tells the story of his life.*

Conclusions

- Play the "So What" Game.

If you're stuck and feel like your conclusion isn't saying anything new or interesting, ask a friend to read it with you. Whenever you make a statement from your conclusion, ask the friend to say, "So what?" or "Why should anybody care?" Then ponder that question and answer it.

Here's how it might go:

You: Basically, I'm just saying that education was important to Douglass.

Friend: So what?

You: Well, it was important because it was a key to him feeling like a free and equal citizen.

Friend: Why should anybody care?

You: That's important because plantation owners tried to keep slaves from being educated so that they could maintain control. When Douglass obtained an education, he undermined that control personally.

You can also use this strategy on your own, asking yourself "So What?" as you develop your ideas or your draft.

- Return to the theme or themes in the introduction.

This strategy brings the reader full circle. For example, if you begin by describing a scenario, you can end with the same scenario as proof that your essay is helpful in creating a new understanding. You may also refer to the introductory paragraph by using key words or parallel concepts and images that you also used in the introduction.

- **Synthesize, don't summarize:**

Include a brief summary of the paper's main points, but don't simply repeat things that were in your paper. Instead, show your reader how the points you made and the support and examples you used fit together. Pull it all together for them.

- Include a provocative insight or quotation from the research or reading you did for your paper.

- Propose a course of action, a solution to an issue, or questions for further study.

This can redirect your reader's thought process and help her to apply your info and ideas to her own life or to see the broader implications.

- Point to broader implications.

For example, if your paper examines the Greensboro sit-ins or another event in the Civil Rights Movement, you could point out its impact on the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. A paper about the style of writer Virginia Woolf could point to her influence on other writers or on later feminists.

Common Conclusion Mistakes

- Beginning with an unnecessary, overused phrase such as "in conclusion," "in summary," or "in closing." Although these phrases can work in speeches, they come across as wooden and trite in writing.
- Stating the thesis for the very first time in the conclusion.
- Introducing a new idea or subtopic in your conclusion.
- Ending with a rephrased thesis statement without any substantive changes.
- Making sentimental, emotional appeals (out of character with the rest of an analytical paper).
- Including evidence (quotations, statistics, etc.) that should be in the body of the paper.

CAPITALIZATION

Capitalize all proper nouns and all proper adjectives (adjectives derived from proper nouns). The chart below provides a quick overview of capitalization rules. The following information explains specific or special uses of capitalization.

Capitalization at a Glance

Days of the week Sunday, Monday, Tuesday
Months.....June, July, August
Holidays, holy daysThanksgiving, Easter, Hanukkah
Periods, events in history.....Middle Ages, the Renaissance
Special events the Battle of Bunker Hill
Political parties Republican Party, Socialist Party
Official documentsDeclaration of Independence
Trade names.....Oscar Mayer hot dogs, Pontiac Sunbird
Formal epithetsAlexander the Great
Official titlesMayor John Spitzer, Senator Feinstein
Official state nicknames the Badger State, the Aloha State

Geographical names

Planets, heavenly bodies..... Earth, Jupiter, the Milky Way
Continents..... Australia, South America
Countries.....Ireland, Grenada, Sri Lanka
States, provincesOhio, Utah, Nova Scotia
Cities, towns, villagesEl Paso, Burlington, Wonewoc
Streets, roads, highways Route 66, Interstate 90
Sections of a country or continentthe Southwest, the Far East
Landforms.....the Rocky Mountains, the Sahara Desert
Bodies of water.....Nile River, Lake Superior, Pumpkin Creek
Public areas.....Yosemite, Yellowstone National Park
Bodies of water.....Nile River, Lake Superior, Pumpkin Creek
Public areas.....Yosemite, Yellowstone National Park

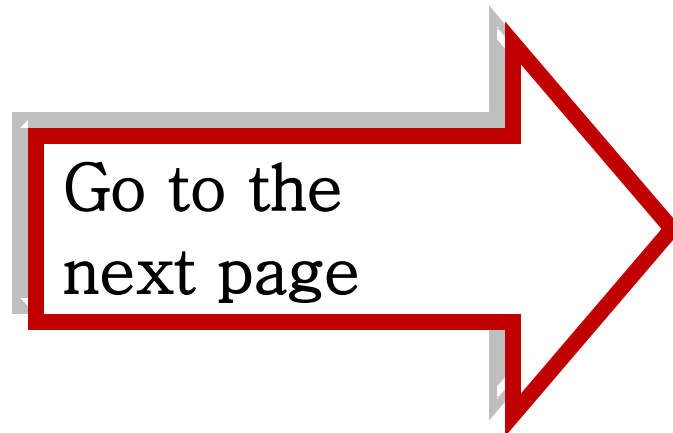
Italics and "Quotation Marks."

It's easy for students to forget that different types of titles require different typographical features. It is even harder to remember which type of title requires which type of punctuation.

If you remember these two handy rules, you can keep the difference straight:

- 1) Short works and parts of long works are usually in quotation marks.
- 2) Long works and collections of short works are usually put in italics.

See the Chart on the following page for more specifics and examples



<p style="text-align: center;">“Quotes” "Short Works" and "Sections of Longer Works"</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Italics</i> Long Works and Collection of Short Works</p>
<p>"Title of a Short Poem." Ex: "The Raven."</p> <p>"Title of a Short Story." Ex: "Young Goodman Brown"</p> <p>"Title of an Essay" Ex: "The Fiction of Langston Hughes"</p> <p>"Title of a Short Song" "Money Talks"</p> <p>"Title of a Skit or Monologue" Ex: "Madman's Lament"</p> <p>"Short Commercial" "Obey Your Thirst."</p> <p>Title of "Individual Episode" in a Television Series. "Sawyer's Past"</p> <p>"Title of a Chapter in a Book" Ex: "Welsh Mountains"</p> <p>"Encyclopedia Article" Ex: "Etruscan"</p> <p>"Title of an Article in a Magazine" Ex: "Training Your Toddler"</p> <p>"Title of an Article in a Newspaper" Ex: "Man Kills Seven in Subway"</p> <p>"One or Two Page Handout" Ex: "Old English Verbs: A One Page Guide"</p>	<p><i>Title of an Epic Poem or Book-Length Poem</i> Ex: <i>The Odyssey</i></p> <p><i>Title of a Novel</i> Ex: <i>The Scarlet Letter</i></p> <p><i>Title of a Collection or Anthology of Essays</i> Ex: <i>Modern Writers and Their Readers</i></p> <p><i>Title of a Music Album</i> Ex: <i>The Razor's Edge</i>, by AC/DC</p> <p><i>Title of a Play</i> Ex: <i>The Importance of Being Ernest</i></p> <p><i>Title of a Film</i> Ex: <i>Star Wars Episode II: Attack of the Clones</i></p> <p><i>Title of a Television Series as a Whole</i> Ex: <i>The Lost</i> Ex: <i>Everybody Loves Raymond</i></p> <p><i>Title of a Complete Book</i> Ex: <i>A Guide to Welsh Geography</i></p> <p><i>Title of the Magazine.</i> Ex: <i>Parenting</i></p> <p><i>Title of the Newspaper</i> Ex: <i>The New York Times</i></p>

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The following resources were used in the preparation of this Form and Style Guide:

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