

Winston Churchill High School  
English Department  
Style Guide  
Complete Edition  
Revised 2012  
2009 MLA format

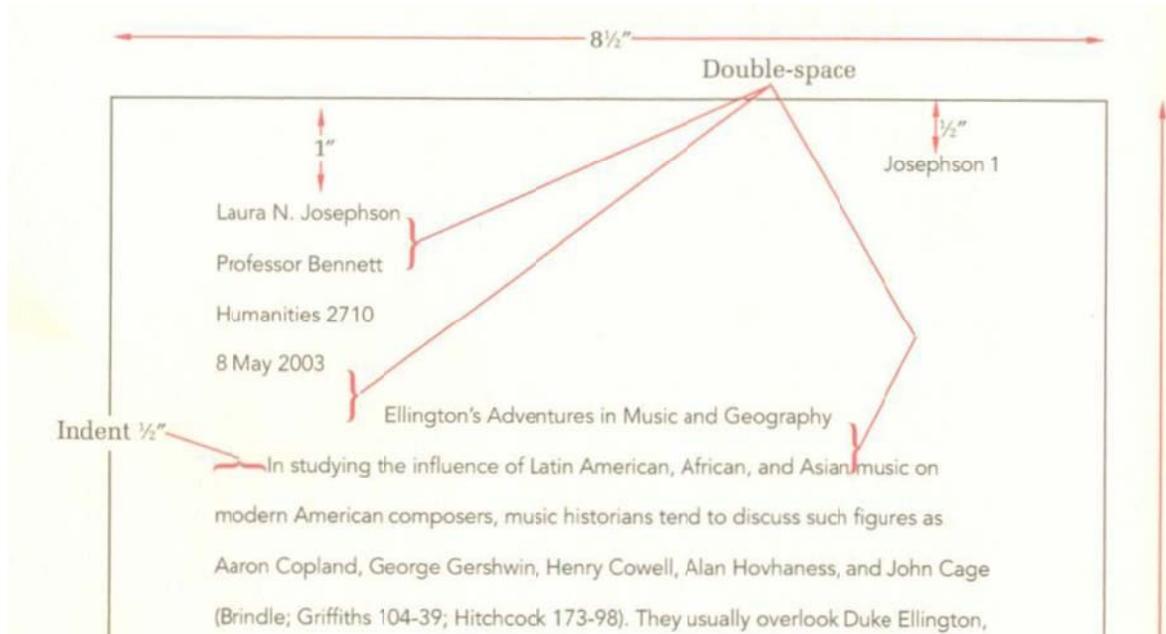


## Winston Churchill High School English Department Style Guide

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**I. 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.
- F. Papers will include a header on every page (Josephson 1). In Word, students go to View: Header/Footer. On the Microsoft toolbar, click on right align. Type last name, hit space, then hit the # symbol. Do not use the abbreviation "p" or add a period, hyphen, or any other mark or symbol.
- G. Papers will be double-spaced throughout. There should NOT be an extra space in between paragraphs.
- H. 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.
- I. After the title, hit return once, hit tab (an additional 1/2" from the preset left margin) and begin writing your first paragraph. Indent each paragraph.

Note: for more details use link: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>

## II. Documentation (Use MLA style for all assignments)

### A. You need to cite:

1. Direct quotes, both entire sentences and phrases
2. Paraphrases (rephrased or summarized material)
3. Words specific or unique to the author's research, theories, or ideas
4. Use of an author's argument, opinion, or line of thinking
5. Historical, statistical, or scientific facts
6. Articles or studies you refer to within your text

### B. You do not need to cite:

1. Proverbs, axioms, and sayings ("You can't judge a book by its cover.")
2. Well-known quotations ("Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.")
3. Common knowledge (Thomas Edison invented the phonograph, or oxygen has an atomic number of 8, or "Starry Night" was painted by Vincent Van Gogh.)  
**Common knowledge refers to facts** and is information that is so well-known that it can be confirmed in numerous sources.

Sometimes it is difficult to be sure what counts as common knowledge, especially when writing in an academic discipline that is new to you. Perhaps you are not familiar with Van Gogh or an atomic number. Two good rules of thumb: ask yourself if a knowledgeable reader would be familiar with the factual information and check multiple sources (at least three) to see if that fact is contained therein. If you are not sure if something counts as common knowledge, document it to be safe.

### C. Credible Sources

With the internet, there are so many sources of information available to students. But just because something is online, it doesn't mean it's accurate or factual. Whether or not to use Wikipedia, for example, is often debated because users can write and edit the information that appears on the site. Because of this, **Wikipedia is *not* to be used as a Works Cited entry**, though your teacher may allow you to use it as a Works Consulted entry. Ask your teacher to be sure. **Google also can lead students to inaccurate information.** The Media Center subscribes to numerous online databases that contain information about topics of interest. Typically, these are considered more credible sources. ***See list of passwords for home and school use.*** The following is a list of indicators that can help you decide whether a source is reliable:

#### 1. Authority

- **Peer Review:** Most scholarly journals and academic book publishers are committed to a policy of consultant review—commonly referred to as “peer review.” Peer reviewers comment on the importance of the subject, the originality and soundness of the argument, the accuracy of the facts, and the currency of the research. Thus, a manuscript submitted to most scholarly journals and presses has undergone rigorous scrutiny before being published.
- **What to Look For When Using Internet Sources:**

**Author**—make sure the author of the document or the person or group responsible for the publication or site is identified. Once you establish authorship, consider the authoritativeness of the work. Publications sometimes indicate the author’s credentials in the field by including relevant biographical information.

**Text**—if you are working with historical documents or literary texts that exist in various versions, make certain you use reliable editions. A modern scholarly editor must compare, analyze, and evaluate these variations and produce an edition that is as historically authoritative as possible.

**Editorial policy**—Take note of the entire work or site you are using even if you are interested only in a particular document within it. Look for a statement of mission or purpose as well as for evidence that the document underwent consultant review.

**Publisher or sponsoring organization**—The name of the publisher or sponsoring organization should be clearly stated, preferably with access to information about the organization. Note the last part of the domain name (e.g., the *.org* in [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)). This suffix identifies where the source originates from—for example, a commercial enterprise (.com), an educational institution (.edu), a government agency (.gov), or a not-for-profit organization (.org).

## 2. Accuracy and Verifiability

If you are evaluating scholarly material, check to see that the work’s sources are indicated, so that its information can be verified. The sources probably appear in a list of works cited. The titles in the list might also tell you something about the breadth of the author’s knowledge of the subject and about any possible biases.

### 3. Currency

The publication date of a print source suggests how current the author's scholarship is. Although online documents and sites have the potential for continual updating, many remain in their original states and may be out-of-date. Ideally, a document should record all dates of publication and revision. Scrutinizing the publication dates of works cited in the text also reveals the currency of its scholarship.

### 4. Questions to ask yourself:

- Who is the author of the work, and what are the author's credentials for writing and publishing this work?
- When judged against your previous reading and your understanding of the subject, is the information furnished by the author correct? Is the argument presented with logic and without bias?
- Are the author's sources clearly and adequately indicated, so that they can be verified?
- Are the author's sources current, or are they outdated?
- Who is the publisher, or what is the sponsoring organization, of the work?
- Is the work peer-reviewed—that is, has it been read and recommended for publication by experts?

### 5. Examples:

If the webpage is run by a specific organization, the information contained on that page will be in favor of that organization. If you're doing research on gun control, for example, and you go to the NRA (National Rifle Association) website, the information you find there will be in favor of gun rights. You will most likely not find unbiased information about gun control.

**The best way to know which sources to use is to ask your teacher.**

## D. Parenthetical Citations

When you quote, paraphrase, or summarize any information from an outside source, you must indicate which source you are using within the body of the paper, not just on the Works Cited page. MLA uses parenthetical citations (this just means placing abbreviated citation information in parenthesis) to refer to the sources used for a research paper. Parenthetical citations should:

1. Be placed directly after the quoted, paraphrased, or summarized material.

*Example of quoted material at the end of the sentence:*

Fitzgerald gives Nick a muted tribute to the hero: "Gatsby turned out all right at the end" (176).

*Example of quoted material in the middle of the sentence (when needed for clarify):*

For Nick, who remarks that Gatsby "turned out all right" (176), the hero deserves respect, but perhaps does not inspire great admiration.

2. Contain the author's last name and the page number where you found the information. For example, (Smith 170). A reader can then refer to your Works Cited page at the end of your paper to find any other bibliographic information about the source by the author with the last name Smith.

*Example of a parenthetical citation for a direct quote:*

"In speaking about the current situation of Black women writers, it is important to remember that the existence of a feminist movement was an essential precondition to the growth of feminist literature, criticism, and women's studies, which focused at the beginning almost entirely upon investigations of literature" (Smith 170).

3. For exact formatting, close your quotes (shift/quotation mark), hit the spacebar, open the parenthesis, type the author's last name, hit the spacebar, type the page number, close the parenthesis, hit period. Ex: "That was easy" (Smith 170).

## **E. Other Ways to Attribute Your Source**

1. Another way to inform your reader of your source is to include the author's name in the text of your paper. For example, use the author's name to introduce the quote. When you do this, you need only to put the page number where you found the quote in parenthesis.

*Example:*

Barbara Smith argues in her well-known article, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," that when "speaking about the current situation of Black women writers, it is important to remember that the existence of a feminist movement was an essential precondition to the growth of feminist literature, criticism, and women's studies, which focused at the beginning almost entirely upon investigations of literature" (170).

2. Even if you are paraphrasing or summarizing and not directly quoting, you must still use parenthetical citations. Use your own words, and place the author's last name and page number in parenthesis.

*Examples:*

The feminist movement had to occur before the establishment of feminist literature and criticism, as well as women's studies (Smith 170).

Feminist literature and criticism, and women's studies as well, originally centered on literature (Smith 170).

## F. Other Guidelines for Parenthetical Citations

1. *Same Last Name:* When using two authors with the same last name, you must indicate the initial of their first name in the parentheses: (B. Smith 170).
2. *Same Author, Multiple Works:* When using more than one work by the same author, the author's name must be followed by a comma and accompanied by a word from the title of the source you are referring to: (Smith, "Toward" 170).
3. *No Author:* If you are given no author at all, choose a word from the title of the source to use in the parentheses and underline or punctuate it appropriately: ("Toward" 170), for an article, for instance. Usually the word you choose should be the first key word from the title. The word "the," for example, would be a poor choice, since you may have many sources that begin with the word "the."
4. *No Author, Same Title:* If you are citing two or more anonymous works that have the same title, find a publication fact that distinguishes the works in their works-cited-list entries, and add it to their parenthetical references. This fact could be the year of publication, or the overall Web site title. For example, ("Snowy Owl," Hinterland) and ("Snowy Owl," Arctic). These match the following works cited entries, respectively:

"Snowy Owl." Arctic Studies Center. 2002 Natl. Museum of Natural History of the Smithsonian Inst. Web. 8 Aug. 2002.

"Snowy Owl." Hinterland Who's Who. 15 May 2002 Canadian Wildlife Service. Web. 8 Aug. 2002.

5. *Web Sources:* If you use electronic sources, you must work with whatever information is provided at the online site. When possible, use this format: (Author page#) or (Title page#). When a source has no page numbers or any other kind of reference numbers, no number can be given in the parenthetical reference.
6. Unless you must list the website name in the signal phrase in order to get the reader to the appropriate entry, do not include URLs in-text. Only provide

partial URLs such as when the name of the site includes, for example, a domain name, like *CNN.com* or *Forbes.com* as opposed to writing out <http://www.cnn.com> or <http://www.forbes.com>.

7. MLA no longer requires the use of URLs in MLA citations. Because Web addresses are not static (i.e., they change often) and because documents sometimes appear in multiple places on the Web (e.g., on multiple databases), MLA explains that most readers can find electronic sources via title or author searches in Internet Search Engines.

If you need more help with citations beyond these examples, for instance, if you want to cite an introduction, an afterword, lines of poetry, a song, or a film, it's best to consult the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers* or the *OWL* link provided.

## G. How to Use Works Cited Lists

The Works Cited page lists **only** the sources that you cite parenthetically in your paper. Follow the guidelines below for the Works Cited page:

1. It begins on a fresh sheet of paper at the end of your paper.
2. Type and center Works Cited at the top of your page. Do not underline, quote, or bold it.
3. Your Works Cited page should be a continuation of your entire document. There should be a header like every other page. If the works cited is the tenth page of your paper, the header would be (Josephson 10). *See Section 1: Formatting of papers.*
4. It is alphabetized by author's last name.
5. The first line of the entry is flush with the left margin, and subsequent lines are indented half an inch (five spaces, or one "tab")
6. Double space the entire list with no extra spaces in between entries.
7. The citations in your parenthetical references will lead readers to this list to find the sources that interest them.

***WCHS English Department has opted to require the use of URLs (ending at domain name) following recommendations from MLA.***

- MLA suggests that the URL appear in angle brackets after the date of access. Break URLs only after slashes.

Aristotle. *Poetics*. Trans. S. H. Butcher. *The Internet Classics Archive*.

Web Atomic and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 13 Sept.

2007. Web. 4 Nov. 2008. <<http://classics.mit.edu/>>.

*Sample Works Cited Page Entries*  
*From the OWL@ Purdue reflecting the 2009 MLA updates*  
*(Add truncated URL for web sources)*

Works Cited

- "Blueprint Lays Out Clear Path for Climate Action." *Environmental Defense Fund*.  
Environmental Defense Fund, 8 May 2007. Web. 24 May 2009.
- Clinton, Bill. Interview by Andrew C. Revkin. "Clinton on Climate Change." *New York Times*. New York Times, May 2007. Web. 25 May 2009.
- Dean, Cornelia. "Executive on a Mission: Saving the Planet." *New York Times*. New York Times, 22 May 2007. Web. 25 May 2009.
- Ebert, Roger. "An Inconvenient Truth." Rev. of *An Inconvenient Truth*, dir. Davis Guggenheim. *rogerebert.com*. Sun-Times News Group, 2 June 2006. Web. 24 May 2009.  
*GlobalWarming.org*. Cooler Heads Coalition, 2007. Web. 24 May 2009.
- Gowdy, John. "Avoiding Self-organized Extinction: Toward a Co-evolutionary Economics of Sustainability." *International Journal of Sustainable Development and World Ecology* 14.1 (2007): 27-36. Print.
- An Inconvenient Truth*. Dir. Davis Guggenheim. Perf. Al Gore, Billy West. Paramount, 2006. DVD.
- Leroux, Marcel. *Global Warming: Myth Or Reality?: The Erring Ways of Climatology*. New York: Springer, 2005. Print.
- Milken, Michael, Gary Becker, Myron Scholes, and Daniel Kahneman. "On Global Warming and Financial Imbalances." *New Perspectives Quarterly* 23.4 (2006): 63. Print.
- Nordhaus, William D. "After Kyoto: Alternative Mechanisms to Control Global Warming." *American Economic Review* 96.2 (2006): 31-34. Print.
- . "Global Warming Economics." *Science* 9 Nov. 2001: 1283-84. *Science Online*. Web. 24 May 2009.
- Shulte, Bret. "Putting a Price on Pollution." *Usnews.com*. *US News & World Rept.*, 6 May 2007. Web. 24 May 2009.
- Uzawa, Hirofumi. *Economic Theory and Global Warming*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. Print.

## H. Works Consulted

A Works Consulted page contains the bibliographical information of sources you referred to as you researched for your paper, but from which you did not summarize, paraphrase or quote. For example, if you are writing a paper on John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*, you might want to do some research on the Great Depression to help you better understand the context of the novel. You won't necessarily quote or paraphrase the information you find, but it will give you essential background information as you write. You still, however, must include the source in the Works Consulted.

If your assignment requires a Works Cited page, it may also require a Works Consulted. The Works Consulted may be included under a separate header (Works Consulted), on the same page as your Works Cited, or as a separate page. The Works Consulted should follow the same format as the Works Cited.

## III. Embedding Quotes

### A. Integrating Quotes from a Literary Text into a Literary Analysis Paper

1. As you choose quotations for a literary analysis, remember the **purpose** of quoting: your paper develops an argument, and you use quotations to support this argument. Select, present and discuss material from the text to "prove" your point—make your case in much the same way a lawyer brings evidence before a jury. This analogy helps you choose your sources as well since, obviously, an attorney would want to use only **expert** witnesses to prove her case. This means that sources such as those found in the online databases and books are far superior to sources such as WIKIPEDIA and SPARKNOTES (these are not considered credible support.)

2. Quoting for any other purpose is counterproductive. Do not quote to "tell a story" (also known as plot summary) or otherwise convey basic information about the text. Assume the reader knows the text. Do not quote just for the sake of quoting or just to fill up space. Do not make the reader stand up and shout "Irrelevant!"

The following is a paragraph of a student's limited literary analysis. This essay is an analysis of the relationship between two characters in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*. Notice how statements expressing the writer's ideas and observations are verified with evidence from the novel in both summarized and quoted form.

Woolf characterizes Mrs. Ramsey's personality by revealing her feelings about other characters. For example, Mrs. Ramsey has mixed feelings toward Mr. Tansley, but her feelings seem to grow more positive over time as she comes to know him better. At first Mrs. Ramsey finds Mr. Tansley annoying, as shown especially when he mentions that no one is going to the lighthouse (52). But rather than hating him, at this point she feels pity: "she pitied men always as if they lacked something..." (85). Then later during the gathering, pity turns to empathy as she realizes that Mr. Tansley must feel inferior. He must know, Mrs. Ramsey thinks, that "no woman would look at him with Mr. Rayley in the room" (106). Finally by the end of the dinner scene, she feels some attraction to Mr. Tansley and also a new respect: "She liked his laugh....She liked his awkwardness. There was a lot in that man after all" (110). In describing this evolution in her attitude, Woolf reveals more about Mrs. Ramsey than about Mr. Tansley. The change in Mrs. Ramsey's attitude is not used by Woolf to show that Mrs. Ramsey is fickle or confused; rather it is used to show her capacity for understanding both the frailty and complexity of human beings. This is a central characteristic of Mrs. Ramsey's personality.

Notice that this paragraph includes three basic kinds of materials: (a) statements expressing the student's own ideas about the relationship Woolf is creating; (b) data or evidence from the text is in summarized, paraphrased and quoted form: and (c) discussion of how the data support the writer's interpretation. The quotations are used in accordance with the writer's purpose, i.e. to show how the development of Mrs. Ramsey's feelings indicates something about her personality.

### **B. Quoting vs. Paraphrasing vs. Summarizing: How to Choose**

You will need to make decisions about when to quote directly, when to paraphrase, and when to summarize. *All three choices require parenthetical citations.*

1. **When you quote**, you are reproducing another writer's words exactly as they appear on the page. Here are some tips to help you decide when to use quotations:

- Quote if you can't say it any better and the author's words are particularly brilliant, witty, edgy, distinctive, a good illustration of a point you're making, or otherwise interesting.
- Quote if you are using a particularly authoritative source and you need the author's expertise to back up your point.
- Quote if you are analyzing diction, tone, or a writer's use of a specific word or phrase.
- Quote if you are taking a position that relies on the reader's understanding exactly what another writer says about the topic.

2. **When you paraphrase**, you take a specific section of a text and put it into your own words. Putting it into your own words doesn't mean just changing or rearranging a few of the author's words: to paraphrase well and avoid plagiarism, try setting your source aside and restating the sentence or paragraph you have just read, as though you were describing it to another person. Paraphrasing is different than summary because a paraphrase focuses on a particular, fairly short bit of text (like a phrase, sentence, or paragraph). You'll need to indicate when you are paraphrasing someone else's text by citing your source correctly, just as you would with a quotation.

When might you want to paraphrase?

- Paraphrase when you want to introduce a writer's position, but his or her original words aren't special enough to quote.
- Paraphrase when you are supporting a particular point and need to draw on a certain place in a text that supports your point.
- Paraphrase when you want to present a writer's view on a topic that differs from your position or that of another writer; you can then refute writer's specific points in your own words after you paraphrase.
- Paraphrase when you want to comment on a particular example that another writer uses.
- Paraphrase when you need to present information that's unlikely to be questioned.

3. **When you summarize**, you are offering an overview of an entire text, or at least a lengthy section of a text. Summary is useful when you are providing background information, grounding your own argument, or mentioning a source as a counter-argument. A summary is less nuanced than paraphrased material. It can be the most effective way to incorporate a large number of sources when you don't have a lot of space. When you are summarizing someone else's argument or ideas, be sure this is clear to the reader and cite your source appropriately.

**SUMMARIZE OR PARAPHRASE WHEN IT IS NOT SO MUCH THE LANGUAGE OF THE TEXT THAT JUSTIFIES YOUR POSITION, BUT THE SUBSTANCE OR CONTENT.**

### C. Quoting Selectively

After you have decided that you do want to use material in quoted form, quote **ONLY** the portions of the text specifically relevant to your point. Think of the text in terms of

units—words, phrases, sentences, and groups of sentences (paragraphs, stanzas)—and use only the units you NEED. If it is particular words or phrases that “prove” your point, you do not need to quote the sentences in which they appear; rather, incorporate the words and phrases into sentences expressing your own ideas.

#### D. Incorporating Quotations in Sentences

Remember that a quote cannot speak for itself, so do not drop a quote into your paragraph without introduction, discussion, or follow-up.

It is permissible to quote an entire sentence (between two sentences of your own), but in general you should AVOID this method of bring textual material into your discussion. Instead, use one of the following patterns:

1. An introducing phrase or orienter plus the quotation:
  - In this poem it is creation, not a hypothetical creator, that is supremely awesome. [introducing sentence] The speaker asks, “What immortal hand or eye / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?” [orienter before quote]
  - Gatsby is not to be regarded as a personal failure. [introducing sentence] “Gatsby turned out all right at the end” (176), according to Nick. [orienter after quote]
2. An assertion of your own, a colon, plus the quotation:
  - Fitzgerald gives Nick a muted tribute to the hero: “Gatsby turned out all right at the end” (176).
  - Cassio represents not only a political but also a personal threat to Iago: “He hath a daily beauty in his life / That makes me ugly/...” (5.1.19-20).
3. An assertion of your own with quoted material worked in:
  - For Nick, who remarks that Gatsby “turned out all right” (176), the hero deserves respect but perhaps does not inspire great admiration.

#### E. Clarity and Readability

1. For non-narrative poetry, it is customary to attribute quotations to “the speaker”; for a story with a narrator, to “the narrator.” For plays, novels, and other works with characters, identify characters as you quote them.
2. Do not use two quotations in a row without intervening material of your own.
3. Use present tense.

Example: When he hears Cordelia's answer, Lear seems surprised but not dumbfounded. He advises her to "mend her speech a little" (1.1.95).

4. As a rule, introduce quotations with a specific reference to their context—either events in the story, or ideas in the paragraph. Never introduce a quotation with just a line or page number:

**Incorrect:** On page 219, Pseudolus says he has "eyes like pumice stones."

**Correct:** When Calidorus asks Pseudolus why Phoenicium's letter doesn't make him weep, Pseudolus responds that he has "eyes like pumice stones" (219).

5. Select your quotations and build your sentences around them so that the whole is a grammatically correct unit. Don't quote complete sentences inside your own sentences.

**Incorrect:** Feste's statement that "Foolery, sir, does walk about the orb like the sun; it shines everywhere" (3.1.40-41) is an appropriate comment on the other characters in the play.

**Correct:** Feste's comment that foolishness, like sunlight, "shines everywhere" (3.1.41) could be taken as the theme of *Twelfth Night*.

## F. Indenting Quotes

Prose or verse quotations less than four lines long are not indented. For quotations of this length, use the patterns described above.

**USE BLOCK QUOTES SPARINGLY.** Block quotes are ONLY used when you fear omitting any words will destroy the integrity of the passages. If the passage exceeds FOUR lines in your paper, then set it off as a block quotation.

1. Indent "longer" quotation in a block about ten spaces from the left margin.
2. MLA format requires that you double space block quotes.
3. Do not use quotation marks for a block quote. Indenting indicates that it is a quote.
4. Place parenthetical documentation AFTER the period following the last sentence of the quote.

*Example of properly formatted block quote:*

Naomi Klein, in her book *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, writes:

The astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multinational corporations over the last fifteen years can arguably be traced back to a single, seemingly innocuous idea developed by management theorists in the mid-1980s: that successful corporations must primarily produce brands, as opposed to products. (3)

## G. Punctuation of Quotes

1. Commas and periods go inside the quotation marks; the other punctuation marks go outside.

*Example:* Lawrence insisted that books “are not life”; however he wrote exultantly about the power of the novel.

*Example:* Why does Lawrence need to point out that “Books are not life”?

2. When quoting lines of poetry up to three lines long (which are not indented), separate one line of poetry from another with a slash mark.

*Example:* “What immortal hand or eye / Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?”

3. For quotations within a quotation use a single quote for the internal quotation.

*Example:* In “The Emperor’s New Clothes,” Hans Christian Anderson wrote, “‘But the Emperor has nothing on at all!’ cried a little child.”

4. Use an ellipsis whenever you want to leave out material from a quotation. An ellipsis is a series of three periods, each of which should be preceded and followed by a space. Be sure that you don’t fundamentally change the meaning of the quotation by omitting material. See *handout on using an ellipsis*.

5. Use brackets when you need to alter a word or words within a quotation in order to improve clarity or flow.

Original quote: “Nobody understood me.” Altered quoted with brackets: Esther Hansen felt that when she came to the United States “nobody understood [her].”

“The principal of the school told Billy [William Smith] that his contract would be terminated.

“We completely revised our political strategies after the strike [of 1934].”

DO NOT OVERUSE BRACKETS. *See handout on using brackets.*

#### IV. Writer's Skills

- A. Use third person. **Avoid** use of "you," "your," "I," "we," "our," "us," etc.
- B. Use present tense when discussing literature.
- C. Always use consistent tenses.
- D. Maintain formal voice. **Do not use** contractions (can't, won't, etc.), abbreviations (b/c, w/o), or other informal language (slang).
- E. **Avoid** sentences that begin "There is," "This is," "This quote shows," etc.
- F. **Avoid** "is when" and "is where" definitions.
- G. **Avoid** qualifiers (very, often, hopefully, practically, basically, really, obviously, evidently, etc.).
- H. Place commas and periods inside quotation marks.
- I. Form possessives and plurals correctly (know the difference between its and it's.)
- J. Make subjects and verbs agree in number.
- K. Make pronouns agree.
- L. Follow the rules for titular punctuation.
  1. Underlined (when handwritten) or Italicized (when typed) Titles: books, plays, long poems published as a book, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, films, television programs, albums, ballets, operas, long musical compositions identified by name, paintings, sculptures, ships, aircrafts, spacecrafts
  2. Titles in Quotation Marks: newspaper, magazine, or encyclopedia articles, essays, short stories, poems, chapters in a book, episodes of a tv show, songs, and lectures
  3. Exceptions (these all appear without underlining or quotation marks): the names of sacred writings (including all books and versions of the Bible); of laws, acts, and similar political documents; of series, societies, buildings, and monuments; and of conferences, seminars, workshops, and courses
  4. In a title or subtitle, capitalize the first word, last word, and all principal words, including those that follow hyphens in compound terms. Therefore, capitalize the following parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and subordinating conjunctions.
  5. Do not capitalize the following parts of speech when they fall in the middle of a title: articles, prepositions, coordinating conjunctions, the *to* in infinitives.
  6. Use a colon and a space to separate a title from a subtitle, unless the title ends in a question mark, exclamation point, or dash.
- M. Use proper punctuation.
  1. Use commas correctly. See *handout on comma rules*.
    - a. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction joining independent clauses in a sentence.
    - b. Use commas to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series.
    - c. Use a comma between coordinate adjectives—that is, adjectives that

- separately modify the same noun.
- d. Use commas to set off a parenthetical comment if it is brief and closely related to the rest of the sentence.
  - e. Use commas to set off nonrestrictive modifiers—that is, a modifier that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence.
2. Use the apostrophe correctly. See handout on apostrophe rules.
    - a. To form the possessives of nouns.
    - b. To show the omission of letters when forming contractions.
    - c. To indicate certain plurals of lowercase letters.
    - d. Do not use an apostrophe to form the plural of an abbreviation or number.
  3. Use hyphens correctly.
    - a. Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective before a noun.
    - b. Use a hyphen with compound numbers.
    - c. Use a hyphen to avoid confusion or an awkward combination of letters (ex: re-sign a petition vs. resign from a job).
    - d. Use a hyphen with the prefixes *ex-* (meaning *former*), *self-*, *all-*; with the suffix *-elect*; between a prefix and a capitalized word; and with figures or letters.
    - e. Do not use a hyphen in a compound adjective beginning with an adverb ending in *-ly* or with *too*, *very*, or *much*.
  4. Use semicolons correctly.
    - a. Use a semicolon to join two related independent clauses not linked by a conjunction.
    - b. Use a semicolon to separate items in a series if the elements of the series already include commas.
    - c. Use a semicolon to achieve a balance between two contrasting ideas.
  5. Use colons correctly.
    - a. The colon signals that more information is to come on the subject of concern.
    - b. The colon creates a slight dramatic tension.
    - c. Use the colon to introduce a word, phrase, or complete statement that emphasizes, illustrates, or exemplifies what has already been stated.
    - d. Use the colon to introduce a series that illustrates or emphasizes what has already been stated.
    - e. Use the colon to introduce long quotations that are set off from the rest of the text by indentation.
    - f. Use the colon to introduce a list.
    - g. The word following the colon can start with either a capital or a

lowercase letter. Use a capital letter if the word following the colon begins another complete sentence. Use a lowercase letter when the words following the colon are part of the sentence preceding the colon.  
 h. Leave only one space after a colon, not two.

6. Use the dash correctly—two hyphens indicate a dash! There is no space before, between, or after the dash.
  - a. Use the dash to indicate a sudden or unexpected break in the normal flow of the sentence.
  - b. Use the dash to give special emphasis to the material set off.
  - c. Use the dash to summarize a series of ideas that have already been expressed.
  - d. Limit the number of dashes in a sentence to two paired or one unpaired.
7. Use question marks appropriately with quotation marks.
  - a. Place a question mark inside a closing quotation mark if the quoted passage is a question. *Ex: Whitman asks, "Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?"*
  - b. Place a question mark outside if the quotation ends a sentence that is a question. *Ex: Where does Whitman speak of "the meaning of poems"?*
  - c. If a question mark occurs where a comma or period would normally be required, omit the comma or period. *Ex: "Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?" Whitman asks.*

#### N. Active vs. Passive Voice

1. In active voice, the subject performs the action expressed by the verb.  
 Ex: The student wrote a song.
2. In passive voice, the subject receives the action expressed by the verb and it is always expressed as a form of the verb "to be" + past participle. In other words, the object of the action becomes the subject.  
 Ex: A song was written by the student.
3. Use active voice whenever possible for lively and succinct writing.
4. Use passive voice to:
  - a. Call attention to the receiver of the action rather than the performer.  
*Ex: The professor was hit by a snowball.*
  - b. Point out the receiver of the action when the performer is unknown or unimportant.  
*Ex: A love letter was slipped under the door.*
  - c. Avoid calling attention to the performer of the action.  
*Ex: The fines will be collected on Monday.*
5. Don't be a lazy writer or thinker! **Avoid** summarizing history or literary plots with passive voice!

*The working class was marginalized.  
African Americans were discriminated against.  
Women were not treated as equals.*

Such sentences lack the precision and connection to context and causes that mark rigorous thinking. The reader learns little about the systems, conditions, human decisions and contradictions that led each of those groups to experience their histories. And so the reader--your instructor--questions your understanding of these things.

In papers where you discuss an author's work--e.g., historians or literary authors--you can also strengthen your writing by not relying on the passive as a crutch to summarize plots or arguments. Instead of writing

*It is argued that...  
or Tom and Huck are portrayed as...  
or And then the link between X and Y is made, showing that...*

you can heighten the level of your analysis by explicitly connecting an author with these statements.

*Anderson argues that...  
Twain portrays Tom and Huck as...  
Ishiguro draws a link between X and Y to show that...*

#### O. Use Parallel Structure.

Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance. This can happen at the word, phrase, or clause level. Do not mix forms.

##### 1. **Coordinated ideas** of equal rank, connected by and, but, or, or nor

**Correct:**

Earl loves bicycling and climbing.  
(A gerund is paired with a gerund.)

Earl loves to bicycle and to climb.  
(An infinitive is paired with an infinitive.)

**Incorrect:**

Earl loves bicycling and to climb.  
(Here, a gerund is paired with an infinitive.)

## 2. Compared ideas

**Correct:**

I like **officiating** basketball more than **playing** basketball.

(A gerund is paired with a gerund.)

I like **to officiate** basketball more than I like **to play** basketball.

(An infinitive is paired with an infinitive.)

**Incorrect:**

I like **to officiate** basketball more than I like **playing** basketball.

(An infinitive is paired with a gerund.)

3. **Correlative ideas** are linked with the correlative conjunctions both...and, either...or, neither...nor, and not only...but also.

**Correct:**

Josh is talented not only as **a basketball player**, but also as **a tennis player**.

(A noun is paired with a noun.)

Josh is talented not only at **playing basketball**, but also at **playing tennis**.

(A gerund is paired with a gerund.)

**Incorrect:**

Josh is talented not only as **a basketball player**, but also at **playing tennis**.

(A noun is paired with a gerund.)

## 4. Placement

Place correlative conjunctions immediately before the parallel terms:

**Incorrect:**

Brad has **both** experienced the sweet taste of success **and** the bitterness of defeat.

**Revised:**

Brad has experienced **both** the sweet taste of success **and** the bitterness of defeat.

## V. Structure and Organization

### A. 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 your 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 professor 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.*

## B. Paragraph Development and Transitions

One of the central components of a paper is the paragraph. When most students think of a paragraph, they hold onto the old myths about length: a paragraph is at least 5 sentences, a paragraph is half a page, etc. A paragraph, however, is "a group of sentences or a single sentence that forms a unit" (Lunsford and Connors 116). Length or appearance is **not** a factor in determining whether a section in a paper is a paragraph. In fact, it is not the number of sentences that construct a paragraph, but it is the unity and coherence of ideas among those sentences that makes a paragraph a paragraph. For instance, in some styles of writing, particularly journalistic styles, a paragraph can be one sentence. As long as that sentence expresses the paper's

central idea, that sentence can serve the function of a paragraph. Ultimately, strong paragraphs contain a sentence or sentences unified around one central, controlling idea. When the paragraph reaches completion it should serve to bring the reader into your paper and guide his/her understanding of what has been read. Whether that completion happens with one sentence or with twenty, the end result is still a paragraph.

Every paragraph in a paper should be

- **Unified** - The sentences should all refer to the main idea, or thesis, of the paper.
- **Coherent**-The sentences should be arranged in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan for development..
- **Well-Developed** - Every idea discussed in the paragraph should be adequately explained and supported through evidence and details that work together to explain the paper's controlling idea.

## 1. Five Step Process to Paragraph Development

- **Controlling idea**- the expression of the main idea, topic, or focus of the paragraph in a sentence or a collection of sentences.

Paragraph development begins with the formulation of the controlling idea. This idea directs the paragraph's development. Often, the controlling idea of a paragraph will appear in the form of a topic sentence. A topic sentence announces and controls the content of a paragraph (Rosen and Behrens 122). Topic sentences can occur at four major points in a paragraph: the beginning of the paragraph, the middle of the paragraph, the end of the paragraph, or at both the beginning and the end of the paragraph. Here's how you might begin a paragraph on handing in homework:

*Idea - Learning how to turn in homework assignments on time is one of the invaluable skills that college students can take with them into the working world.*

- **Explanation of controlling idea**- the writer's rationale into his/her thinking about the main topic, idea, or focus of the paragraph

Paragraph development continues with an expression of the rationale or the explanation that the writer gives for how the reader should interpret the information presented in the idea statement or topic sentence of the paragraph. Here's the sentence that would follow the controlling idea about homework deadlines:

*Explanation - Though the workforce may not assign homework to its workers in the traditional sense, many of the objectives and jobs that need to be completed require that employees work with deadlines. The deadlines that students encounter in the classroom*

*may be different in content when compared to the deadlines of the workforce, but the importance of meeting those deadlines is the same. In fact, failure to meet deadlines in both the classroom and the workforce can mean instant termination.*

- **Example** -- the example serves as a sign or representation of the relationship established in the idea and explanation portions of the paragraph

Paragraph development progresses with the expression of some type of support or evidence for the idea and the explanation that came before it. Here are two examples that you might use to follow the homework deadline explanation:

**Example 1**--*For example, in the classroom, students form a contract with the teacher and the university when they enroll in a class. That contract requires that students complete the assignments and objectives set forth by the course's instructor in a specified time to receive a grade and credit for the course.*

**Example 2**--*Accordingly, just as a student risks termination in the classroom if he/she fails to meet the deadline for a homework assignment, so, too, does that student risk termination in the workforce.*

- **Explanation (of example)** - the reasoning behind why you chose to use this/or these particular examples as evidence to support the major claim, or focus, in your paragraph.

The next movement in paragraph development is an explanation of each example and its relevance to the topic sentence and rationale given at the beginning of the paragraph. This pattern continues until all points/examples that the reader deems necessary have been made and explained. NONE of your examples should be left unexplained; the relationship between the example and the idea should always be expressed. Look at these two explanations for examples in the homework deadline paragraph:

**Explanation for example 1**--*When a student fails to complete those assignments by the deadline, the student breaks her contract with the university and the teacher to complete the assignments and objectives of the course. This often leaves the teacher with no recourse than to fail the student and leaves the university with no other recourse than to terminate the student's credit for the course.*

**Explanation for Example 2**--*A former student's contract with his/her employer functions in much the same way as the contract that student had with his/her instructor and with the university in a particular course.*

- **Completion of Paragraph's idea or transitioning into next paragraph**--a review for your reader about the relevance of the information that you just discussed in the paragraph, or a transition or preparation for your reader for the paragraph that follows.

The final movement in paragraph development involves tying up the loose ends of the paragraph--and reminding the reader of the relevance of the information in this paragraph to the main or controlling idea of the paper. You might feel more comfortable, however, simply transitioning your reader to the next development in the next paragraph. Here's an example of a sentence that completes the homework deadlines paragraph:

**Idea**-Developing good habits of turning in assignments in class now, as current students, will aid your performance and position as future participants in the working world.

## 2. Beneath the Formula for Paragraph Development

There are some other central components of paragraph development that help to make this formula work. These components are often overlooked, but developing the sentences that complete the steps of the paragraph development process is not possible without these two components:

- **Topic Sentences** - A topic sentence is a sentence that expresses the main idea of a paragraph. It tells the reader what to expect about the information that will follow. Without the use of a topic sentence, developing a paragraph can be extremely difficult. Topic sentences can appear at several points in a paragraph:
  1. the beginning of the paragraph
  2. the middle of the paragraph
  3. the end of the paragraph
  4. the beginning and the end of the paragraph

\*Notice how the development of the paragraph (in the 5-Step example above) is framed by two topic sentences (beginning and end) which work to reinforce the same idea and close the discussion and multiple examples given by the writer.)

Here is an example of a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph (in bold print):

Homework is one of those necessary evils of being a student. The one sure way that a teacher knows how to measure your progress in his/her course is to assign homework that tests your knowledge of the information that is taught. Some instructors, however, seem to use homework as a way of reassuring themselves that they have "taught" the information to the students. Many students, aware of these ideas about homework, tend to treat homework as a chore, putting little or no thought into the work that is turned in. **However, like any designated task, homework is a reflection not only on you as a student, but also on you as an individual.** When an employer has to decide whether or not to hire you, he or she has to consider your ability to complete the demands of the working world. For many employers, the way that you handle your "homework" in college often indicates the way that you will handle your homework on the job. For example, often your grade in a class is determined by the quality of the homework that you do. That homework

grade can be a significant part of your final grade for the course. In fact, many students can attest to an experience where the homework grade made the difference in their final course grade. Once you leave college and attempt to find a job, those homework grades translate into final GPAs for your major. Those final GPAs show up on résumés and job applications and employers look to see if you have done your "homework" in school as a key factor in determining if you will do your "homework" on the job.

- **Transitions** ([see our separate handout on transitions](#)) - Transitions come in the form of single words, phrases, sentences, and even whole paragraphs. They help to establish relationships between ideas in a paragraph and to create a logical progression of those ideas in a paragraph. Without transitions, your paragraph will not be unified, coherent, or well developed. Look at the following paragraph and the transitions that it uses from idea to idea (in bold print):

Juggling the demands of a job with the demands of being a full-time student makes good academic performance difficult. Many students are forced to choose between good work on the job and good work in the classroom. **Often**, good work in the classroom is compromised for good work on the job because the job pays the rent. **In addition**, those students who do manage to perform well in both areas usually do so at the expense of their health. **For example**, several students complain of the inability to handle the stress of both a job and school. **In fact**, the stress of both can often cause headaches, dizziness, fatigue, and other ailments which slow the body down and prevent adequate performance in either area. **To eliminate the threat of being in the middle between job and school**, students have to form a balance between the demands of work and the demands of the classroom. **Ultimately**, managing your time more effectively, working the same number of hours in smaller chunks, and planning ahead can all help in alleviating some of the stress to the body and to the mind.

## C. Conclusions

Introductions and conclusions can be the most difficult parts of papers to write. While the body is often easier to write, it needs a frame around it. An introduction and conclusion frame your thoughts and bridge your ideas for the reader.

Just as your introduction acts as a bridge that transports your readers from their own lives into the "place" of your analysis, your conclusion can provide a bridge to help your readers make the transition back to their daily lives. Such a conclusion will help them see why all your analysis and information should matter to them after they put the paper down.

### 1. Why bother writing a good conclusion?

- Your conclusion is your chance to have the last word on the subject. The conclusion allows you to have the final word on the issues you have raised in your paper, to summarize your thoughts, to demonstrate the importance of your ideas, and to propel your reader to a new view of the subject. It is also your opportunity to make a good final impression and to end on a positive note.
- Your conclusion can go beyond the confines of the assignment. The conclusion pushes beyond the boundaries of the prompt and allows you to consider broader issues, make new connections, and elaborate on the significance of your findings.
- Your conclusion should make your readers glad they read your paper. Your conclusion gives your reader something to take away that will help them see things differently or appreciate your topic in personally relevant ways. It can suggest broader implications that will not only interest your reader, but also enrich your reader's life in some way. It is your gift to the reader.

## 2. Strategies for Writing an Effective Conclusion

- 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.

### 3. Strategies to Avoid

- 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.

## VI. Developing Your Style as a Writer

### A. What is style?

Have you ever wondered what your instructors mean when they write "wordy" or "passive voice" or "awk" in the margins of your paper? Do you sometimes sense that your sentences could be stronger, clearer, shorter, more effective? Do you often feel that you know what you mean but do not know how to say it? If you often get feedback from your instructors that you need to "tighten your prose" or "look at your word choice," you may need to work on your writing *style*. When you read your writing it may seem perfectly clear, but other people may not be getting your point. If you have checked your grammar, punctuation, and even that handy thesaurus on your word processor and still find a ton of circled words and question marks on your graded paper, you may need to work on your writing **style**--the *way* you put together a sentence or group of sentences.

Part of the problem with style is that it's subjective. You may have an instructor who keeps circling items in your paper and noting "word choice" or "awkward" and another who only comments on content. Worse yet, some of what readers identify as writing problems are not technically grammatically incorrect. A sentence can be wordy and still pass all the rules in the grammar handbooks. This fact may make it harder for you to see what's wrong, and it may make you more likely to think that the instructor is picky or out to get you when you read her comments. In fact, the instructor probably just cares about your development as a writer. She wants you to see what she thinks interferes with your argument and learn to express your ideas more directly, elegantly, and persuasively.

### B. How to Improve Your Style

1. **Say what you mean.** First, remember that your goal in academic writing is not to *sound* intelligent, but to get your intelligent point across. Your instructor isn't psychic, and if she can't understand what you are saying, she's going to have trouble giving you credit for it. Remember that the most important goal in every paper is to get your point across as straightforwardly as possible.

2. **Say it in the appropriate tone.** Avoid writing in the same way you would talk to your friends over email, IM, or texting. Maintain formality, unless the specific assignment calls for a less formal style.

3. **Avoid wordiness.** This problem involves using more words than you absolutely need to say something. Filler words and phrases act as delays in getting the reader to the point of your ideas. Don't write more to meet a length requirement. Teachers can tell. Get rid of:

- **clichés**

*Ex: America's intervention was too little, too late.*

- **qualifiers**

*Ex: really, practically, basically, mostly, seems*

- **two words that mean the same thing**

*Ex: All our hopes and dreams were fulfilled.*

- **overuse of prepositional phrases** (prepositions are little words such

as in, over, of, for, at, etc.)

- **stock phrases**

Instead of...

The reason for  
 For the reason that  
 Due to the fact that  
 Owing to the fact that  
 In light of the fact that  
 Considering the fact that  
 On the grounds that

Use...  
 Because, since, or why

Instead of...

Despite the fact that  
 Regardless of the fact that

Use...  
 Although or even though

For more examples, see Strunk & White's *Elements of Style* or Joseph M. Williams's, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*.

#### 4. **Avoid ostentatious erudition.** Use the right words in the right context.

You may be inclined to improve your style by sounding more "collegiate" or by using multi-syllabic words. Don't ever do so without looking up those words to make sure you know exactly what they mean. And don't accept the recommendations of your word processing program's thesaurus--these tools may be dangerous unless you double-check the meaning of the words *in a dictionary*. Many times, an inappropriate synonym will make you sound like you don't know what you are talking about or, worse yet, give the impression that you are plagiarizing from a source you don't understand. Never use a word you can't clearly define. It's okay to use big words if you know them well and they fit your overall tone—just make sure your tone is consistent. In other words, don't say "That miscreant has a superlative aesthetic sense, but he's dopey."

You may use overly "erudite" words because you think it is wrong to use the same words over and over again in an essay. In fact, it's often okay to repeat

the same word(s) in your paper, particularly when they are significant or central terms. For example, if your paper discusses the significance of memory represented by the scent of wisteria in William Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom*, you are going to write the words "memory" and "wisteria" a lot. Don't start writing "recollection," "reminiscence," "summoning up of past events," and "climbing woody vine" just to get a little variation in there.

**5. Read your paper out loud and at a slow pace.** When you read out loud, your written words should make sense to you and other listeners. If a sentence seems confusing or trips you up as you speak, rewrite it using different words and/or altered syntax to make the meaning clear.

## VII. Literary Terms

1. **Allegory** – The representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in a fictional work. For example, In John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the characters named Faithful, Mercy, and Mr. Wordly Wiseman are clearly meant to represent types of people rather than simply be characters in the narrative. (See works like Plato's Allegory of the Cave) <http://webspace.ship.edu/cgboer/platoscave.html>

a. **Fable** – a short story that exemplifies an abstract moral thesis or principle of human behavior. The most common type is the *animal fable* in which animals are personified to highlight the characteristics of the humans they are meant to represent. <http://www.iusb.edu/%7Ejournal/1998/2Tale.html>

b. **Parable** – a short narrative presented to stress an analogy between its component parts and a lesson that the narrator is trying to teach to his listeners or readers. The Bible is full of these types of stories, for example, the story of the Prodigal Son. <http://www.comparativereligion.com/prodigal.html>

2. **Alliteration** - Repetition of a consonant sound at the beginning of words. Ex: "The kids kicked the can into the corner."

- a. **Assonance** - The repetition of identical or similar vowel sounds, especially in stressed syllables, with changes in the intervening consonants. Ex: Fleet feet sweep by sleeping geeks.
- b. **Consonance** – The repetition of a sequence of two or more consonants in the middle of words but with a change in the intervening vowels. Ex: W.H. Auden's Poem "O where are you going?"
- "Out of this house," said the rider to the rader,  
 "Yours never will," said the farer to the fearer,  
 "They are looking for you," said the hearer to the horror

3. **Allusion** - A reference, either explicit or indirect, to a well-known person, place, event, or to another literary work. Ex: She had the beauty of Aphrodite, charming all who looked upon her. (a reference to the Greek goddess of love). Ex. "Christy didn't like to spend money. She was no Scrooge, but she seldom purchased anything except the bare necessities". (a reference to one of the main characters of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*). <http://www.worsleyschool.net/socialarts/allusion/page>

4. **Archetype** - According to Carl Jung, archetypes are characters, images, plot patterns, rituals, and settings that are shared by diverse cultures. Jung believed that archetypes are part of humanity's "collective unconscious" and that they appear in literature, myth, folklore, and rituals from a wide range of cultures. Archetypes fall into two major categories: characters, situations/symbols. It is easiest to understand them with the help of examples. Listed below are some of the most common archetypes in each category:

Archetypal Characters:

The hero - The courageous figure, the one who's always running in and saving the day. **Ex:** D'Artagnon from Alexandre Dumas's *The Three Musketeers*.

The outcast - The outcast is just that. He or she has been cast out of society or has left it on a voluntary basis. The outcast figure can oftentimes also be considered as a Christ figure. **Ex:** Simon from William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies*.

The scapegoat - The scapegoat figure is the one who gets blamed for everything, regardless of whether he or she is actually at fault. **Ex:** Snowball from George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

The star-crossed lovers - This is the young couple joined by love but unexpectedly parted by fate. **Ex:** Romeo and Juliet from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

The shrew - This is that nagging, bothersome wife always battering her husband with verbal abuse. **Ex:** Zeena from Edith Wharton's *Ethan Frome*.

### Archetypal Situations/Symbols:

The task - A situation in which a character, or group of characters, is driven to complete some duty of monstrous proportion. **Ex:** Frodo's task to keep the ring safe in J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy.

The quest - Here, the character(s) are searching for something, whether consciously or unconsciously. Their actions, thoughts, and feelings center around the goal of completing this quest. **Ex:** Luke Skywalker's quest to destroy the empire and redeem his father in *Star Wars*.

The loss of innocence - This is, as the name implies, a loss of innocence through sexual experience, violence, or any other means. **Ex:** Holden's loss of innocence after the death of his brother in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The initiation - This is the process by which a character is brought into another sphere of influence, usually (in literature) into adulthood. **Ex:** Telemachus' initiation into adulthood in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Water - Water is a symbol of life, cleansing, and rebirth. It is a strong life force, and is often depicted as a living, reasoning force. **Ex:** Edna learns to swim in Kate Chopin's *The Awakening*.

5. **Cliché** - A trite or overused expression or idea (**Ex:** "No pain, no gain") OR A person or character whose behavior is predictable or superficial (ex. She is such a dumb blonde. She threw a clock out of her window to see time fly).
6. **Connotation** - An idea or feeling suggested by or associated with a word or thing. **Ex:** The American flag connotes personal freedoms for millions of Americans.  
**Denotation** – The strict, literal, dictionary definition of a word devoid of any emotion or attitude.  
**Explanation** - You may live in a *house*, but we live in a *home*  
 If you were to look up the words house and home in a dictionary, you would find that both words have approximately the same meaning- "a dwelling place." However, the speaker in the sentence above suggests that home has an additional meaning. Aside from the strict

dictionary definition, or **denotation**, many people associate such things as comfort, love, security, or privacy with a home (its **connotation**) but do not necessarily make the same associations with a house.

## 7. Ethos/Pathos/Logos – A General Summary of Aristotle's Appeals:

The goal of argumentative writing is to persuade your audience that your ideas are valid, or more valid than someone else's. The Greek philosopher Aristotle divided the means of persuasion, appeals, into three categories--**Ethos, Pathos, Logos**.

**Ethos** (Greek for 'character') refers to the trustworthiness or credibility of the writer or speaker. Ethos is often conveyed through tone and style of the message and through the way the writer or speaker refers to differing views. It can also be affected by the writer's reputation as it exists independently from the message--his or her expertise in the field, his or her previous record or integrity, and so forth. The impact of ethos is often called the argument's 'ethical appeal' or the 'appeal from credibility.' An argument that appeals to ethos may frequently also appeal to "what is right or wrong" but it does so based on the author's credibility. **Ex:** A doctor from NIH says, 'As a professional who has worked in the field of medical ethics for the last 35 years, I would argue that blocking stem cell research is wrong.'

**Pathos** (Greek for 'suffering' or 'experience') is often associated with emotional appeal. But a better equivalent might be 'appeal to the audience's sympathies and imagination.' An appeal to pathos causes an audience not just to respond emotionally but to identify with the writer's point of view--to feel what the writer feels. In this sense, pathos evokes a meaning implicit in the verb 'to suffer'--to feel pain imaginatively. Perhaps the most common way of conveying a pathetic appeal is through narrative or story, which can turn abstractions into something palpable and present. The values, beliefs, and understandings of the writer are implicit in the story and conveyed imaginatively to the reader. Pathos thus refers to both the emotional and the imaginative impact of the message on an audience, the power with which the writer's message moves the audience to decision or action.

**Logos** (Greek for 'word') refers to the internal consistency of the message--the clarity of the claim, the logic of its reasons, and the effectiveness of its supporting evidence. The impact of logos on an audience is sometimes called the argument's logical appeal.

[The above text drawn verbatim from Ramage, John D. and John C. Bean. *Writing Arguments*. 4th Edition. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon, 1998, 81-82. Print.]

**Epic** – Applied to a work that meets at least the following criteria: it is a long narrative poem on a great and serious subject, told in an elevated style, and centered on a heroic or quasi-divine figure on whose actions depends the fate of a tribe, a nation, or the human race. **Ex:** *Beowulf*, Homer's *The Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*.

8. **Euphemism** – A mild or pleasant sounding expression that is substituted for the harsher or more offensive one that would more precisely designate what is intended. **Ex:** "He passed away" is a euphemism for "He died." He "lost his lunch" after the roller coaster ride is a euphemism for "He vomited" after the roller coaster ride.

(<http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/euphemism.html>)

9. **Figurative Language** - An umbrella term for all uses of language that imply and imaginative comparison. The speaker or writer purposely departs from the literal meanings of words to achieve some special meaning or effect. **Ex:** "You've earned your wings" is a figurative way of saying "You have succeeded" by implying a comparison with a bird that has just learned how to fly. Similes, metaphors, personification, irony, synecdoche, metonymy, hyperbole, imagery, and symbols are some examples of figurative language.
10. **Genre** – The major category into which a literary work fits. The basic divisions of literature are prose, poetry, and drama. Within these broad boundaries exist many subdivisions that are often called genres themselves. Prose can be divided into non-fiction and fiction. Fiction can be further divided into mystery, comedy, tragedy etc.
11. **Hyperbole/Understatement** - A **Hyperbole** is a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used to achieve emphasis. **Ex:** Your friend is 20 minutes late to pick you up. He finally arrives and says, "Sorry I was late, there were a million busses parked at the intersection of Gainsborough and Seven Locks Road." An **Understatement** tries to achieve an effect by doing the exact opposite of a hyperbole. An author assigns less significance to an event than it deserves. **Ex:** In referring to Hurricane Katrina, an author said, "the unexpected wind that created turmoil within the Bush presidency."
12. **Imagery** – a mental picture that is conjured by specific words and associations which can also include auditory and other sensory components. Nearly all effective writing depends on imagery to be interesting.
13. **Irony** - In Greek comedy, the character called *eirōn* was a "dissembler," who characteristically spoke in understatement and pretended to be less intelligent than he was, yet he always triumphed over *alazōn* – the self-deceiving and stupid braggart. In most uses of the term *irony* there remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case; not, however, in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects.
- Verbal Irony** - a statement in which the speaker's implicit meaning differs sharply from the meaning that is expressed. The most common form of verbal irony is sarcasm. However, sarcasm, which is highly dependant on the speaker's voice, is usually intended to make fun of its target. **Ex:** Mother comes into the TV room and discovers her 11-year-old watching *South Park* instead of doing his homework, as he was set to a dozen minutes ago. Pointing to the screen she says, "Don't let me tempt you from your duties, kiddo, but when you're finished with your serious studies there, maybe we could take some time out for recreation and do a little math."  
([http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/cc-verbal\\_irony.htm](http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/cc-verbal_irony.htm))
  - Dramatic Irony** - Dramatic irony is when the words and actions of the characters of a work of literature have a different meaning for the reader than they do for the characters. This is the result of the reader having a greater knowledge than the characters themselves. **Ex:** In Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, when Hester is in the governor's garden to see to it that Pearl is not taken away from her, she asks the Reverend Dimmesdale to support her position. This is an example of dramatic

irony as the reader knows that Dimmesdale and Hester are partners in sin, but the characters do not.

([http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/-dramatic\\_irony.htm](http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/-dramatic_irony.htm))

- c. **Situational Irony** – Used much less often and usually lumped into the category of dramatic irony, cosmic irony refers to literary works in which the divine, or destiny, or the process of the universe is represented as though deliberately manipulating events as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate, mock, or even kill them at the end. **Ex:** Romeo and Juliet are presented as “star-crossed lovers.” They find a brief moment of happiness during which they plan their marriage leading to the false hope that the feud between their families will end. Eventually, the plan goes horribly wrong and both main characters, as well as many minor characters, die as a result of the two falling in love.
14. **Juxtaposition** - juxtaposition occurs when two contrasting things – ideas, words, or sentence elements – are placed next to each other for the purpose of comparison. **Ex:** A writer may choose to juxtapose the coldness of a room with the warmth of another person, or one person’s honesty with the deceitfulness of another.
16. **Metonymy** - A figure of speech that uses the name of an object, person, or idea to represent something with which it is closely associated. **Ex:** “The pen is mightier than the sword.” The pen is an attribute of thoughts that are written with a pen; the sword is an attribute of military action. (<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Figures/M/metonymy.htm>)
- a. **Synecdoche** – a rhetorical or metaphorical expression where a part stands for the whole or the whole stands for a part. It is important to understand that in synecdoche, the representations must be a physical part of what it represents. **Ex:** The rustler bragged he’d absconded with five hundred head of longhorns. Both “head” and “longhorns” are parts of cattle that represent them as wholes. (<http://rhetoric.byu.edu/Figures/S/synecdoche.htm>)
17. **Motif, Symbol, and Theme** –
- a. **Motif** – Recurring elements (representing a subject, theme or idea) that help establish mood are called a “motif.” For a man becoming parched and dehydrated in the desert, the motifs might be cracked creek beds, and the sun shimmering through heat waves. For crime in a violent city it might be constant sirens in the background and screeching tires, and TV reports with violence statistics. These things are generally independent of the characters. The characters don’t create them, but they may respond to them. Motifs generally are repeating elements used to create the same mood over and over. They can be created by the display of patterns which might be visual, but could also be behavioral, ideas or themes, auditory, or objects.
- b. **Symbol** - This is one of those words that is often used in a confusing manner. The confusion is increased by different scholars using the word to mean very different things. Most often, people define **symbol** as “a tangible object that is used to signify an idea, concept, or feeling.” A **symbol** always has further layers of meaning than the object itself. In other words, a symbol means more than it literally says. **Ex:**

The American Flag, on a literal level, simply denotes that there are fifty states (stars) and that there were thirteen original colonies (bars). On a symbolic level, however, the flag is intended to represent freedom, liberty, opportunity and the pursuit of happiness. It is extremely important to remember that recurring symbols can be considered motifs.

- c. **Theme** - This word is sometimes used interchangeably with "motif" but that is not always a case. The term theme is better applied to a general claim or doctrine that a work is designed to incorporate and make persuasive to the reader. The theme is not a single word (jealously, greed, lust) and must be stated in a sentence. For example, Milton states the explicit theme of *Paradise Lost* is "to assert eternal Providence, / And justify the ways of God to men."
18. **Oxymoron** - a form of paradox where two contradictory terms are combined in one phrase.  
**Ex:** cold fire, honest thief, darkly lit, fearful joy, joyful pain.
19. **Paradox** - a statement that appears to be absurd, untrue, or contradictory, but may actually be true. **Ex:** In "Death, Be Not Proud," John Donne states, "One short sleep past, we wake eternally, / And death shall be no more; death, thou shalt die." It seems impossible that man could live beyond death, and that death itself could die. However, if one believes in the Christian doctrine, it is possible. The Christian faith teaches that after the body dies, the soul wakes again and lives for eternity. Therefore, if the passage is examined from a Christian perspective, the "impossible" statement becomes true.
20. **Pun** - A play on words which are identical in sound or very similar in sound but are sharply diverse in meaning. Shakespeare and other writers use puns for comic value as well as serious purposes. **Ex:** In *Romeo and Juliet* (III. i. 101) Mercutio, bleeding to death, says, "Ask for me tomorrow and you shall find me a grave man." In modern, everyday usage, puns are much less serious. **Ex:** A group of chess enthusiasts checked into a hotel and were standing in the lobby discussing their recent tournament victories. After an hour, the manager came out of the office and asked them to disperse. "But why?" they asked, as they moved off. "Because," he said, "I can't stand chess nuts boasting in an open foyer." (<http://www.punoftheday.com/cgi-bin/longpuns.pl>)
21. **Rhetoric** – The strategies, modes, devices, and techniques an author uses to achieve a particular purpose.
- Rhetorical or stylistic, devices** – A technique used by an author to induce an emotional response. **Ex:** metaphor, alliteration, simile, allusion, parallelism... etc.
  - Rhetorical modes** – This flexible term describes the variety, the conventions, and the purposes of the major kinds of writing. There are four rhetorical modes, sometimes known as modes of discourse. **Exposition**-explains and analyzes information by presenting an idea, relevant evidence, and appropriate discussion. **Argumentation**-proves the validity of an idea, or point of view, by presenting sound

reasoning. **Description**- recreates, invents, or visually presents a person, place, event, or action so that the reader can picture that being described. **Narration**- tells a story or narrates an event or series of events.

- c. **Rhetorical strategies** – The way an author organizes words, sentences, and overall argument in order to achieve a particular purpose. The major rhetorical strategies are comparison/contrast, cause/effect, exemplification, process analysis/division, definition and classification.
- d. **Rhetorical structures**– How a passage is constructed. If asked to consider rhetorical structure, look at the passage’s organization and how the writer combines images, details, or arguments to serve his or her purpose. For a detailed breakdown of all of the following concepts, go to:

<http://www.kisd.org/khs/english/help%20page/DIDLS%20Breakdown.htm>

1. **Details** – Facts revealed by the author that support his/her attitude or tone.
2. **Diction** - Diction refers to the author’s choice of words. For instance, in the sentence, “That guy was really mad!” the author uses informal diction (“guy,” “mad”), whereas in the sentence, “The gentleman was considerably irritated,” the author uses more elevated diction. When discussing diction, do not say or write, “The author uses diction.” Basically, that sentence explains that the author uses words 😊 Diction must always be described by adjectives and then the adjectives used must be analyzed and explained. For example, if you describe an author’s diction as somber, you must explain why. What makes it “somber?” What specific clues lead you to describe the diction in such a way?
3. **Imagery** – This word was defined earlier as “a mental picture that is conjured by specific words and associations which can also include auditory and other sensory components.” When discussing imagery, do not say or write, “The author uses imagery to paint a picture for the reader.” That is simply restating the definition. The author said “The humidity slapped me in the face and clung to me like a spider web.” When he could have said, “It was wet and sticky outside.” Why?
4. **Syntax** – The pattern or formation of sentences or phrases in language (sentence structure). **Ex:** Fragments, run-ons, compound vs. simple, periodic vs. loose, many prepositional phrases, choppy sentences vs. long, flowing sentences, etc. For example, “The big blue sky beckoned her” essentially says the same thing as “She was beckoned by the big blue sky” but the sentences have different syntax.
5. **Tone** – Tone, which can also be called attitude, is the way the author presents a subject. An author’s tone can be serious, scholarly, humorous, mournful, or ironic, just to name a few examples. A correct perception of an author’s tone is essential to understanding a particular literary work; misreading an ironic tone as a serious one, for instance, could lead you to miss the humor in a description or situation.

6. **Voice** – How the speaker in literary work presents himself or herself to the reader determines the speaker's unique voice. For example, the speaker's voice can be personal or cold, compassionate or judgmental, authoritative or hesitant, or can have a manner or combination of characteristics.

22. **Satire, Wit, Humor** –

- a. **Humor** – any element in literature that is designed to amuse or elicit laughter from the reader or audience.
- b. **Satire** - To satirize is to ridicule or mock ideas, persons, events, or doctrines as well as to make fun of human foibles and weaknesses with the intent to evoke a change. Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" and *Gulliver's Travels* are satires of particular people and events of his time. A great example of modern day satire is Jon Stewart's "The Daily Show."
- c. **Wit** – originally, this word meant the "human faculty of intelligence, inventiveness, and mental acuity." In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, it came to be used for ingenuity in literary invention, and especially for the ability to create and discover surprising and paradoxical figures of speech. Wit now denotes a kind of verbal expression or style which is brief, deft, and intentionally constructed for comic surprise. For example, Philip Guedalla once said, "History repeats itself, while historians repeat each other." Puns are usually considered the lowest form of wit.

## VIII. Asking for Feedback

### A. Possible Writing Moments for Feedback

There is no "best time" to get feedback on a piece of writing. In fact, it is often helpful to ask for feedback at several different stages of a writing project. Listed below are some parts of the writing process and some kinds of feedback you might need in each. Keep in mind, though, that every writer is different--you might think about these issues at other stages of the writing process, and that's fine.

1. The beginning/idea stage: Do I understand the assignment? Am I gathering the right kinds of information to answer this question? Are my strategies for approaching this assignment effective? How can I discover the best way to develop my early ideas into a feasible draft?
2. Outline/thesis: I have an idea about what I want to argue, but I'm not sure if it is an appropriate or complete response to this assignment. Is the way I'm planning to organize my ideas working? Does it look like I'm covering all the bases? Do I have a clear main point? Do I know what I want to say to the reader?
3. Rough draft: Does my paper make sense, and is it interesting? Have I proven my thesis statement? Is the evidence I'm using convincing? Is it explained clearly? Have I given the reader enough information? Does the information seem to be in the right order? What can I say in my introduction and conclusion?
4. Early polished draft: Are the transitions between my ideas smooth and effective? Do my sentences make sense individually? How's my writing style?
5. Late or final polished draft: Are there any noticeable spelling or grammar errors? Are my margins, footnotes, and formatting okay? Does the paper seem effective? Is there anything I should change at the last minute?
6. After the fact: How should I interpret the comments on my paper? Why did I receive the grade I did? What else might I have done to strengthen this paper? What can I learn as a writer about this writing experience? What should I do the next time I have to write a paper?

## B. Specific Questions to Ask

Asking for a specific kind of feedback can be the best way to get advice that you can use. Think about what kinds of topics you want to discuss and what kinds of questions you want to ask:

1. Understanding the assignment (Do I understand the task? How long should it be? What kinds of sources should I be using? Do I have to answer all of the questions on the assignment sheet or are they just prompts to get me thinking? Are some parts of the assignment more important than other parts?)
2. Factual content (Is my understanding of the course material accurate? Where else could I look for more information?)
3. Interpretation/analysis (Do I have a point? Does my argument make sense? Is it logical and consistent? Is it supported by sufficient evidence?)
4. Organization (Are my ideas in a useful order? Does the reader need to know anything else up front? Is there another way to consider ordering this information?)
5. "Flow" (Do I have good transitions? Does the introduction prepare the reader for what comes later? Do my topic sentences accurately reflect the content of my paragraphs? Can the reader follow me?)
6. Style (Comments on earlier papers can help you identify writing style issues that you might want to look out for. Is my writing style appealing? Do I use the passive voice too often? Are there too many "to be" verbs?)
7. Grammar (Just as with style, comments on earlier papers will help you identify grammatical "trouble spots." Am I using commas correctly? Do I have problems with subject-verb agreement?)
8. Small errors (Is everything spelled right? Are there any typos?)

## C. Asking for Feedback After a Paper Has Been Graded:

Many people go to see their teacher after they receive a paper back with comments and a grade attached. If you seek feedback after your paper is returned to you, it makes sense to wait 24 hours before scheduling a meeting to talk about it. If you are angry or upset about a grade, the day off gives you time to calm down and put things in perspective. More importantly, taking a day off allows you to read through the instructor's comments and think about why you received the grade that you did. You might underline or circle comments that were confusing to you so that you can ask about them later. You will also have an opportunity to reread your own writing and evaluate it more critically yourself. After all, you probably haven't seen this piece of

work since you handed it in a week or more ago, and refreshing your memory about its merits and weaknesses might help you make more sense of the grade and the instructor's comments.

Also, be prepared to separate the discussion of your grade from the discussion of your development as a writer. It is difficult to have a productive meeting that achieves both of these goals. You may have very good reasons for meeting with an instructor to discuss why you believe your writing deserves a better grade, and having that kind of discussion is completely legitimate. Be very clear with your instructor about your goals. Are you meeting to contest the grade your paper received and explain why you think the paper deserved a higher one? Are you meeting because you don't understand why your paper received the grade it did and would like clarification? Or are you meeting because you want to use this paper and the instructor's comments to learn more about how to write in this particular discipline and do better on future written work? Being up front about these distinctions can help you and your instructor know what to expect from the conference and avoid any confusion between the issue of grading and the issue of feedback.

## **IX. Understanding Teacher Marks**

AWK: Awkward phrasing

BS: Be specific

CAP: Capitalize this word or phrase

CIT: Citation needed, inadequate or incorrect citation

CONTRA: This contradicts what was said previously

DS: Double space

FRAG: Sentence fragment

ITAL: Italicize

LC: Use lowercase

P: Missing or incorrect punctuation

PA: Pronouns do not agree

PER: Use of first or second person is not appropriate here

PLAG: Plagiarism

P.V.: Passive voice

POSS: Possessive used incorrectly here

Q: Incorrect or awkward quote incorporation

REF: Unclear pronoun reference

REP: Repetitive

R-O: Run on sentence

SP: Incorrect spelling

S/V AGR: Subject/verb do not agree

SUPP: Statement or argument lacks support

T.S.: Topic sentence is missing

V.T.: Incorrect or inconsistent verb tense

WC or WW: Poor choice of word or phrase; wrong word

Wordy: Phrase or sentence is unnecessary

¶: New paragraph

^: Omission

?: Meaning is not clear

//: Not parallel structure

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This guide has been adapted from the following sources:

Gibaldi, Joseph, ed. *The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6<sup>th</sup> edition.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Writing Center

The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The University of Wisconsin at Madison Writing Center

X: APPENDIX: Handouts for Classroom Use
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Handout 1: Comma Rules

Handout 2: Apostrophe Rules

Handout 3: How to Use Brackets When Quoting

Handout 4: How to Use an Ellipsis When Quoting

Handout 5: Transitions

## Comma Rules

Commas help your reader figure out which words go together in a sentence and which parts of your sentences are most important. Using commas incorrectly may confuse the reader, signal ignorance of writing rules, or indicate carelessness. Although using commas may have seemed mysterious before, using them correctly is easy if you follow a few guidelines.

### Beware of popular myths of comma usage:

- A really long sentence may be perfectly correct without commas. The length of a sentence does not determine whether or not you need a comma.
- Where you pause or breathe in a sentence does not reliably indicate where a comma belongs. Different readers pause or breathe in different places.

You can use the following procedures to help test your writing for common comma errors. Read through an essay you have written and look at each comma. If none of the five situations described in this handout apply, you probably don't need one at all.

You probably already know at least one of the following guidelines and just have to practice the others. These guidelines are basically all you need to know; if you learn them once, you're set for all but the most unusual situations.

### 1. Introductory Bits (Small-Medium-Large)

Setting off introductory words, phrases, or clauses with a comma lets the reader know that the main subject and main verb of the sentence come later. There are basically three kinds of introductory bits: small, medium, and large ones.

There are small (just one word) introductory bits:

*Generally, extraterrestrials are friendly and helpful.*

*Moreover, some will knit booties for you if you ask nicely.*

There are medium introductory bits (often these are two- to three-word prepositional phrases):

*In fact, Godzilla is just a misunderstood teen lizard of giant proportions.*

*On the other hand, Bert and Ernie are known to have worked closely with Flipper.*

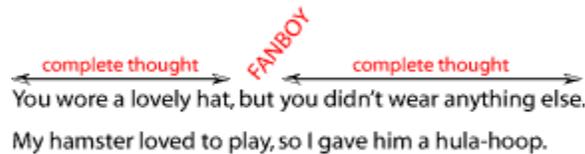
There are large introductory bits (more than 3 words). You can often spot these by looking for key words/groups such as *although, if, as, in order to, and when*:

*If you discover that you feel nauseated, then you know you've tried my Clam Surprise.*

*As far as I am concerned, it is the best dish for dispatching unwanted guests.*

## 2. FANBOYS

**FANBOYS** is a handy mnemonic device for remembering the coordinating conjunctions: For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So. You should always have a comma before **FANBOYS** that join two complete thoughts (with two subjects and two verbs).



If you do not have two subjects and two verbs separated by the **FANBOYS**, you do not need to insert the comma before the **FANBOYS**. In other words, if the second grouping of words isn't a complete thought, don't use a comma:



## 3. The Dreaded Comma Splice

If you don't have **FANBOYS** between the two complete and separate thoughts, using a comma alone causes a "comma splice" or "fused sentence" (some instructors may call it a run-on). Some readers (especially professors) will think of this as a serious error.

*BAD: My hamster loved to play, I gave him a hula-hoop.*

*ALSO BAD: You wore a lovely hat, it was your only defense.*

To fix these comma splices, you can do one of three things: just add **FANBOYS**, change the comma to a semicolon, or make each clause a separate sentence.

*GOOD: You wore a lovely hat, for it was your only defense.*

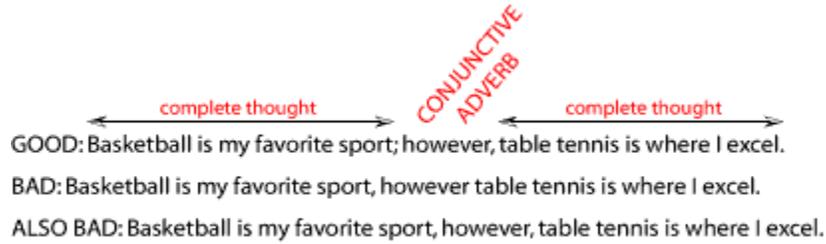
*ALSO GOOD: You wore a lovely hat; it was your only defense.*

*STILL GOOD: You wore a lovely hat. It was your only defense.*

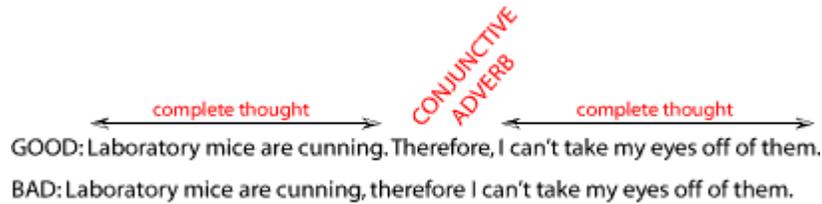
## 4. FANBOY Fakers

*However, therefore, moreover,* and other words like them are *not* **FANBOYS** (they are called conjunctive adverbs). They are really small introductory phrases that begin the second complete

thought in a long sentence. When you want to use one of these words in the middle of a sentence, check to see if you have a complete thought on both sides of the "conjunctive adverb". If you do, then you need a semi-colon after the first complete thought and a comma after the small introductory phrase in the second complete thought.



Another option is to break the two parts of the long sentence into two separate sentences.



## 5. X,Y, and Z

Put commas between items in a list. When giving a short and simple list of things in a sentence, the last comma (right before the conjunction—usually *and* or *or*) is optional, but it is never wrong. If the items in the list are longer and more complicated, you should always place a final comma before the conjunction.

EITHER: *You can buy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness in Los Angeles.*

OR: *You can buy life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness in Los Angeles.*

BUT ALWAYS: *A good student listens to his teachers without yawning, reads once in a while, and writes papers before they are due.*

## 6. Describers

If you have two or more adjectives (words that describe) that are *not* joined by a conjunction (usually *and*) and both/all adjectives modify the same word, put a comma between them.

*He was a bashful, dopey, sleepy dwarf.*

*The frothy, radiant princess kissed the putrid, vile frog.*

## 7. Interrupters (Appositives)

Two commas can be used to set off additional information that appears within the sentence but is separate from the primary subject and verb of the sentence. These commas help your reader figure out your main point by telling him or her that the words within the commas are not necessary to understand the rest of the sentence. In other words, you should be able to take out the section framed by commas and still have a complete and clear sentence.

*Bob Mills, a sophomore from Raleigh, was the only North Carolina native at the Japanese food festival in Cary.*

*Aaron thought he could see the future, not the past, in the wrinkles on his skin.*

## Apostrophe Rules

<[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_apost.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_apost.html)>

### Forming possessives of nouns

1. To see if you need to make a possessive, turn the phrase around and make it an "of the..." phrase. For example:

the boy's hat = the hat of the boy

three days' journey = journey of three days

2. If the noun after "of" is a building, an object, or a piece of furniture, then no apostrophe is needed!

room of the hotel = hotel room

door of the car = car door

leg of the table = table leg

3. Once you've determined whether you need to make a possessive, follow these rules to create one.

• **add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it ends in -s):**

the owner's car

James's hat

• **add 's to the plural forms that do not end in -s:**

the children's game

the geese's honking

• **add ' to the end of plural nouns that end in -s:**

houses' roofs

three friends' letters

• **add 's to the end of compound words:**

my brother-in-law's money

• **add 's to the last noun to show joint possession of an object:**

Todd and Anne's apartment

**Forming plurals of lowercase letters**

Apostrophes are used to form plurals of letters that appear in lowercase; here the rule appears to be more typographical than grammatical, e.g. "three ps" versus "three p's." To form the plural of a lowercase letter, place 's after the letter. There is no need for apostrophes indicating a plural on capitalized letters, numbers, and symbols (though keep in mind that some editors, teachers, and professors still prefer them). Here are some examples:

**p's and q's = a phrase indicating politeness, possibly from "mind your pleases and thankyou's"?**

Nita's mother constantly stressed minding one's p's and q's.

**three Macintosh G4s = three of the Macintosh model G4**

There are two G4s currently used in the writing lab.

**many &s = many ampersands**

That printed page has too many &s on it.

**the 1960s = the years in decade from 1960 to 1969**

The 1960s were a time of great social unrest.

**Don't use apostrophes for possessive pronouns or for noun plurals.**

Apostrophes should not be used with possessive pronouns because possessive pronouns already show possession -- they don't need an apostrophe. *His, her, its, my, yours, ours* are all possessive pronouns. Here are some examples:

wrong: ~~his' book~~      correct: his book

wrong: ~~The group made it's decision.~~      correct: The group made its decision.

(Note: Its and it's are not the same thing. It's is a contraction for "it is" and its is a possessive pronoun meaning "belonging to it." It's raining out= it is raining out. A simple way to remember this rule is the fact that you don't use an apostrophe for the possessives his or hers, so don't do it with its!)

wrong: ~~a friend of yours'~~      correct: a friend of yours

## How to Use Brackets When Quoting

Sometimes it is necessary for clarity and flow to alter a word or words within a quotation. You should make such changes rarely. In order to alert your reader to the changes you've made, you should always bracket the altered words. Here are a few examples of situations when you might need brackets.

1. Use brackets to indicate a change in a word.
  - April, with its new life is really just a reminder of death. It mix[es] memory and desire," a combination that is certainly bittersweet.
  - Janie's first encounter with a boy is described in violent terms: she is "lacerat[ed] with a kiss" by Johnny Taylor (12).
2. Changing verb tense or pronouns in order to be consistent with the rest of the sentence.

Suppose you were quoting a woman who, when asked about her experiences immigrating to the United States, commented "nobody understood me." You might write:

- Esther Hansen felt that when she came to the United States "nobody understood [her]."

In the above example, you've changed "me" to "her" in order to keep the entire passage in third person. However, you could avoid the need for this change by simply rephrasing:

"Nobody understood me," recalled Danish immigrant Esther Hansen.

3. Including supplemental information that your reader needs in order to understand the quotation.

For example, if you were quoting someone's nickname, you might want to let your reader know the full name of that person in brackets.

- "The principal of the school told Billy [William Smith] that his contract would be terminated."

Similarly, if a quotation referenced an event with which the reader might be unfamiliar, you could identify that event in brackets.

- "We completely revised our political strategies after the strike [of 1934]."

#### 4. Indicating the use of nonstandard grammar or spelling.

In rare situations, you may quote from a text that has nonstandard grammar, spelling, or word choice. In such cases, you may want to insert [sic], which means "thus" or "so" in Latin. Using [sic] alerts your reader to the fact that this nonstandard language is not the result of a typo on your part. Always italicize "sic" and enclose it in brackets. There is no need to put a period at the end. Here's an example of when you might use [sic]:

- Twelve-year old Betsy Smith wrote in her diary, "Father is afraid that he will be guilty of beach [sic] of contract."

Here [sic] indicates that the original author wrote "beach of contract," not breach of contract, which is the accepted terminology.

#### 5. Do not overuse brackets!

For example, it is not necessary to bracket capitalization changes that you make at the beginning of sentences. For example, suppose you were going to use part of this quotation:

- "We never looked back, but the memory of our army days remained with us the rest of our lives."

If you wanted to begin a sentence with an excerpt from the middle of this quotation, there would be no need to bracket your capitalization changes.

- "The memory of our army days remained with us the rest of our lives," commented Joe Brown, a World War II veteran.

Not

- "[T]he memory of our army days remained with us the rest of our lives," commented Joe Brown, a World War II veteran.

## How to Use an Ellipsis When Quoting

Whenever you want to leave out material from within a quotation, you need to use an ellipsis, which is a series of three periods, each of which should be preceded and followed by a space. So, an ellipsis in this sentence would look like . . . this. There are a few rules to follow when using ellipses:

1. Use an ellipsis (3 dots) to leave out information.
  - Isabel is “fond of...dark, shining dampness of everything” in London (James 349).
2. You should not change the meaning of the quoted material.
3. The phrase should still make sense as a complete thought.
4. Use punctuation marks in combination with ellipses when removing material from the end of sentences or clauses. For example, if you take material from the end of a sentence, keep the period in as usual.
  - “The boys ran to school, forgetting their lunches and books. Even though they were out of breath, they made it on time.”
  - “The boys ran to school. . . . Even though they were out of breath, they made it on time.”
5. Likewise, if you excerpt material at the end of clause that ends in a comma, retain the comma.
  - “The red car came to a screeching halt that was heard by nearby pedestrians, but no one was hurt.”
  - “The red car came to a screeching halt . . . , but no one was hurt.”
6. Do not use ellipses at the beginning or ending of quotations, unless it's important for the reader to know that the quotation was truncated.

## The Function and Importance of Transitions

In both academic writing and professional writing, your goal is to convey information clearly and concisely, if not to convert the reader to your way of thinking. Transitions help you to achieve these goals by establishing logical connections between sentences, paragraphs, and sections of your papers. In other words, transitions tell readers what to do with the information you present them. Whether single words, quick phrases or full sentences, they function as signs for readers that tell them how to think about, organize, and react to old and new ideas as they read through what you have written.

Transitions signal relationships between ideas such as: "Another example coming up--stay alert!" or "Here's an exception to my previous statement" or "Although this idea appears to be true, here's the real story." Basically, transitions provide the reader with directions for how to piece together your ideas into a logically coherent argument. Transitions are not just "window dressing" that embellish your paper by making it sound or read better. They are words with particular meanings that tell the reader to think and react in a particular way to your ideas. In providing the reader with these important cues, transitions help readers understand the logic of how your ideas fit together.

### Types of Transitions

Now that you have a general idea of how to go about developing effective transitions in your writing, let us briefly discuss the types of transitions your writing will use.

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

1. **Transitions between Sections**--Particularly in longer works, it may be necessary to include transitional paragraphs that summarize for the reader the information just covered and specify the relevance of this information to the discussion in the following section.
2. **Transitions between Paragraphs**--If you have done a good job of arranging paragraphs so that the content of one leads logically to the next, the transition will highlight a relationship that already exists by summarizing the previous paragraph and suggesting something of the content of the paragraph that follows. A transition between paragraphs can be a word or two (*however, for example, similarly*), a phrase, or a sentence.
3. **Transitions within Paragraphs**--As with transitions between sections and paragraphs, transitions within paragraphs act as cues by helping readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases.

### Some Transitional Expressions

Effectively constructing each transition often depends upon your ability to identify words or phrases that will indicate for the reader the *kind* of logical relationships you want to convey. The table below should make it easier for you to find these words or phrases. Whenever you have trouble finding a

word, phrase, or sentence to serve as an effective transition, refer to the information in the table for assistance. Look in the left column of the table for the kind of logical relationship you are trying to express. Then look in the right column of the table for examples of words or phrases that express this logical relationship.

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