

English Composition

El Camino College

Humanities

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to the students of El Camino. May you be enriched by your time here, and may you accomplish much in life.

About this book

This book was created to provide you with an inexpensive guide to English Composition at El Camino College.

English

English 1A is designed to strengthen the students' ability to read with understanding and discernment, to discuss assigned readings intelligently, and to write clearly. Emphasis will be placed on the ability to write an essay in which each paragraph relates to a controlling idea, has an introduction and conclusion, and contains primary and secondary support. College-level reading material will be assigned to provide the stimulus for class discussion and writing assignments, including a required research paper.

Acknowledgements

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Implementing Strategies for Success

Set Goals

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Acquire Materials

Organize Academic Life

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Overview

This section provides practical advice intended to better ensure your success in English Composition and beyond.

Set Goals

It's a good idea to identify and set short, mid, and long term goals for this class and all your other classes. When setting goals, be realistic, be as specific as possible, and be diligent about tracking your progress.

Goal examples

Short Term (poorly worded): to get a good grade on my next essay. (good grade is too vague)

Short Term (better worded): to get at least a B+ on my next essay.

Mid Term: to successfully complete my pre-transfer level courses in math and English by next semester

Long Term: to transfer to a four year college within three years.

Record your goals somewhere you'll see them such as the screensaver of your phone. Review them often and work to make them a reality.

When you finish a goal, create a new one.

Exercise

Complete the following on a separate piece of paper. Be sure that your goals are specific and can be measured.

A. Long-Term Academic Goal

My academic goal is to . . .

B. Mid-Term Academic Goal

I will complete the following courses as soon as possible . . .

C. Short-Term Academic Goal

The 3 goals I have for this semester are . . .

D. Action Plan

Write down three specific actions you could take toward achieving a goal from item C.

Know Your Syllabus

At the beginning of the semester, your instructor will provide you with a syllabus in either print or electronic form. The syllabus, essentially an outline of the course, is filled with important information such as:

- Instructor contact and course material information

- Course objectives for student learning

- Instructor and college policies

- Information about assignments and grading

- A daily or weekly course schedule with important due dates

Keep the syllabus handy and refer to it often.

You are responsible for meeting the requirements and completing the assignments indicated on the syllabus (even if you miss a class).

Acquire Materials

Be sure to purchase the required classroom materials indicated in the syllabus right away.

It's not a good idea to start a semester behind schedule.

Always save your bookstore receipts in case you get the wrong text.

If money is tight, ask your instructor if there are any options such as a book on reserve at the library.

Organize Your Academic Life

Keeping track of assignment due dates is imperative in college.

Performing well in your classes depends upon having assignments in on time. The best way to stay on top of assignments is to have a weekly and monthly planner.

Place all assignment due dates into the monthly planner. In addition, add your work hours and family commitments if applicable.

A traditional print calendar will do as well any number of homework organizer apps for phones, tablets, and PCs.

Google Calendar is a free program (must have a Gmail account or Google+ account—both of which are free) that allows you to put all your assignments, due dates, and time commitments on one calendar. You may opt to print daily/weekly planners like the ones found at www.vertex42.com.

Keep all handouts, writings (drafts and final), quizzes, and homework assignments in specific folders for easy future reference.

Put a date on everything.

Time Management

Give yourself ample time to complete assignments. When planning your calendar, be sure to

identify when you will work on school assignments as well as your other activities such as work.

If you know you have something planned for the weekend before an essay is due, make time to work on the essay before the weekend.

Practice Classroom Etiquette

Behavior This one is pretty simple. Be polite and respectful of others in the classroom. You're all in this together, so you may as well be supportive of one another. Be sure to listen when your instructor speaks. Also, look at your syllabus for any pet peeves your instructor might have. For example, an instructor may have an issue with eating, texting, and/or excessive talking in class.

Participation is much more than simply showing up for class. It includes actively engaging in class discussions, volunteering, asking questions, and working with other students to complete tasks. Students who are actively engaged in the classroom are more likely to remember more course material and are more likely to do better in the class.

Attendance Poor attendance disrupts the potential success of too many students. Attend class regularly—ideally, every time the class meets. Don't schedule other activities like work and doctor/dentist appointments during class time. In the unlikely event that you do have to miss a class, be sure to arrive prepared for the following class.

Assignments Be sure to meet the deadline for all assignments. Even missing one major assignment can have a tremendous negative impact on your grade. Often times assignments build on one another, so missing one assignment leaves you lacking a skill you need for the next one. Homework, too, shouldn't be neglected, as the homework is intended to strengthen your skills and help you identify areas where you have questions or need more help.

Listen and Take Quality Notes

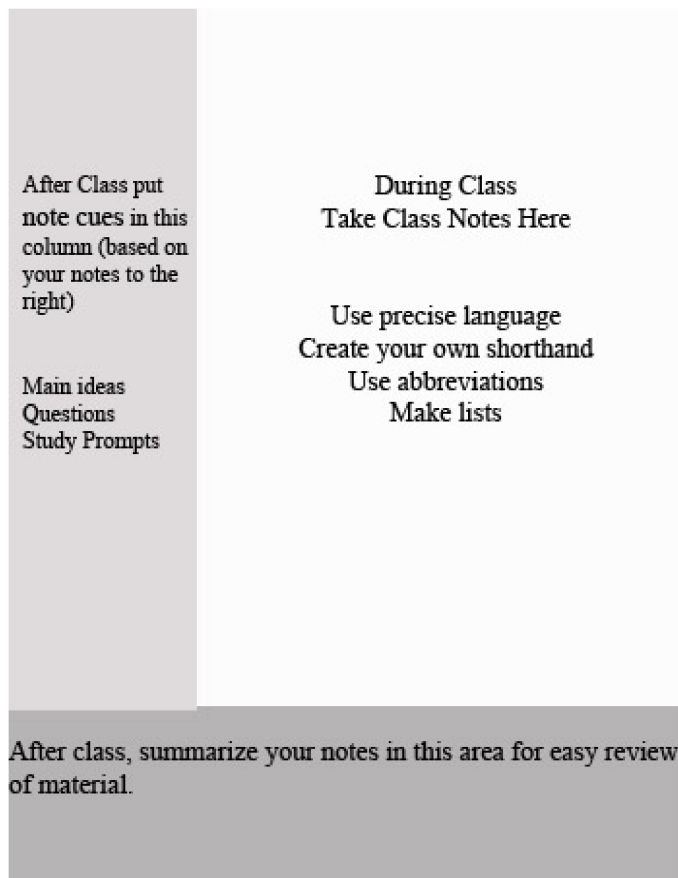
Listen carefully to your instructor. Get interested in the subject and ask appropriate questions to ensure you understand the material correctly. In addition, ask yourself questions like

“What's the point of this lecture?”

“What's being asked of me?”

“How can I incorporate the lesson of this lecture into my next assignment?”

Above all, take notes. Consider using the Cornell notetaking system.



Remember to review your notes on a regular basis.

Write in this
book!

Write notes in
these margins
and highlight
important
concepts as you
read.

Employ Reading Strategies

Preview a Book or Chapter or Article before you Read

Note the author and time period of the book.

Read the title of the book or chapter.

Read the overview of the chapter if there is one.

Read any questions or essay prompt your instructor may have handed out.

Write down questions you may have about the book.

As You Read

Annotate (take notes) on the text. Write down key points in the margins.

In a work of fiction pay attention to reoccurring events or symbols. For example you may notice the reading contains a lot of people falling in and out of relationships. This is a theme.

Pay attention to any themes you find (a reoccurring event or symbol).

For example you may notice the reading contains a lot of people falling in and out of relationships. This is a theme.

Write down questions you have as you read.

For example, for a newspaper article: ask yourself,

“What is the main idea?”

“What specific points support the main idea?”

“Could there be viewpoints different from article?”

Differentiate between relevant and irrelevant information.

Make inferences about the piece you are reading.

Predict what will come next in your reading or what will happen to the characters.

After You Have Read

Summarize the work

Come up with a list of questions you have about the author, the issue, or one of the characters.

Write down a few things you didn't understand about the reading and share with your class. Chances are that other students have similar questions and will be glad you're bringing them up.

Get Help

From Your Instructor

As the semester progresses, your instructor will become more familiar with your writing. Ask your instructor for input when you are struggling with a writing assignment or simply want to improve what you have. Don't be shy about asking for help. If there isn't time to during class, consider talking to your instructor during her/his scheduled office hours or by appointment. (Note: not all instructors have office hours. Refer to your syllabus for details.)

From Your Counselors

Educational Planning – Make an appointment with a counselor to map out your educational plan. Then you'll know what classes to take each semester to fulfill your goals for a certificate, a degree, and/or transfer. Don't waste time taking classes you don't need, and make sure you've completed any basic skills and pre-collegiate courses you need to take before you enroll in college-level classes and find yourself having trouble.

Career Planning – The Career Center can help you decide on a career that fits your personality and interests as well as your educational goals. The center offers a variety of services from on-line assessments to individual career counseling appointments.

Transfer Center – The Transfer Center will help you make a smooth transition from El Camino College to a four-year college or university. Counselors there will help you decide on colleges and universities where you can find the programs that interest you and that match your personality, your finances, and your GPA. You can drop in and speak to a transfer specialist at any time.

All Counseling Services are located in the Student Services Center.

From Other Sources

Writing Center (Hum 122)– Get help with writing assignments for all classes, get help with grammar, use computers to do exercises and research on the Internet.

Learning Resource Center (2nd Floor of the Library)– Get help with all subjects from trained tutors

Math Study Center (MCS 106) – Get help with math homework from trained tutors

Reading Success Center (East Library Basement E36) – Get help with reading assignments for any course.

Health – Get free and low cost services at the Health Center (next to the pool), including medical services, chiropractic services, and psychological services, testing for STDs, HIV, and pregnancy workshops on managing anxiety, anger, and depression.

Financial Aid and Scholarships – Get help with the high cost of courses and books by applying for financial aid and scholarships online and in-person through the Financial Aid Office (SSVC 215).

Computer Labs – Take advantage of over 33 computer labs on campus for writing papers, studying language, working on art projects, and more. You'll need a Student ID to use most computers. To write papers, research on the Internet, and print essays for English, here are two labs you might use:

Library Media Tech Center (LMTC) – East Library Basement
Writing Center (Hum 122) – no printing available

For a detailed list of resources check the SSTARs webpage at <http://www.elcamino.edu/student-services/co/sstars.asp>.

2

Writing the College Essay

The Writing Process

The Stand-Alone Paragraph

The Essay

Essay Genres

The Writing Process

One concept every student should fully embrace: **writing is a process**

Before diving into the essay, there is one concept every student should fully embrace: **writing is a process**. A process is a series of actions aimed at an end result.

The series of actions for writing your essays are

- planning
- drafting
- revising and editing
- proofreading.

The end result is each graded essay throughout the class.

Writing an essay can be likened to playing an instrument. People don't usually walk up to an instrument they have never played and start playing beautiful music on it. Instead, they typically have to spend some time getting to know the parts of the instrument and how it is played. In addition, they have to practice--a lot. So, too, with writing. This chapter outlines the process involved to write well.

Stick to the process addressed in the pages that follow, and your writing will likely improve greatly throughout the semester.

Planning

Before you begin writing your essay, you should plan out what you want to convey about the topic as well as what specific points and details you want to include.

The best place to begin is with your instructor's essay prompt. Most likely, your instructor will indicate what kind of essay you should write. For example, you may be asked to write a persuasive essay or a narrative essay.

In addition, the prompt will also include subject choices, length requirements, due dates, and other helpful information.

Talking with a tutor in the writing center (Humanities 122) will also prove useful for the planning stage.

Generating ideas before you write your essay is a great idea. To generate ideas, use one of the following prewriting techniques.

Prewriting Techniques

Prewriting techniques are tools you use to help you come up with a topic to write about or to collect your thoughts on a topic you've already chosen.

Use prewriting techniques when you're not yet sure exactly what you want to write about, when you feel you are experiencing writer's block, or whenever you find you need a fresh approach to collecting your thoughts.

Although five prewriting techniques are identified in this chapter, you may find some more useful than others. Find one that you like and use it whenever you need it.

Freewriting

Freewriting is writing non-stop for a set period of time. When you freewrite, don't worry about grammar or spelling or organization. The key is to write down whatever comes into your mind. It's amazing how much you can write in five minutes.

Why it works: When you write down whatever comes to mind, you free yourself from obstacles you normally encounter when you write.

Putting it to use: On a separate piece of paper, freewrite for five minutes on the topic of your next essay or on the topic of reality television.

Brainstorming (A.K.A Listing)

Brainstorming is simply making a list of ideas that come to mind. When you brainstorm, write short one or two word answers rather than complete sentences. As with freewriting, don't worry about spelling or organization.

Why it works: Letting your mind quickly jump from one thought to another allows you to overcome obstacles you normally encounter when you write.

Putting it to Use: On a separate piece of paper, make a list of what comes to mind on your next essay's topic or on the topic of education.

Questioning

When you have a general topic in mind, get ideas about the topic by answering the questions *who*, *what*, *where*, and *why*.

Why it works: This technique allows you to approach your topic from different perspectives.

Suppose your instructor wants you to write an essay arguing for or against requiring school uniforms in high school. There's no need to panic. Begin asking questions about the topic. Why do school officials want uniforms? What are the advantages and disadvantages of uniforms? How much will the uniforms cost? What about students' freedom to wear what they want?

Answering these questions will likely lead you to a better understanding of the topic and will likely lead you to a more focused topic.

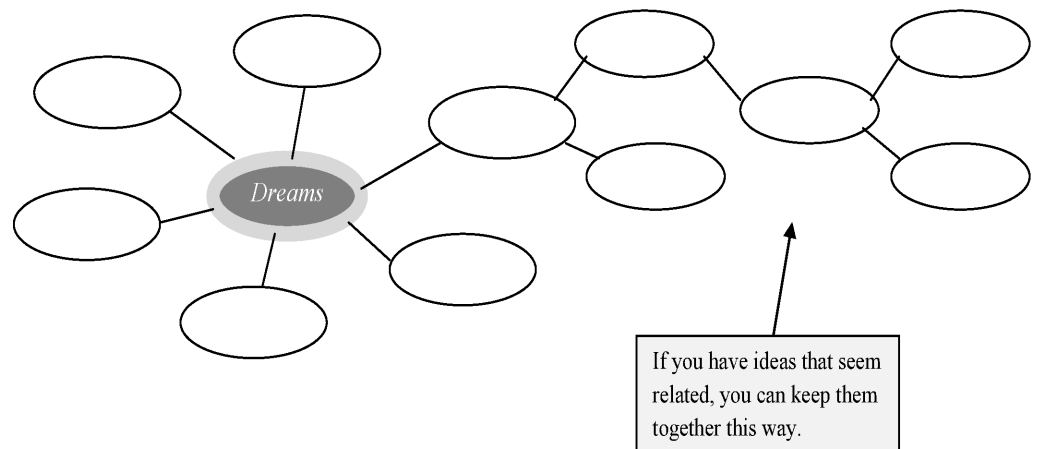
Putting it to use: On a separate piece of paper, ask at least five *who*, *what*, *where*, and *why* questions on the topic of your next essay or on how technology affects our lives (positively or negatively). Then, try to answer your questions.

Clustering (A.K.A. Branching, Webbing)

Place a topic in the center of a blank page. As ideas come to mind, attach them to your original idea. As more thoughts come to you, add them to your growing cluster.

Why it works: This method helps you visualize how ideas might be grouped together.

Putting it to use: On a separate piece of paper create a diagram similar to the one below on your next essay topic or fill in the empty ovals below with what comes to mind when you think of "dreams."



Outlining

Outlining is a way of organizing your ideas in a more formal way than the other prewriting techniques. Generally, when you finish an outline, you have an excellent idea about the direction of your essay and how it will be organized..

Why it works: This technique helps students who like to know where their essay is going before they begin writing, and it helps them stay on track while they're actually writing the essay.

Putting it to use: Use the model outlines below as guides to create an outline for a topic your instructor gives you.

I.	Thesis Sentence
a.	Topic Sentence 1
i.	Detail
ii.	Detail
iii.	Detail
b.	Topic Sentence 2
i.	Detail
ii.	Detail
iii.	Detail
c.	Topic Sentence 3
i.	Detail
ii.	Detail
iii.	Detail

I.	_____
a.	_____
i.	_____
ii.	_____
iii.	_____
b.	_____
i.	_____
ii.	_____
iii.	_____
c.	_____
i.	_____
ii.	_____
iii.	_____

On the following page is a more detailed outline provided by Professor Hong that includes an introductory and concluding paragraph.

Sample Outline

Provided by Professor Hong

Outlining the Argumentation/Persuasive Essay – An Example

- I. Introduction and Thesis
 - A. Relevant background or context for your controversial issue
 - B. Your argumentative claim
 1. For example, “We should move from a system of student evaluation based grades to one based on written evaluations of student progress.”
 - C. Plan of development
 1. What are the primary reasons for supporting your position
 2. What opposing arguments/reasons are you going to rebut or refute?

- II. Topic Sentence / Main Idea #1 (E. g., “Students receive more accurate and useful feedback in written evaluations.”)
 - A. Supporting Point #1 (E.g., “Written evaluations provide students with clear explanation of strengths and weaknesses”)
 1. Examples / Explanation
 - B. Supporting Point 2 (E.g., “Written evaluations provide students with clear directions for improvement.”)
 1. Examples / Explanation
 - C. Supporting Point 3
 1. Examples / Explanation

- III. Topic Sentence / Main Idea #2
 - A. Supporting Point 1
 1. Examples / Explanation
 - B. Supporting Point 2
 1. Examples / Explanation
 - C. Supporting Point 3
 1. Examples / Explanation

- IV. Topic Sentence / Main Idea #3*
 - A. Supporting Point 1
 1. Examples / Explanation
 - B. Supporting Point 2 – Refutation of opposing View
 1. Explain / Introduce opposing view
 - a) Concede validity of opposing view if necessary
 - b) Evidence contradiction opposing view
 - c) Evidence that allows you to propose an alternative and better solution to opposing view
 - d) Argue that opposing viewpoint does not invalidate your larger claim

- V. Conclusion
 - A. Restate the controversial issue and your position.
 - B. Concisely summarize the arguments that support your position.
 - C. Warn the readers of the consequences of not adopting your position, or explain how the community will benefit from adopting your position.

* Please Note: You may use more than one of your body/supporting paragraphs to refute or accommodate an opposing view.

Final Thought on Planning

Once you have used one of these prewriting techniques to collect your thoughts on your essay, you may start writing your first draft. Keep in mind that you may come back to these techniques to help you throughout the writing process.

Drafting

Simply put, drafting is writing the essay. There are many different approaches students take when writing their essays. Some prefer to write everything out by hand first. Author John Updike took this approach in his writing. Others prefer to type everything directly into a computer. Author Isaac Asimov took this approach in his writing.

Some students like to work in a linear fashion moving from the introduction straight through to the conclusion. Others prefer working on chunks of the essay at a time and piecing those chunks together later. Ultimately, whichever drafting approach works for you is the right one.

Regardless of how you approach drafting, you should keep a few things in mind as you write.

Have an idea of where your essay is going. (What are you trying to prove/show?)

Know the parts of the essay and how they work together.

Make improvements as you write and later when you re-write. (Instructors encourage you to consider changes.)

Understand that instructors fully expect your first draft (sometimes called a “rough draft”) to reflect your best effort even if it isn't perfect. Even though it's your first draft, if you're submitting an essay for feedback, you should take the time to read it over first and correct any errors you can spot. You owe this to your reader.

“Even though it's your first draft, if you're submitting an essay for feedback, you should take the time to read it over first and correct any errors you can spot.”

Revising and Editing

The revising and editing process is when your essay gets refined. It is during this step that you consider the changes you wish to make to your first draft. It's important to look critically at your own work.

Things to consider when revising and editing include making sure your

title is creative and relevant to the essay as a whole

thesis is clearly stated

introductory paragraph has enough background information

topic sentences for each body paragraph relate directly to the thesis

evidence to support each topic sentence is ample and convincing

body paragraphs are completely necessary

body paragraphs are logically organized

tone is consistent throughout

word choice is appropriate to your audience

transition words and phrases are appropriately used

essay follows a logical order

sentences are clear

concluding paragraph adequately sums up your essay

Don't be shy when assessing your work. Sometimes whole paragraphs need to be discarded because they stray slightly from the topic. Other times, whole paragraphs need to be added to support the claim(s) put forward in your thesis.

When you finish making all your changes, have someone read it. It often helps to get someone else's perspective. Make any further changes you deem necessary.

Even though you feel you're ready to turn in your essay, you still have to proofread your work. A revising/editing checklist is provided on the following page.

Proofreading

Proofreading is completing a final check of your essay before you turn it in. It's primarily checking for errors in punctuation, spelling, verb use, and proper MLA format. A proofreading checklist is provided on the following page.

Please remember this important step.

It's important to look critically at your own work.

Revising and Editing Checklist

- I have given my essay a creative title.
- My thesis clearly states my subject and the point I'm going to make about that subject.
- My intro paragraph has enough background information.
- I have several body paragraphs that support my thesis.
- Each body paragraph has a topic sentence that relates directly to my thesis.
- I have ample details in each body paragraph to develop the topic sentence.
- All of my sentences in each body paragraph relate directly to the topic sentence.
- My sentences are clear.
- I have used a consistent tone throughout the essay
- My word choice is appropriate to my audience
- My essay follows a logical order
- I have used transition words where appropriate throughout my essay.
- I have a concluding paragraph that sums up my essay.

Proofreading Checklist

- I have used the spell and grammar check feature on my computer.
- I have also checked for spelling and grammar errors on my own.
- I have spelled out words rather than abbreviated them.
- I have made sure my subjects and verbs agree in number.
- I have corrected any commonly confused words (their/there/they're).
- I have checked for run-ons, comma-splices, and fragments.
- I have checked for proper capitalization.
- I have checked for other punctuation errors.
- I have followed MLA format.
- This essay represents my best writing.

The Stand-Alone Paragraph

Overview

In writing college essays, you will primarily write three basic types of paragraphs. They are the introductory paragraph, the body paragraph, and the concluding paragraph.

At times you may be asked to write a paragraph that stands on its own without the aid of other paragraphs. This stand-alone paragraph most resembles a body paragraph and is often assigned prior to your first essay assignment.

(Note: some instructors call the stand-alone paragraph a “one-paragraph essay.”)

Think of a paragraph as organized sentences that work together to prove a main idea. **Everything** in the paragraph should relate directly to the main idea.

Paragraph Parts

Title

It's a good idea to come up with a creative title for your paragraph
Avoid paragraph titles like “Paragraph 1” or “Narration Paragraph”

Topic Sentence

- Identifies the subject of the paragraph (what the paragraph is about)
- Contains the controlling idea of the subject (the point you want to make about the subject)
- Is general enough to cover all the ideas in the paragraph
- Is specific enough for the subject to be thoroughly covered in one paragraph

Although the topic sentence may be placed in several different places in your paragraph, instructors tend to be picky about where they want it. It will save you tremendous headache if you find out your instructor's preferences before you write.

Supporting Sentences

Each supporting sentence tells the readers something about the subject of the paragraph. Furthermore, the supporting sentences help convince the reader of your overall opinion about your subject.

Examples/Proof

For each supporting sentence, you will need to provide specific evidence to support your opinion. Always have more than one piece of evidence for each supporting point.

Transition Words

Transition words are used to move smoothly from one supporting point to another. They are also used to move from one example to another. Variety is the key for transition words. Examples include “in addition,” “furthermore,” and “next.”

Concluding Sentence

The concluding sentence, like your topic sentence, leaves the reader with an overall impression of the paragraph’s subject.

Other Paragraph Essentials

Organization

Sentences shouldn’t be randomly thrown into a paragraph. Each sentence should be placed carefully within the paragraph. The way you organize your paragraph will be determined by the type of paragraph you're writing (narrative, descriptive, etc.).

Format

Type your work

Set the line spacing to double

Use one inch margins

Use Times New Roman, twelve point font

Create a four line heading in the top left that includes student name, instructor name, class, and date

Center title

Indent the first line of your paragraph five spaces

Sample Stand-Alone Paragraph

Wendy Storm

Instructor Mai Tripp

English

5 April 2015

Riding the Storm

During my cross country bicycle journey, weather proved to be a difficult obstacle to overcome. The first element I encountered was extreme cold. During a particularly long climb in Washington, I rode past a twelve foot high glacier that foreshadowed what was to come. The weather got increasingly colder as I rode higher and higher in elevation. Luckily, I was able to descend to more reasonable temperatures before I had to stop for the night. The next day, however, I rode to the pass at the top of Going to the Sun Highway. Snow blanketed the pass despite it being mid-June. If not for the warm fire at the visitor's center, I don't know if I could have made it to my next destination. Another element I encountered on the trek was hail. As I rode a particularly boring part of North Dakota, a strong wind picked up. The wind would have been bearable if it wasn't accompanied by hail. The wind whipped the hail into my back as I pedaled as fast as I could. It was really painful. A final element I dealt with was extreme heat. Parts of North Dakota were so hot I was constantly dehydrated despite drinking large quantities of water. In Milwaukee I encountered the most severe heat of the trip. Around noon I decided to find shade for a few hours and continue my ride during the slightly cooler evening. Although I loved the experience of bicycling across the U.S., I wish I had been prepared for inclement weather.

Topic Sentence

Supporting Sentence 1

Details/Examples

Supporting Sentence 1

Details/Examples

Supporting Sentence 1

Details/Examples

Concluding Sentence

Exercise 1

Draw lines to connect the sentence parts above to their matching sentences in the paragraph.

Exercise 2

Use the sample paragraph to answer the following prompts on a separate paper.

1. What is the subject of the paragraph?
2. What is the author's opinion or point about the subject?
3. Identify at least three transitions the author uses.
4. Identify where you would like to see more detail added.

The Summary

Another type of stand-alone paragraph you may be asked to write is a summary.

To summarize is to condense a speech or text down to its main points and put these in your own words. To be able to summarize succinctly is a great skill that will come in handy when you write research papers.

Steps to writing a summary (adapted from Scott Kushigemachi):

1. Read the original text **thoroughly and thoughtfully**.
2. In your topic sentence, name the **author** and the **title** of the text and identify the author's **main point in your own words**.
3. Paraphrase the most important details **without looking at the original**. (A summary usually doesn't contain direct quotations.)
4. Be careful to avoid adding your own opinions because a summary is about the author's point of view.
5. Include **transition phrases** to help the summary flow smoothly.
6. Limit yourself to a paragraph of **5-6 sentences for a short text**.
7. As a general rule, use present tense when writing the summary.
8. When you've completed a working draft, **make any changes** after considering the following questions:
 - Is the summary accurate and fair? That is, would the author agree with the summary?
 - If exact wording is used, are the author's words enclosed in quotation marks?
 - Did I use my own sentence structure? (Avoid simply copying the original sentences and changing a few words.)

The following is a poor example of a summary of Malcom X's "Learning to Read" (contributed by Scott Kushigemachi):

Malcolm X learns to read in prison. Basically, he copied pages out of the dictionary. He taught himself, and it involved a lot of hard work. He wanted to write letters. Bimbi was a reason he wanted to read, and Elijah Muhammad was too. By the end, he is very educated and knowledgeable.

The following is an example of a good summary of Isaac Asimov's "What Is Intelligence Anyway?"

Munira Alshehabi

Professor Kushigemachi

English

12 December 2012

In "What Is Intelligence Anyway?" by Isaac Asimov, the author begins to realize that there are other forms of intelligence that surround him. One of the types of intelligence that he discovers is his own intelligence. For example, he notices that he scores higher than the others in his tests; one being the military test that was taken at the military base. He discovers that he is a highly intellectual being. Another type of intelligence he discovers when he has to repair his car. He sends his car to the auto repairman, and that is when he notices that he has a different type of intelligence than the repairman. Asimov is more educated, while the repairman is educated in mechanics. This experience causes Asimov to deduce that there are various types of intelligence and not just one.

Exercise 1

Looking at the poor example given on the previous page, identify why it is considered weak. Even if you haven't read "Learning to Read" by Malcolm X, you should be able to find a few flaws.

Looking at the good example above, identify why it is considered good.

Exercise 2

Write a summary of this chapter. Be sure to follow the steps outlined on the previous page.

The Essay

An essay is an organized group of paragraphs that work together to prove or illustrate a main idea.

For the purpose of English Composition, an essay should be at least five paragraphs though your instructor may require more.

Loney 1

Bill Loney
Professor Joe Klein
English
31 February 2015

Laughing Out Loud: The Comedy Team of the Marx Brothers

Laughing out loud during a movie is something I rarely do. It's not that I don't find things funny; it's just that things aren't usually laugh-out-loud funny. However, an exception is whenever I watch an old Marx Brothers' movie. The Marx Brothers, who made movies in the first half of the twentieth century, make me laugh every single time. Although there have been many funny comedy teams, the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Chico, and Harpo) remain the best. Part of what made them so good is they could perform well in different mediums, they had great wit, and they established well-developed, hilarious characters.

The Marx Brothers were extremely talented because they could perform equally well across mediums. They began their career on stage in what was called Vaudeville. Surprisingly, they were initially a song and music act. They could sing and play instruments well. Eventually, they gravitated to comedy. Their brand of comedy played well on Broadway, in film, and on the radio. They had Broadway hits like *I'll Say She Is* and *The Cocoanuts*. They even had their own radio show. Additionally, they made twelve movies including my favorites *Duck Soup*, *Animal Crackers*, and *A Night at the Opera*. To be able to perform well in so many different areas shows what great talent they were.

When it came to wit, these guys could deliver. An example of a particularly witty line is, "Those are my principles, and if you don't like them... well, I have others." The line is so clever because if the speaker is willing to change his principles, then he doesn't really have strong principles to begin with. Lines like that keep audiences laughing. In addition to clever lines, the brothers were also skilled in delivering snide remarks and insults, many of which went unnoticed by the recipients. For example, Groucho once commented to a woman, "I never forget a face, but in your case I'll be glad to make an exception." The insults go on seemingly non-stop. The kind of witty

MLA Heading

Title

Intro Paragraph

Body Paragraph 1

Body Paragraph 2

Body Paragraph 3

banter that is found throughout their movies is one reason the brothers were so good at their art.

Most importantly, the characters they created were well-developed and added to their comedy. Groucho, perhaps the most famous brother, had a ridiculous looking greasepaint moustache, had over-exaggerated eyebrows, walked with a stoop, and smoked a cigar. The absurdity of his appearance and walk is funny by itself. Chico, on the other hand, didn't look too absurd, but he did have a unique trait—his accent. Chico mastered a fake Italian accent, which resulted in his mispronouncing many words for comedic effect. Harpo took on a few distinct traits. He wore a wiry red wig and acted a bit like a clown. His character could not speak, so he used a horn to make noises. His lack of speech forced Harpo to use his facial expressions to make people laugh. The Marx Brothers' characterizations became an essential part of their comedy.

Conclusion ¶

It may be surprising to some people that movies made during the 20s, 30s, and early 40s could still be appealing to audiences today. But there is something refreshing about those movies. Perhaps it is the talent and versatility of the Marx brothers that draw audiences into their world. Or perhaps what attract audiences are the witty lines delivered in every scene and the memorable characters that become amusingly familiar. Ultimately, it is likely the combination of all these things that make the Marx Brothers' films so great and so downright funny.

Breakdown of Essay Parts

MLA Header and Heading

The header is formatted to insert your last name and the page number automatically at the top right of each page in a multi-page essay. The heading appears at the top left and is typed in on the first page only. Use the example in the model essay as a guide to create your heading. The heading is double spaced as is the entire essay.

Title

The centered title reflects the content of the essay rather than just identifying the name or number of the assignment.

Introductory Paragraph

An introductory paragraph is the springboard for your entire essay. After reading your introductory paragraph, a reader should have a clear grasp of exactly where your essay is heading. There are a few key parts to an introductory paragraph: a hook, some background information on your subject, and a thesis statement.

Hook: a sentence or two that grabs the reader's attention. Be careful with your hook, as it is easy to get carried away. Instructors often have preferences for the kinds of hooks students use. For example,

some instructors insist students do not ask questions in their opening paragraphs, while others are fine with such questions.

Background Information: a few sentences that tell the reader a little something about your subject.

Thesis statement: a sentence that clearly identifies your topic as well as the point you want to make about the topic. Your thesis may also contain the major subdivisions of your essay. While it is true that your thesis statement can be anywhere in your opening paragraph, some instructors prefer it at the end of the paragraph.

Two types of thesis statements

Open: An open thesis statement does not state the specific areas the author will elaborate on in the body paragraphs.

Example: Of all the comedic teams who have been in film, the Marx Brothers remain the best for a variety of reasons. (This thesis could also end after the word “best.”)

Closed: A closed thesis statement identifies the specific areas the author will elaborate on in the body paragraphs.

Example: Part of what made the Marx Brothers so good is they could perform well in different mediums, they had great wit, and they established well-developed, hilarious characters.

(Many instructors have a preference for a particular type of thesis, so be sure to ask.)

Some final advice on introductory paragraphs

Avoid making announcements such as, “I am going to write about. . .” or “In this essay I will. . .” Instead, it is best to simply dive into your topic and get to the point.

Ask your instructor where she or he would like you to put your thesis.

Laughing out loud during a movie is something I rarely do. It’s not that I don’t find things funny; it’s just that things aren’t usually laugh-out-loud funny. However, an exception is whenever I watch an old Marx Brothers’ movie. The Marx Brothers, who made movies in the first half of the twentieth century, make me laugh every single time. Although there have been many funny comedy teams throughout the years, the Marx Brothers (Groucho, Chico, and Harpo) remain the best. Part of what made them so good is they could perform well in different mediums, they had great wit, and they established well-developed, hilarious characters.

Body Paragraph

The basic definition of a body paragraph is a group of sentences that revolve around a central idea that in turn tries to prove some part of the essay's thesis. The body paragraph is a lot like the stand-alone paragraph.

There are a few key parts to the body paragraph: the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a conclusion.

Topic Sentence: a sentence that introduces your reader to the subject of the paragraph as well as your opinion or point about the subject. The topic sentence should relate directly to your thesis statement.

A good topic sentence:

- is a complete sentence

- contains the main idea of the paragraph

- is general enough to cover all the ideas put forth in the paragraph

- is specific enough for the subject to be adequately covered in one paragraph

The topic sentence may be placed in different places in your paragraph, but many instructors want it as the first sentence of your paragraph. Be sure to find out your instructor's preference.

Supporting Sentences: sentences that set out to prove or illustrate your topic sentence. These sentences are always followed by reasons, examples, facts, statistics, and other proof.

Conclusion: a sentence that sums up the paragraph.

Sample Body Paragraph

Most importantly, the characters they created were well-developed and added to their comedy. Groucho, perhaps the most famous brother, had a ridiculous looking greasepaint moustache, had over-exaggerated eyebrows, walked with a stoop, and smoked a cigar. The absurdity of his appearance and walk is funny by itself. Chico, on the other hand, didn't look too absurd, but he did have a unique trait—his accent. Chico mastered a fake Italian accent, which resulted in his mispronouncing many words for comedic effect. Harpo took on a few distinct traits. He wore a wiry red wig and acted a bit like a clown. His character could not speak, so he used a horn to make noises. His lack of speech forced Harpo to use his facial expressions to make people laugh. The Marx Brothers' characterizations became an essential part of their comedy.

Topic Sentence relates directly to thesis.

Supporting sentences help prove the topic sentence. Paragraph explains what made each character unique.

Conclusion sums up the paragraph.

Concluding Paragraph

A concluding paragraph is important in an essay because it gives the reader a sense of closure. Ideally, the concluding paragraph strengthens the ideas you put forth in your essay. This paragraph should not be casually tagged onto your essay. Rather, it should flow logically from the preceding paragraphs. In the concluding paragraph, you should remind the reader of your thesis, summarize the main ideas you presented in your essay, and emphasize what you want the reader to take away from your essay (sometimes referred to as the "So What" or "Take Away" statement).

When it comes to concluding paragraphs, you should avoid:

announcing it is the end with expressions such as the overused phrase "in conclusion"

introducing completely new information (Too often, this tactic leaves the reader wishing for more information and wishing for closure.)

rewording your introductory paragraph (Readers don't want to read the same general opening paragraph again.)

ending your essay with a quote (It is best to end with your words, as this is your last chance to make a lasting impression on the reader.)

This chapter has outlined the parts that make up the essay.

The following chapters will address different types of essays that are commonly assigned.

While most essays you write will have some element of persuasion, the specific type of essay identifies the broader purpose of the essay.

Narration

A narrative essay tells a detailed story usually in chronological (time) order. While the narration essay follows the essay format identified in "The Essay" portion of this book, there are a few narrative-specific concepts to keep in mind as you write your narrative.

Thesis Sentence

Makes clear that the essay will tell about a specific event
Lets the reader know who is telling or narrating the story

Body Paragraphs and their Details

The body paragraphs provide a great deal of detail.
They usually answer the questions:

Who? (the people involved)

What? (the event)

Why? (why the event is important to you)

Where? (the story's location)

When? (the date or time of the story)

Organization

The primary organization style for narration is time order (chronological order). Even if you begin your story at the end and backtrack as you write (much like Quentin Tarantino does with *Reservoir Dogs*), you are still adhering to organization based on time.

Transitions

Transitions help you maintain and structure your organization. Some common transitions for narration paragraphs are given below:

Time Transitions

after

next

later

during

immediately

then

when

eventually

meanwhile

soon

first

one day

suddenly

Model Narration Essay

Contreras 1

Guadalupe Contreras

Professor Halonen

English

2 March 2012

Education Hurdle

It was the first day of my fourth grade year. I was accepted into the G.A.T.E. program, gifted and talented education. It made me nervous and shaky because all of my previous years were in normal classes and this class was not only for fourth-graders, but for fifth and sixth-graders too. I walked toward the second to last door in what seemed to be the longest hallway I ever walked in. I finally reached the door after the long walk through that dark empty hallway. I held the cold knob trying to imagine how it was going to be because I really didn't know what to expect. I took a deep breath, calmed my nerves, and stepped into the oversized room. There were no posters or bright colors like I was used to and there certainly was no welcoming greeting from my new teacher, Mrs. Manabat. All she said when I walked through the door was, "Just sit down and be quiet." I examined her as I sat down and waited for the second bell to ring. She was hollow-cheeked and the bags under her eyes were lower than the rims on her glasses. Her hair was an orange/grey color. Her skinny figure was tall and looked like it was about to break. I thought to myself, "She can't be as bad as she looks." That is when I really learned that sometimes you can judge a book by its cover. Never did I believe that any teacher would be capable of hindering me from my learning experience--that is, until I was placed in that woman's class.

I began to notice Mrs. Manabat's odd behaviors during the first week of school. She would seem annoyed, making all kinds of smirks and snickers under her breath, at most of the questions that some of the children asked. While reading a passage in class about a musician, Ashely, a petite girl with a faint voice, asked a question about something she did not understand and Mrs. Manabat's only response was, "Are you kidding me?" The small girl, whose face turned red as a cherry, sank into her chair as everyone turned to look at her and then back at my frail, but very harsh, fourth grade teacher. How odd, I thought there was no such thing as a wrong answer. More and more of my classmates started to get the same kind of response all stated in different ways like, "Come on, you should know this," and "Are you really asking me that question?" I began to feel like it was only a matter of time until I got the same treatment. I was scared to raise my hand, but there were things I really needed help with. I really began to worry about the rest of the school year and wondered if things would only get worse. They did.

Contreras 2

Things progressed downhill as weeks went on in the class. Not only did Mrs. Manabat not answer my questions, but she began to use curse words and physical gestures. Although the words were not exactly the worst of words, they were still definitely nothing that a nine-year-old child should have to be exposed to. One day during activity time, which was when everyone got into groups and worked on projects or studied together, I had to use the restroom, so I went up to ask her if I could go. I had not even begun to ask when she put her long skinny hand right in front of my face and told me to wait because she was busy talking on the phone. I felt so dejected that I just went to sit with my group and waited the next hour for our recess to go use the restroom. If I could not even ask for something that simple, I felt like I could not ask her anything at all. It made me feel like my teacher did not care. I was always so accustomed to being treated well by my teachers and being helped whenever I needed it and with her, it was just not the same.

Defeat and helplessness was all I could feel and it started to really take a toll on me and was evident in my grades. Throughout all of my previous years of school, I was always an A student. In her pale blue, gloomy, and depressing class, all I wanted to do was give up. All of the people around me felt the same way, like my best friend in the class, Neyat. She disliked the class as much as I did because she got the exact same treatment. One time she needed some feedback on a project she made having to do with our hero. She asked Mrs. Manabat if she was heading in the right direction. My sly teacher just laughed and said, "Sure, kid." I couldn't ask that unpleasant person any question pertaining to school because those questions were just not good enough for her. I did not want to get the same treatment as all of my friends and classmates, so I decided just not to ask and stay quiet. I was giving up. Even though school was always very important to me, I could not see myself getting anything done in that frightening place.

After watching my grades start to plummet, I finally got the courage to tell my parents about what was going on because I was not going to let myself slip just because of a teacher when there are so many other great teachers. Telling them was very difficult for me because I thought they might not believe me since parents do not always believe children when it comes to things like that. I walked to the living room slowly as they watched television and held each other. I stood there with a blank look on my face as I tried to collect myself and find the words to tell them. "What is it sweetie?" asked my dad worried with a puzzled look on his face while my mom pulled me into her arms. I stared at them while my knees trembled and my eyes began to water. "Please tell us," kept insisting my mom. I took a deep breath and

Contreras 3

closed my eyes, and I let everything that happened to me in that class come out. They believed me and were furious and wanted to take action right then. They took the time to go to my school and demand that I get a different teacher as soon as possible. There was no protest from my principal, Dr. Sims. She felt that if I needed a class change in order to succeed, that I could do that. All of my worries would soon be over and I could just focus on school.

The very next day I was moved into Mr. Mendoza's class and out of Mrs. Manabat's class. I felt free. My new teacher was better than I expected and I was able to fit in right away. No more sad and depressing room. No more having to be looked at with that cold stare. This new classroom was full of life and the environment was something that I really enjoyed. After that, my grades were back to what I was used to. My ability to open my eyes and realize that I did not have to take on such a difficult challenge alone helped me overcome such a significant obstacle. It made me a stronger student and person. I knew from that moment on that if I wanted to succeed, I could never let anyone, not even a teacher, obstruct me from reaching my full potential.

Exercise

Use the model narration essay to answer the following prompts.

1. List three transition words that indicate time order.
2. Choose three details you find helpful in understanding people in the story.
3. Is the title adequate for the story? Create an alternative title.
4. Is there anywhere you would like to see more detail? If so, where?
5. Can you relate to Guadalupe's experience? If so, how?

Description

The goal of a description essay is to convey an overall impression of a place, person, object, or idea. You're not telling a story in this kind of essay; you're simply describing with enough detail that your audience can imagine what you are describing.

While the description essay follows the essay format identified in "The Essay" portion of this book, there are a few concepts to keep in mind as you write your description essay.

Organization

Organization styles for descriptive paragraphs include location (where things are in relation to one another, such as front to back, left to right) and order of importance (the paragraph moves from least important to most important).

Transition Words

Explanation and Example	Location
for example	nearby
for instance	above
to illustrate	adjacent to
one example	below, beyond, farther on, opposite to, there
Similarity	
furthermore	
additionally	
and	
in addition	
moreover	
besides that	
in the same way	
also	

Model Description Essay

Mariam I

Aly Mariam

Professor A-Tompkins

English

September 27, 2011

LAX: An Assault on the Senses

Aren't vacations exciting? Packing and setting the alarm a day before already gets me anxious. The night before my trip to Hawaii, I lay in bed thinking: What will Hawaii look like? What will there be for me to taste or touch? I wonder if I can actually smell the exotic flowers in the air. Is there traffic like there is in LA? Or is it calm, silent, and peaceful? Before I could answer these questions, I had to go through LAX airport: the place where all the aspects of my senses get tested first.

LAX airport was crowded and busy even before I entered it. Right when I exited the 105 freeway, I immediately saw the huge LAX sign. Off to the sides, I saw the enormous poles that lit up at night. When I first entered terminal one, there were already people in their cars trying to find parking. Buses, taxis, and shuttles were dropping and picking up people, while others were running around trying to find a cart to put their luggage in. Every forty-five seconds, I could see an airplane the size of the Titanic flying above my head. Inside the terminals were long lines for people to check in. In addition to the check-in point, there were conveyor belts, baggage claims, gift shops, and a massive board posting flight schedules. The most overwhelming sight to see was the TSA area. (This is where x-ray scans take place before going into the gates.) Additionally, I saw all types of people waiting for their flights. There were soldiers, business men and women, families with children running and playing around, and I even saw flight attendants. My eyes never rested because of the rate of movement in LAX airport.

There were so many things going on that it was impossible to avoid all the raucous noise that went on inside the terminals. The screeching tires and honking vehicles rang an annoying bell in my ears. But that was nothing compared to the shaking ground and the "rooooooom" from the airplanes taking off. Then there was the intercom voice: "Flight 609, now boarding. Last call, flight 609 now boarding." Somehow, the intercom voice was the most soothing voice because it meant that vacation was getting nearer. On the other hand, crying babies and screaming children were the most disturbing sound that ever assaulted my ears. Their mothers were screaming at them, "Matthew!

Mariam 2

Stop running around!” and some mothers were singing their babies to sleep. On top of that, dogs jogged around sniffing, and of course, barking at certain luggage. It seemed like peace and quiet ran away to get married and never came back.

Not only were there so many sights to see and so much noise to listen to, but the touch and smell changed all around me. On my way in, I smelled the smoke from vehicles and cigarettes in the hands of air polluters. Inside, as people walked by me, their cologne and perfume charged up my nose. In contrast, the aroma of coffee and McDonald’s food brought a smile to my face. Besides all the different smells in the air, I was able to feel the coldness from the air conditioner. The chill in the terminals made the handles on the luggage carts cold. Beyond the ghostly chill, the leather seats were smooth but warm from the many bodies that sat on them. However, the experience was not over until I passed the overly crowded lines, which lead to the plane. It was impossible not to feel hot and musty between the people in line.

In retrospect, LAX airport touched all the aspects of my senses. I was able to see so many sights of such vehicles, airplanes, terminals, and people. In addition, I was able to hear screeching tires, honking vehicles, and even families yelling at each other. Moreover, I smelled smoke from machines and humans, and I also got to feel the welcoming chill from the air conditioner. In spite of LAX airport being busy, it was still possible for me to see, hear, smell, and touch every dimension of the airport.

Exercise

Use the model narration essay to answer the following prompts.

1. Identify the subject of the essay.
2. What is the author's overall impression of the subject.
3. Identify two details that you like and explain why you like them.
4. Create an alternative topic sentence for body paragraph one.
5. Identify two details that support the topic sentence of body paragraph 3.
6. Identify three transition words or phrases.
7. Identify a place you've been to that engaged all your senses.

Comparison/Contrast

A comparison essay shows similarities between two subjects. A contrast essay shows differences between two subjects. Sometimes an essay in this genre demonstrates both similarities and differences. Generally, students either choose two subjects that are seemingly different and show how similar they really are or they choose two subjects that are seemingly similar and show how different they really are.

Organization

Generally there are two ways to organize a comparison/contrast essay. The subject by subject pattern (or block pattern), and the point by point pattern (or alternating pattern).

Subject by Subject (4 ¶s)

I. Intro ¶ with thesis: The two political candidates are worlds apart in terms of appearance, personality, and policies.

II. Body ¶ Candidate A

- A. Appearance
- B. Personality
- C. Policies

III. Body ¶ Candidate B

- A. Appearance
- B. Personality
- C. Policies

IV. Concluding ¶

(alternatively, part II about candidate A could be three separate body paragraphs. So too, part III.

Point by Point (5 ¶s)

I. Intro ¶ with thesis: The two political candidates are worlds apart in terms of appearance, personality, and policies.

II. Body ¶ Appearance

- A. Candidate A appearance
- B. Candidate B appearance

III. Body ¶ Personality

- A. Candidate A personality
- B. Candidate B personality

IV. Body ¶ Policies

- A. Candidate A policies
- B. Candidate B policies

V. Concluding ¶

Model Comparison/Contrast Essay

Owens 1

Nyla Owens

Professor Ansite

English

05 April 2012

People Who Seem Different Can Be Similar

There are many people in the limelight who may seem different but in reality have many similarities. The renowned Jackie Robinson made a ground-breaking change in the history of baseball. He was the first African-American to play in the major baseball league. Robinson stood strong through all the racial hatred and let his athletic talent do all the talking. The King of Pop, Michael Jackson, also made a memorable imprint on pop music and its culture. Jackson sold millions of records worldwide, and has inspired generations of pop, soul, and R&B artists with his music style and dance moves. Although Jackie Robinson and Michael Jackson may seem very different, they are alike in numerous ways, including the sacrifices they made, the legacy they left behind, and the respect they have gained in their professional field.

One way Jackie Robinson and Michael Jackson are similar is the many sacrifices they both had to give up to be on top in their professions. Jackie Robinson had to sacrifice his manhood and step outside of his character because of his race. Branch Rickey, the president of the Brooklyn Dodgers at that time, told Robinson “. . .for three years he would have to turn the other cheek and silently suffer all the vile things that would come his way” (Aaron 82). Instead of reacting to the ignorant and hurtful things the other players would do and say to Robinson, he would just have to ignore them and still be the great ballplayer he was. This wasn't an easy task for Jackie Robinson due to the great amount of courage he had. Describing Robinson's character, Larry Schwartz says, “His instinct wasn't to turn the other cheek, but face problems head on. He was more prone to fighting back than holding back.” Where there may have been times when Robinson would want to fight back, he had to gain self-control to reply to all the insults and violence with silence. Michael Jackson also had to sacrifice something important to become a successful pop star. Starting at the age of eleven Jackson had no time to be a child and found himself “. . . so lonely, so confused, so sad. He lost happiness somewhere in his childhood, and spent his life trying to go back there and find it” (Schwartz). Throughout his career it is evident that he never got the chance to grow up like a normal child. Everything Jackson wanted to do

Owens 2

as a child came to life as he became an adult. Sacrifice is the price one pays to be on top.

The next ways Jackie Robinson and Michael Jackson are alike are the legacy and lasting impression they left behind. Baseball would not be what it is today without Robinson; although he has passed away, his legacy will live on in baseball forever. "Jackie Robinson had to be bigger than life" (Aaron 82). Jackie Robinson is more than a human being; he is a hero to all African-Americans who have ever played in the mega baseball league. He is the reason that baseball is such a melting pot today; it is because of him that little African-American boys can now dream to grow up to be a baseball player. In addition to legacies, holding the title The King of Pop is legendary itself. Michael Jackson has truly left his mark on the music and dance business. "The Guinness Book of World Records recognized Jackson as the Most Successful Entertainer of All Time" ("Michael"). Jackson left behind a unique style on earth and many artists today take pieces of his work to create their own. Not only did he touch the lives of people in America, but people worldwide admire and look up to Michael Jackson. Both of these men are gone, but their legacy still lives on.

The last way Jackie Robinson and Michael Jackson are the same is the respect they have gained in their professional field. Robinson rightfully gained respect from Blacks but from baseball: "In 1997, baseball dedicated the season to Robinson on the 50th anniversary of his debut"(Schwartz). Fifty years after Jackie Robinson died, he was getting honored and is still being honored today. He is respected for the changes he made and the color barrier he broke in baseball. All respect is rightfully his because of all the physical and verbal abuse he was exposed to stand up for his people. In comparison, Michael Jackson has respect from many people globally: ". . . Michael Jackson forever lives on in the hearts of all that love and respect his short time on earth" (Sturgis). The music icon was a true entertainer who stole away the hearts of many through his songs. He captivated an audience when he walked on stage with his dance moves, the way he dressed, and his angelic singing voice. Jackson still gets honored today and his talent is something that will never be forgotten. His one of a kind music style and his complex dance moves will always be remembered. The lasting effects these men have left upon earth have gained them both a tremendous amount of respect.

All in all, two people who may appear to be complete opposites and have no similarities can have several things in common, not only by physical

Owens 3

appearance but by things they have accomplished. Jackie Robinson was a strong African-American man who changed history in baseball whereas Michael Jackson was a very talented artist who changed the music business. Though the two are in completely different professional fields, they are both American legends.

Owens 4

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Exercise

Use the model essay to respond to the following prompts:

1. Identify the subjects of the essay.
2. In what ways are the subjects being compared?
3. Indicate any details you would like to see added to the essay.
4. Identify the overall organization of the essay?

Persuasion

A persuasive essay uses details and examples to sway the reader to agree with the writer's opinion about a subject.

Organization

Persuasive essays should be organized in a logical manner.

- from general to specific
- from specific to general
- from least important to most important
- from most important to least important

Transition Words

To Continue a Line of Reasoning

furthermore in addition
 additionally in the same way
 consequently also, moreover
 following this the most important
 besides that pursuing this further

To Show Organization

Most importantly,
 Specifically

To Change Reasoning Direction

on the other hand nevertheless
 in contrast instead
 alternatively rather
 conversely but
 nonetheless yet
 however still
 but another otherwise
 although though

Model Persuasion Essay

Reyes 1

Aaron Reyes
 Prof. Blake
 English
 30 October 2014

State-Sponsored Lotteries

Lotteries have a long tradition in America, stretching as far back as “the 1740s, [when] Benjamin Franklin organized a lottery to purchase a cannon for the defense of Philadelphia” (Zamarripa). After a huge bribery scandal in the 1870s involving the Louisiana state lottery, lotteries fell out of favor

Reyes 2

and had virtually disappeared by the turn of the century. However, they were reintroduced in the 1960s, and today lotteries operate in 37 states and the District of Columbia (National). But not everyone agrees that states should be in the lottery business. It's time for the government to get out of the lottery business because lotteries are deceptive, exploitative, and ineffective.

First, the lottery deceives consumers. Few people who purchase a lottery ticket realize how unlikely they are to win. "From the viewpoint of consumers," writes Harvey N. Chinn, Executive Director of the California Coalition Against Gambling Expansion, "the sale of nearly 3 billion lottery tickets is a deception of unbelievable magnitude. . . . [in which] citizens are persuaded to buy tickets that are virtually worthless." Not only do these buyers stand only a minute chance of winning, but in some cases they have no chance of winning. A man in Virginia filed a lawsuit against that state after he discovered in 2007 that the \$75,000 grand prize had already been awarded prior to the time he was sold a \$5 scratch-off ticket. The man's attorney later found that the Virginia lottery had actually "sold \$85 million in tickets for which no top prize was available" (Carroll and Chun). While this experience might be an extreme case, most people are not aware of the exact odds against their winning a lottery. A 1990 study by David Nibert, a sociology professor at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio, revealed that "fewer than half of the state lotteries disclosed the odds against winning in their print advertising, and only about 25 percent did so in their television ads" (Marshall). Consequently, players are not being adequately informed of the financial risk they are undertaking in purchasing a lottery ticket.

In addition to defrauding consumers in general, lotteries tend to exploit the poor especially. As Chinn points out, "Our poorest citizens buy the most tickets." This point has been substantiated by a number of studies. According to a 1994 study by Indiana University, when unemployment rates rise, so do lottery sales. This phenomenon has been observed first hand by Lou Mott, owner of a convenience store in Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, a town which took a severe hit when its steel mills closed in the 80s. In September 2008, Mott reported that he "sold tickets to about 40 people in the 45 minutes before the state lottery numbers were broadcast. Most spent \$10 or more each" (Zezima). These buyers were virtually throwing away money they could not spare in the mistaken notion that they could magically solve their problems. A 2008 study of why poor people, in particular, spend their money on lottery tickets, revealed that these people are encouraged by the hope of escaping poverty to purchase lottery tickets, "even though their chances of stumbling upon a life-changing windfall are nearly impossibly slim and buying lottery tickets in fact exacerbates the very poverty that purchasers are hoping to escape" (McElhinny). Thus the lotteries take advantage of the desperation of our neediest citizens.

While lotteries are often adopted by states to generate additional income and make up budget shortfalls, in practice lotteries have not been successful in this regard. In California, for example, the lottery has done little to solve the

Reyes 3

state's financial woes. In 2002, "citizens purchased nearly 3 billion lottery tickets." However, the following year the state had a "\$35 billion deficit" (Chinn). In 2007, when California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger proposed selling lottery-based bonds to avoid a tax increase, his scheme drew criticism for overshadowing the need for tax reform in the state. State Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata compared the governor's plan to the lending risky practices that had such a damaging effect on the housing industry. As Perata put it, "basing the state's fiscal health on increased gambling revenue [is] . . . not unlike Countrywide (Financial Corp.) telling people you can have this house for no money down and interest-only payments" ("Schwarzenegger"). State finances should not rely on lottery income to resolve deficits.

Government-sponsored lotteries should have no place in America. They defraud consumers and target those who can least afford to risk their money. Most importantly, lotteries do not even fulfill their primary purpose of enhancing state budgets. States should be helping people, not taking advantage of them. We need to educate citizens about the dark side of lotteries and come up with better solutions for social problems and state finances.

Reyes 4

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Exercise

Use the model essay to answer the following questions:

1. What is being argued in this essay?
2. Is the evidence convincing? If so, give reasons. If not, why not?
3. Where could this essay benefit from more specific examples?
4. How is this essay organized?
5. Create an alternative title for the essay.
6. What are the strengths of this essay?

Literary Analysis

A literary analysis essay uses details and examples to support a claim you make about a piece of literature as a whole or about some smaller aspect of the work.

The goal of this essay is to provide **your perspective** on how to better understand a character, theme, plot, or entire work of literature.

Terms to Know

Primary source: The story or book you are reading and writing about.

Secondary source: Outside sources that relate directly or indirectly to the primary source.

Plot: Actions and events that make up the storyline.

Character: A person or being or creature who exhibits thoughts and actions in a narrative work.

Theme: A common idea found throughout a work or found repeated in the narrative.

Setting: The surroundings, environment, and time period of a narrative.

Tone: The author's attitude to the subject.

Conflict: A struggle between two forces.

Internal = character is struggling with something on the inside such as what is right or wrong

External = character is struggling with something outside of himself/herself such as another character, nature, society, technology, gods.

Things to consider when discussing and writing about literature: class, gender, race, history, culture,

As a general rule, use present tense when writing literary analysis.

Reading Skills

Active Reading is key to a good essay. To read actively, try the following:

Highlight passages you find interesting either because they seem to represent a theme or they simply stand out. Make a note in the margin about what you were thinking when you highlighted the passage.

Annotate: Take notes both in the margin of your text and on a separate piece of paper as you read as well as when you finish each chapter

Ask Questions both in your notes and in class.

Create your own shorthand. For example, you can abbreviate characters' names with a letter (G for Gatsby) or put an R in the margin next to religious references.

Know that your unique perspective on the reading is what will make a good essay

(To hack a computer is to gain access to it. Similarly, the reading skills identified above (HAACK) help you gain access to texts.)

Organization of Literary Analysis Essay

Organization is usually dictated by your thesis. For example, if you are trying to show a character has matured in the way she interacts with society, you will likely adhere to a chronological order that somewhat matches the order of the plot.

If, however, you're trying to show the different ways the supernatural plays a role in determining the fate of characters, your essay will likely not adhere to the chronological order of the plot. Rather, each body paragraph may examine a different character's dealings with the supernatural. Or each paragraph may deal with a particular way the supernatural acts, in which case, each body paragraph might focus on a different supernatural event.

Transition Words

Transition words help the reader know when you are moving from one example to the next or from one idea to another.

For a comprehensive list of transition words see "Appendix A: Transition Words".

Model Literary Analysis Essay

Look over the model literary analysis paper that follows. It analyzes the theme of identity in a short story by Native-American author Sherman Alexie.

Santiago 1

Jose Santiago
Professor Tompkins
English
11 December 2011

The Flight Pattern Illusion

Sherman Alexie's short story "Flight Patterns" demonstrates that people's identities are lost within people's misperceptions. The characters in the story try to hold on to their identity but due to stereotyping they lose their identity.

Throughout the story William's identity is always mistaken. Everywhere William goes he is confused for something he is not. William says, "People usually think I am a long haired Mexican" (116). People think because he lives in the United States of America and is dark skinned that he must be Mexican. William feels that he is a normal man but he is struggling with keeping his identity. When William informs people that he is Indian, most people do not know which type of Indian he is. William says, "I am Indian ... no, not jewel on the forehead Indian, I am bows and arrows Indian" (115). William's identity is lost within two types of Indians, causing him to resort to stereotyping in order to convey his ethnic identity. Once William informs people that he is Indian, people expect him to be sacred and care about the land. William does not really care about the land; he just wants to be a normal man. His feeling is expressed in his comment: "Who cares about uranium mines and nuclear waste dump site and sacred land? Who cares about the recovery of tribal languages?" (103). Even though William is Indian, he does not want to be a like every other Indian; he wants to be himself.

William is not just a victim of people's misperception as he also misperceives others. One example of William's misperceptions of others is the fact that "William always scanned the airports and airplanes for little brown guys who reeked of fundamentalism" (107). Even though William is a brown man himself, he still stereotypes other brown guys as potential terrorists. Ironically, he is also stereotyped as a potential terrorist. William and every other dark skinned person are victims of circumstance in a post 9/11 era. In the story William feels he would be treated better if the terrorist were not brown. He feels that "If Norwegian terrorists had exploded the World Trade Center, then blue eyed blondes would be view with more suspicion or so he hoped" (108). In his view, even if a light skinned person blew up the world trade center, he did not have hope in society to be different. The U.S.A has been plagued with racism since it was born. Every dark skinned person has always been misperceived as untrustworthy.

Santiago 2

William is not the only victim of stereotyping: Fekadu, the cab driver that befriends William, has suffered because of stereotyping. When William first met Fekadu he thought what many people think about a black man in America, something negative. William describes Fekadu as “a black man with a violent history” (114). As soon as he thinks this he feels bad: “[William] immediately reprimanded himself for racially profiling the driver” (114). William is a nice guy but everyone stereotypes everyone. Those who deny it are much worse, because they stereotype and they lie about it. Fekadu has suffered the loss of his identity because of the stereotypes America has of black people. Fekadu says “because people think I am black [they see me] only as a crack addict on welfare” (117). Fekadu’s identity suffers because of his skin color. Being black, people just see him as a cab driver not realizing that he once was a pilot and studied at Oxford. Fekadu is an educated African man but people still think he is a streetwise black American. Fekadu says that “they always want to hip hop rap to me,” or they ask him, “Are you east coast or west coast?” and he responds “I am Ivory Coast” (117). Since Fekadu is dark skinned they assume he is African-American and that he should know the culture of black America.

Ethnicities are not the only things that are being lost, but also the roles of man and woman and how they are viewed. In modern society women are taking over jobs that were traditionally viewed as a man’s job. Women are now providers of their family, thanks to the movement called feminism. That is why “husbands and children who kept looking up feminism in the dictionary” (108) are viewed as new age parents, unlike William who feels he is old fashioned. William himself says, “He suspected he was an old fashion bastard who wanted his wife to stay at home and wait, wait, wait for him” (109). William is a warrior who feels that it is his job to provide for his family; that is why he asks his wife to stay at home.

Whether it is self-identity or roles of man and woman, society has always had something to say about what we should be. The characters in the story struggle with their identity. They know who they are but society will not let them keep their identity. The stereotyping that both William and Fekadu suffer has caused them to lose their identity and they struggle to keep their identity.

Exercise

Use the model literary analysis essay to answer the following prompts.

1. What's the author of this essay trying to reveal about the story?
2. Who are the victims of stereotyping in the story?
3. How does William misperceive other people?
4. How are the body paragraphs organized?
4. Would you add or change anything in this essay if you were the author?
5. Create an alternative title for the essay.

3

Understanding Grammar

Sentence Parts

Clauses and Phrases

Writing Clearly

Common Word Errors

Problem Words

Italics and Quotations

Capitalization

Sentence Parts

Verbs

A verb shows *action* or *state of being* and is one of the key building blocks to every sentence you write.

Action Verbs are typically actions you can physically do.

Examples: *kick, run, hide, dance, drive, write, jump*

Action verbs can also be actions you can't see.

Sue *thought* about pets. She *wanted* a puppy.

Action verbs are time-telling words. They change form to tell *when* something takes place.

My dog *runs* faster than yours. (present tense)

Yesterday he *ran* around the block. (past tense)

State-of-being verbs, also known as **linking verbs**, don't show action – you can't *do* them. Instead, they **link** the subject (a noun or pronoun) with a word that describes or renames it (an adjective, noun, or pronoun). To put it differently, these verbs give information about the condition, or the **state of being**, of the subject. Examples: *is, are, were, seem*

be-form verbs	(sensory verbs)	(other linking verbs)
<i>am</i>	<i>feel</i>	<i>appear</i>
<i>is</i>	<i>look</i>	<i>become</i>
<i>are</i>	<i>smell</i>	<i>grow</i>
<i>was</i>	<i>sound</i>	<i>prove</i>
<i>were</i>	<i>taste</i>	<i>remain</i>
		<i>seem</i>

Like action verbs, linking verbs change form to show time.

He *is* tired now. (present tense)

He *was* tired earlier. (past tense)

Some verbs can be either linking verbs or action verbs, depending on how they're used.

The chef *tasted* the soup. (*tasted* is an action)

The soup *tasted* delicious. (*tasted* is not an action, *taste* = *was*)

Helping Verbs are added on to main verbs (action and linking verbs) to “help” them show time more exactly and to add different shades of meaning.

Examples: *will* walk, *has* walked, *might be* walking, *could have been* walking.

Helping Verbs:

am					
is	can		has		
are	could		have		
was	shall	do	had		+ MAIN
were	should	did	may		VERB
be	will	does	might		
being	would		must		
been					

Some verbs can be either helping verbs or main verbs:

He *is* the team captain. (main verb).

The team *is* playing tonight. (helping verb).

When used as main verbs, *be*, *being*, and *been* always NEED a helping verb:

Pat *has been* ill all weekend.

She *will be* absent on Monday.

Helping verbs *do*, *did*, and *does* are used with the base form of the main verb:

She *did go* to bed. (the base form is the form used after **to**: *to go*)

More than one helping verb can be combined:

My cousin *would have been* graduating in June. Instead, he *will be* joining the Marines.

Sometimes another word can separate the helping verb from the main verb. Common examples are adverbs "not," "always," and "often."

The confused dog *could not find* the tennis ball.

An *-ing* word can't be the verb of a sentence by itself. It must have a helping verb:

Jorge *was running* to catch the bus.

Helping verbs let writers ask questions (Notice that in a question, the subject comes after the helping verb):

Are you taking math this semester? *Will* she *be* arriving soon?

Irregular Verbs have irregular forms in the past tense and past participle. When you are uncertain about the form of a verb, consult the following list.

Present	Past	Past Participle (with <i>have</i> , <i>had</i>)
arise	arose	arisen
be	was/were	been
bear	bore	borne
begin	began	begun
bite	bit	bitten/bit
blow	blew	blown



Regular Verbs form the past tense and past participle by adding *-ed* to the present tense.

present: walk

past: walked

past participle: have walked

break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
creep	crept	crept
dive	dived/dove	dived
do	did	done
drag	dragged	dragged
draw	drew	drawn
dream	dreamed	dreamt
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
drown	drowned	drowned
eat	ate	eaten
feel	felt	felt
fight	fought	fought
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgave	forgiven
get	got	got/gotten
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
hang	hung	hung
hide	hid	hidden
know	knew	known
lay	laid	laid
lead	led	led
lie	lay	lain
light	lit	lit
lose	lost	lost
prove	proved	proved/proven
ride	rode	ridden
ring	rang	rung
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
see	saw	seen
seek	sought	sought
set	set	set
shake	shook	shaken
sing	sang	sung
sit	sat	sat
speak	spoke	spoken
spring	sprang	sprung
steal	stole	stolen
sting	stung	stung
strike	struck	struck
swear	swore	sworn
swim	swam	swum
swing	swung	swung
take	took	taken
tear	tore	torn
think	thought	thought
throw	threw	thrown
wake	woke/waked	woken/waked/woke
wear	wore	worn
write	wrote	written

Consistent Verb Tense

Don't mix tenses unnecessarily; keep them consistent to avoid confusing your reader.

Notice the shift in verb tenses in the next example (past, present, past):

The thief **ran** from the store. Bystanders **call** the police and **identified** the thief. The police **chase** after the thief and **caught** him two blocks from the store.

The following example uses consistent verb tenses:

The thief **ran** from the store. Bystanders **called** the police and **identified** the thief. The police **chased** after the thief and **caught** him two blocks from the store.

Advanced Verb Tenses

Verbs tell us when something occurred. The most common verb tenses are present, past, and future. Yet there are nine other tenses that allow writers to be more specific and subtle. See the chart below for an example of all twelve tenses.

Tenses	Examples
Present	I laugh
Past	I laughed at the comedian's joke
Future	You will laugh when you hear the joke too.
Present perfect	Gail has laughed at his jokes before.
Past perfect	They had laughed for hours before they left the show.
Future perfect	The audience will have laughed for hours by the time they leave.
Present progressive	I am laughing already.
Past progressive	She was laughing during the show.
Future progressive	The crowd will be laughing tonight.
Present perfect progressive	The audience has been laughing for hours.
Past perfect progressive	The crowd had been laughing until the new act started.
Future perfect progressive	Gail will have been laughing at this comedian for an hour by the time his set is over.

Notes on Advanced Verb Tenses

The **perfect tenses** are formed by adding *have, has, or had* to the past participle.
Ex: has laugh + ed

The **progressive tenses** are formed by adding *am, is, are, was, were* to the present participle.
Ex: were laugh + ing

The **present progressive tenses** are formed by adding *have been, has been, or had been* to the present participle. Ex: have been laugh + ing

Present Perfect = *have or has* + past participle

The present perfect tense expresses an action that began in the past and has recently been completed or is continuing in the present.

The firefighters have just agreed on a new contract with the city.
Mr. Nguyen has worked at his job for twenty years.

Past Perfect = *had* + past participle

The past perfect tense expresses a past action that was completed before another past action.

I had just started eating when I heard my neighbor call for help.
Mozart had learned to compose music by the time he was seven.

Present Progressive = *am, is, or are* + -ing form

The present progressive tense expresses an action still in progress.

I am cycling every weekend this month.
My son is growing taller.

Past Progressive = *was or were* + -ing form

The past progressive expresses an action that was in progress in the past.

In 2014, she was spending three hundred dollars a month on her phone bill.

Last week my favorite movie was playing at my favorite theatre.

Active and Passive Verbs (Pass)

When the subject of a sentence performs the action of the verb, the verb is an active verb.

When a sentence is written in the passive voice, a subject is acted upon. The “doer” of the action may or may not be included in the sentence.

Active	Passive
Lassie caught the frisbee. (The subject, <i>Lassie</i> , is the doer of the action.)	The frisbee was caught by Lassie. (The subject, frisbee, is acted upon.)
The electrician rewired our house in 2015. (The subject, <i>electrician</i> , does the action.)	Our house was rewired in 2015. (The house does not do the remodeling.)

Sentences written in the passive voice are less powerful than sentences in the active voice. Using the active voice makes writing more direct and concise.

The passive voice is most appropriate when the performer of the action is unknown or when the intention is to emphasize the receiver of the action.

Examples:

My car was stolen!
(The identity of the thief is unknown.)

The mail is not delivered on Columbus Day.
(Everyone knows a postal worker delivers the mail, so the writer doesn't need to include this information.)

Several protestors were arrested for destruction of public property.
(The receiver of the action, *protestors*, is being emphasized.)

Nouns

A noun is a person, place, thing, or idea.

Common Noun Endings

- tion: Constitution, exemption, pollution, deduction
- ness: happiness, sadness, emptiness
- er/or: actor, painter
- ist: capitalist, journalist
- ism: capitalism, magnetism
- ment: development, arrangement
- ity: severity, paucity

Proper and Common Nouns

Proper Nouns name specific people, places, or organizations.

Proper nouns are always capitalized. Always!

Jacob	Mexico	President Obama	Mother Theresa
Cathy	El Camino College	Matt Damon	L. A. Lakers

Proper nouns may also refer to dates or holidays in the calendar:

January	Monday	Memorial Day
February	Tuesday	Thanksgiving

Common Nouns are all nouns that aren't proper nouns. They aren't capitalized.

woman school day holiday actor country

Nouns as Subjects

The subject of the sentence is the noun (or pronoun) doing the action or being something. It's what the sentence is about.

To find the noun that is the subject:

Step 1: Find the verb.

Step 2: Insert the word *who* or *what* before the verb, and read the sentence as a question.

Step 3: Answer the question. Your answer will be the subject.

Example: Cows have four stomachs.

Step 1: The verb is *have*.

Step 2: Who or what has four stomachs?

Step 3: Cows have four stomachs. Therefore, *cows* is the subject.

Pronouns

Pronouns take the place of nouns (persons, places, things, or ideas).

Subject Pronouns	Object Pronouns
I	me
you	you
he	him
she	her
it	it
we	us
they	them

Subject pronouns are subjects of verbs.

She scored the winning goal.. (*She* is the subject of the verb *scored*.)

We postponed our wedding. (*We* is the subject of the verb *postponed*.)

Rules:

1. Always use a subject pronoun in a sentence with more than one subject.

Incorrect: Dalia and me went to the mall last week.

Correct: Dalia and I went to the mall last week.

If you are confused, read the sentence out loud and try each pronoun by itself. "Me went to the mall last week" will sound funny, but "I went to the mall last week" will sound correct.

2. Use a subject pronoun after different forms of the verb be, such as *am*, *is*, *are*, *was*, *were*, *has been*, *have been*.

Correct : It was *she* who called. ("She" renames the subject,
it = she so you use the subject pronoun.)

In spoken English, many people break this rule because they are unaware of it. However, in writing, proper grammar is expected. One way to avoid these stilted yet correct constructions is to reword each sentence.

3. Use subject pronouns after *than* or *as* when a verb is understood after the pronoun.

You run faster than *I* (run). (The verb *run* is understood after *I*.)

She is as stubborn as *I* (am). (The verb *am* is understood after *I*.)

They do not go out as much as *we* (do). (The verb *do* is understood after *we*.)

Relative Pronouns start a clause that gives more information about someone or something already mentioned in the sentence.

who whom whose that which

The actor, *who* is the best in her field, won an Oscar.

The scientist *whom* I most admire is Einstein.

The Vanderbilts, *whose* mansion is in Newport, live in Rhode Island.

I prefer the shows *that* are in my instant queue.

Each relative pronoun above refers to a specific word that precedes it in the sentence. *Who* refers to actor, *whom* refers to scientist, *whose* refers to Vanderbilts, and *that* refers to shows.

One of these relative pronouns above begins a phrase that contains non-essential information, and that phrase is set off with commas for that reason.

Relative Pronoun Tips:

Who, *whose*, and *whom* refer to people and to animals with names (as in Lassie).

I cannot remember whose phone I borrowed.

Which refers to things.

Pass me my keys which are still in the door.

That can refer to groups or things.

The whale that beached began to smell after a while.

The team that led the season ended up losing early in the finals.

Who is a subject pronoun and is used as the subject of a verb.

I'm looking forward to seeing who will win the Nobel Prize.

Whom is an object pronoun and is used as the object of a verb or a preposition.

I can't figure out whom I should blame for the broken window.

To whom should I write this check?

Possessive Pronouns show ownership or possession.

my, mine	our, ours
your, yours	your, yours
his	their, theirs
her, hers	
its	

That book is **mine**. **Your** book is over there. **Our** books are in the locker.

Note: These words show possession **without** an apostrophe!

Demonstrative Pronouns refer to a person or a thing (noun).

 this that these those

This and *these* refer to things that are close. *That* and *those* refer to things that are farther away.

May I use *this* letter opener?

I will open *these* letters.

Those kids playing at the park are having fun.

Reflexive Pronouns refer to the subject of the sentence and are used either to give emphasis or to show a subject acting upon itself.

myself	herself	ourselves
yourself	himself	yourselves
	itself	themselves

Correct:

I hurt *myself* while hiking. The commander *himself* made the call.

She created the product *herself*. The volunteers did it all by *themselves*.

Incorrect: Joe and myself entered the contest.

Correct: Joe and I entered the contest.

When reflexive pronouns are plural, -self becomes -selves.

Example: The couple treated *themselves* to a night without children.

Prepositions (Prep)

A preposition is a word that shows position or location or time.

The following sentence will help you find most prepositions that you encounter in sentences:

THE AIRPLANE FLEW _____ THE CLOUDS.

Any one word that fits in that blank is a preposition.

There are a few important prepositions that do not fit into the sentence above. These you will need to memorize so you can locate them easily when you are analyzing sentences. The most frequently used exceptions are *like, of, with, except, during*. Use the mnemonic LOWED to remember them.

Prepositional phrases

Prepositions are very important because they begin prepositional phrases. Here are some examples of prepositional phrases:

across the river	on my way	over the years	beyond the parking lot
to the store	from school	along the fence	after dark
like her	with my friends	except tomatoes	during the game.

All prepositional phrases begin with a preposition, end with a noun or pronoun, and include all words in between.

You need to be able to spot prepositional phrases because eliminating these phrases makes it easier to identify the subject and verb of a sentence, a skill that can help you avoid a number of grammatical errors.

IMPORTANT: The subject and the verb of a sentence will NEVER be inside a prepositional phrase.

From now on, when you analyze a sentence, locate and eliminate the prepositional phrases first, then find the verb(s), and only then locate the subject(s). This will make your task much, much easier!

Adjectives

An adjective is a word that modifies a noun or pronoun by describing, quantifying, or identifying it.

Adjectives usually appear before the noun being modified. Used appropriately, adjectives can help bring a sentence to life.

The monkey ran to the zookeeper who was carrying food.

The **excited, howling** monkey ran to the **slow, unaware** zookeeper who was carrying the **bright yellow** bananas.

Three basic types of adjectives follow:

Descriptive Adjectives describe the noun or pronoun.

red Corvette	ambitious athlete	witty student
tall mountain	smiling sloth	mature writer
twenty elephants	modern times	empty cup
bright light	sweet strawberries	shrill laugh

Predicate Adjectives follow a linking verb to describe the subject of a sentence.

The carpet is **clean**. The trash smells **bad**. She seems **angry**.

Proper Adjectives are made from a proper noun, so they're capitalized.

Canadian prime minister **Nixon** era **Shakespearian** drama

Exercise: Circle the adjectives in the following sentences.

- 1) I love the humorous show *Bear in the Big Blue House*.
- 2) The cool, dark waters surrounded me when I dove into the clear lake.
- 3) While I waited for the yellow bus, the chilly wind blew off my blue hat.
- 4) The thin dancer performed an African dance in the large theatre.
- 5) We walked in the French village after getting off the fast train.

Note: **Articles** (*a, an, the*) and **possessive pronouns** (*my, his, her, its, their, our, your*) can also function as adjectives. These words are sometimes called "noun markers" because they signal that a noun will appear soon.

a man *my* cousin *the* exciting movie *our* house

Adverbs

Adverbs modify or describe verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. While many adverbs end in *ly*, not all do. To make it even more confusing, some adjectives end in *ly*. More often than not, however, if you have a word ending in *ly*, you have an adverb.

Generally, adverbs answer *how*, *when*, *where*, and *why* about verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Examples:

The bus arrived **late**. (indicates *when* the bus arrived)

Samantha banged on the drums **loudly**. (indicates *how* she banged on the drums)

I **always** do my homework. (indicates *when* I do my homework)

Jamie does his work **quietly**. (indicates *how* Jamie works)

She was **quite** upset with her boyfriend. (indicates *how* upset she was)

Exercise: Circle the adverbs in the following sentences.

- 1) He drives very carefully because he has a new driver's permit.
- 2) The fastball came dangerously close to the batter's head.
- 3) The baseball team played extremely badly last week.
- 4) The squirrel hid the acorns nearby.
- 5) Jenna reads fast, but Cathy reads slowly.
- 6) The high jumper easily cleared the bar.
- 7) In the action film, Hercules convincingly defeats his foes.
- 8) Shouting loudly, the lawyer honorably defended her client.
- 9) The lovely dove flew furiously at the soaring hawk.
- 10) Clinging tightly to the rope, the nervous mountain climber prepared for another blast of extremely cold wind.

TIP: Be careful not to confuse adverbs and adjectives.

Correct: He did **well** on the test.

Wrong: He did **good** on the test.

Clauses and Phrases

Clauses and phrases are the building blocks of sentences. Sometimes a sentence is made of only one of these building blocks. Other times, a sentence is made from a combination of these building blocks.

Clauses

A clause is a group of words that has a subject and a verb working together.

There are two types of clauses you'll need to know to become a better writer. Recognizing the differences between these types of clauses will help you tremendously when it comes to common writing errors like fragments, run-ons, and comma-splices.

Dependent Clause: a clause that cannot stand alone as a sentence. While it has both a subject and a verb, a dependent clause doesn't express a complete thought.

Examples:

Although I enjoy horseback riding

Whenever I go to the beach

Because my car wasn't running

A dependent clause cannot be a sentence by itself. If you punctuate a dependent clause like a sentence, you will have a fragment.

Independent Clause: a clause that can stand alone as a sentence. It has a subject, a verb, and expresses a complete thought.

Examples:

I enjoy horseback riding.

The beach is a great place for family reunions.

I rode my bicycle to work.

Independent clauses can be punctuated as sentences because they have everything needed to be a sentence (a subject, a verb, a complete thought).

Phrases

A phrase is a group of related words that does not contain both a subject and a verb (sometimes they lack both a subject and a verb). Phrases are used in sentences but cannot be sentences by themselves.

Examples:

driving to school (-ing phrase phrase)

against a house (prepositional phrase)

a self-made man (noun phrase)

Combining Clauses

Knowing the different types of clauses helps you write different kinds of sentences. **Every sentence must have at least one independent clause.**

The Simple Sentence

A simple sentence is made from one **independent clause**.

Examples:

I love chocolate candy.

Mia and Josh like to dance.

My house is too small.

The Compound Sentence

A compound sentence is made from **two independent clauses**.

The two independent clauses may be joined by using a comma and a coordinating conjunction or by using a semicolon.

1) Using a comma and a coordinating conjunction

Independent clause, **for** independent clause.
 , **and**
 , **nor**
 , **but**
 , **or**
 , **yet**
 , **so**

Examples:

Thomas Edison failed many times, but he kept trying.

Albert Einstein was a great scientist, and he enjoyed playing the violin

2) Using a semicolon

Independent clause; independent clause.

Examples:

My piano has been sounding funny lately; I think it needs a tune up.

My laptop has been freezing up lately; it's time for a new one.

Tip: Semicolons should be used only to join two **related** independent clauses.

Be sure not to confuse coordinating conjunctions with conjunctive adverbs or subordinate conjunctions.

See Appendix B

Tip: An easy way to remember the coordinating conjunctions is with the word **fanboys**.

A **Compound-Complex Sentence** is made by adding one or more dependent clauses to a compound sentence.

The Complex Sentence

A complex sentence is made from **an independent clause** and **one or more dependent clauses**. A dependent clause begins with a dependent word that keeps the clause from being a complete thought. Two types of dependent words are subordinating conjunctions and relative pronouns.

Subordinating Conjunctions and Subordinate Clauses

Subordinating conjunctions such as *after*, *although*, *because*, *since*, or *when* introduce dependent clauses called **subordinate clauses**. These dependent clauses must always be joined with an independent clause to make a sentence.

Independent clause dependent clause.

Dependent clause, independent clause.

Note: When the dependent clause comes before the independent clause, you must have a comma between them.

Examples: *When* I was young, I couldn't ride a unicycle.
I can now ride a unicycle *because* I kept trying.
After we went to the movie, we went out for pizza.

Tip: Using subordinate clauses is an effective way to vary sentence style and to express clearly the relationship between the independent and dependent clauses.

Relative Pronouns and Relative Clauses

A relative pronoun is a word that describes a noun or pronoun. Common relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *that*, and *which*.

Relative pronouns introduce dependent clauses called **relative clauses**. A relative pronoun can sometimes be the subject of the relative clause.

Relative clauses must always be joined with an independent clause to form a sentence. Enclose relative clauses in commas if they add nonessential information.

Relative clauses give more information about someone or something already mentioned in the sentence.

Examples: The painter **whom I most admire** is Monet.
My sister, **who is a hockey fan**, has a framed picture of the Bruins.
The Solanos, **whose hats are all the rage**, live in Vienna.
I like five songs **that are on my friend's playlist**.

Tip: Using relative clauses is an effective way of combining sentences, adding details, and varying sentence structure.

Exercise

Identify each of the following word groups as either a dependent (Dep.) or independent (Ind.) clause.

(Dep. Ind.) 1) we enjoyed the movie

(Dep. Ind.) 2) before closing the store for the night

(Dep. Ind.) 3) after riding my bicycle across the United States

(Dep. Ind.) 4) that broke down on the freeway

(Dep. Ind.) 5) she will meet us in the library for our study group

(Dep. Ind.) 6) since you have been gone

(Dep. Ind.) 7) although we have known each other for a long time

(Dep. Ind.) 8) because I drove my father's car into the garage door

(Dep. Ind.) 9) that book is the best one around

(Dep. Ind.) 10) whose music video won a Grammy

Writing Clearly

Fragments

A fragment is a writing error that occurs when a group of words is punctuated like a sentence but lacks a subject or a verb or doesn't express a complete thought.

For a sentence to be complete, it must **have a subject, have a verb, and express a complete thought.**

If any one of these parts is missing, you have a fragment.

Fragment Examples

Missing a subject:

Caught the winning pass. (Who caught it?)

And threw the football into the end-zone for a touchdown. (Who is throwing?)

Missing a complete verb:

The boy bitten by the dog. (was bitten)

The garden with its pleasant smell of roses. (Where is the verb?)

Lacking a complete thought:

After Alicia passed her math test. (What happens after?)

This morning when I was taking my morning run. (What happened?)

Fixing Fragments

After identifying what part is missing, add the missing part. Shown below are possible ways to fix the fragment examples from above.

Sam caught the winning pass.

The quarterback threw the football into the end-zone for a touchdown.

The boy was bitten by the dog.

The garden smelled pleasantly of roses.

After Alicia passed her math test, she celebrated with her study group.

This morning when I was taking my morning run, I saw a raccoon.

Note: In sentences stating a request or command, the subject is understood to be "you," so it may be omitted.

Complete sentence examples: Please open your books to page five. Shut the door!

Review

Be sure each of your intended sentences has a subject, has a verb, and expresses a complete thought. If you find one of the parts is missing, add the missing part.

TIP: In your own writing, you can usually fix a fragment by adding it to the sentence before or after. Try performing this option first.

Exercise

Underline each fragment and circle the missing part or parts in parentheses (s = subject, v = verb, ct = complete thought). Then correct the fragment by adding the missing part or joining it to the sentence before or after it.

1. (s, v, ct) Some things are difficult to do. Like winning the lottery.
2. (s, v, ct) People spend a lot of money on lottery tickets. Despite the odds.
3. (s, v, ct) Although the odds of winning the MEGA Millions jackpot are 1 in 176 million. People still continue to play.
4. (s, v, ct) Some people reason spending money on the lottery is worth the fun of fantasizing how they would spend the jackpot if they won. Others that much of the money raised goes to higher education.
5. (s, v, ct) Still other players reason that someone has to win. And want to be that someone.
6. (s, v, ct) Even though the lottery is often considered to be a retirement plan for people bad at math. Many people still truly believe they will win.
7. (s, v, ct) With the odds so much against winning. It is no wonder people turn to the supernatural for help.
8. (s, v, ct) Prayers, lucky numbers, lucky stores, lucky clothing, Tarot cards, and fortune cookie numbers are some common aids. That lottery players turn to for help.
9. (s, v, ct) One thing is for sure. If you don't play, you won't win. By buying a ticket, you've increased your odds of winning. To 1 in 176 million.
10. (s, v, ct) However, I would rather take that \$2 a week and invest it in a real retirement account. Although I may not get rich off it. I like the odds better.

Run-on

In order to understand run-ons and comma-splices, you must become familiar with independent and dependent clauses.

An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence. In other words, it has a subject, it has a verb, and it expresses a complete thought.

Although it has a subject and a verb, a dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence because it lacks a complete thought.

Definition:

A run-on is a writing error that occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined without any punctuation. Run-ons create confusion for readers and should be eliminated from your writing.

Example:

I was born in Texas I live in California now.

The first independent clause is "I was born in Texas."

It has a subject: *I*

It has a verb: *was born*

It expresses a complete thought.

The second independent clause is "I live in California now."

It has a subject: *I*

It has a verb: *live*

It expresses a complete thought.

Fixing Run-ons

The four different ways to fix run-ons are identified below.

Method 1: Make the two independent clauses two distinct sentences.

Example: I was born in Texas. I live in California now.

Method 2: Add a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

(A coordinating conjunction is a word used to connect words, phrases, and clauses. The coordinating conjunctions are the FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*.)

Example: I was born in Texas, but I live in California now.

Method 3: Use a semicolon to join the two independent clauses.

Use the semicolon by itself only when the two independent clauses share a close relationship with each other. (Try not to overuse this method.)

Example: I was born in Texas; I live in California now.

Use the semicolon with a transition, like *therefore* or *however*, to stress the relationship between the two clauses.

Example: I was born in Texas; however, I live in California now.

Method 4: Make one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause.

Example 1: Although I was born in Texas, I live in California now.

In this example, the first independent clause has been changed to a dependent clause by adding the word *Although*.

Comma Alert! When a dependent clause comes before an independent clause, it's followed by a comma.

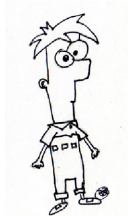
Example 2: I was born in Texas even though I live in California now.

There are no commas in this second example because the independent clause comes before the dependent clause.

When using Method 4, put the item that you want to stress in the independent clause. The first example emphasizes the writer's current living situation while the second example emphasizes the state where the writer was born.

REMEMBER: You can NEVER fix a run-on with just a comma!

One Final Note: When it comes to fixing run-ons, variety is the key. Try using different methods so that your sentences are not all alike.



Exercise

Use ONE of the four methods to correct each run-on. If a sentence is correct, write "C." Be sure to use each method at least once in completing the exercise.

Phineas and Ferb

1. The show *Phineas and Ferb* premiered in 2007 the idea for the show had been around since 1991.
2. Within a couple of years the show became wildly successful by 2012 *Phineas and Ferb* was the most watched television show for pre-teens.
3. The show was created by Dan Povenmire and Jeff Marsh they are also the voices of Major Monogram and Doctor Doofenshmirtz.
4. The plot of the show is divided between two main themes Phineas and Ferb spend each day making the best of summer Perry the platypus protects the tri-state area from the ever-plotting evil Dr. Doofenshmirtz.
5. The show features love interests between Candace and Jeremy, Buford and Bridgitte, Isabella and Phineas, and Ferb and Vanessa.
6. The main characters create impossible inventions such as a roller coaster that goes into outer space, a time machine, a portal to Mars, and an airplane that could go around the world in a single day they also have an annoying sister who tries to bust them whenever she can.
7. The show is an animated comedy that appeals to audiences of all ages it even includes catchy musical numbers.
8. One of the appealing aspects of the show is that things are not always as they appear for example, Perry is a secret agent and the bully Buford has a loving soft side.
9. The bully Buford is an excellent example of the complexity of characters on the show he speaks fluent French and Latin, plays the violin, and loves his pet goldfish.
10. The show was eventually picked up by Disney it has been a tremendous success.

Comma Splice

In order to understand run-ons and comma splices, you must become familiar with independent and dependent clauses.

An independent clause is a group of words that can stand alone as a sentence. In other words, it has a subject, it has a verb, and it expresses a complete thought.

Although it has a subject and a verb, a dependent clause cannot stand alone as a sentence because it lacks a complete thought.

Definition:

A comma splice is a writing error that occurs when two independent clauses are joined with only a comma. A comma splice is a type of run-on.

Example:

The velodrome became slippery, the cyclists slowed down.

The first independent clause is "The velodrome became slippery."

It has a subject: *velodrome*

It has a verb: *became*

It expresses a complete thought.

The second independent clause is "the cyclists slowed down."

It has a subject: *cyclists*

It has a verb: *slowed*

It expresses a complete thought.

Fixing Comma Splices

The same four ways used to fix run-ons are used to fix comma splices.

Method 1: Make the two independent clauses two distinct sentences.

Example: The velodrome became slippery. The cyclists slowed down.

Method 2: Add a coordinating conjunction after the comma.

(A coordinating conjunction is a word used to connect words, phrases, and clauses. The coordinating conjunctions are the FANBOYS: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*.)

Example: The velodrome became slippery, so the cyclists slowed down.

Method 3: Use a semicolon to join the two independent clauses.

Use the semicolon by itself only when the two independent clauses share a close relationship with each other. (Try not to overuse this method.)

Example: The velodrome became slippery; the cyclists slowed down.

Use the semicolon with a transition, like *therefore* or *however*, to stress the relationship between the two clauses.

Example: The velodrome became slippery; consequently, the cyclists slowed down.

Method 4: Make one of the independent clauses into a dependent clause.

Example 1: When the velodrome became slippery, the cyclists slowed down.

In this example, the first independent clause has been changed to a dependent clause by adding the word *When*.

Comma Alert! When a dependent clause comes before an independent clause, it's followed by a comma.

Example 2: The velodrome became slippery just before the cyclists slowed down.

There are no commas in this second example because the independent clause comes before the dependent clause.

When using Method 4, put the item that you want to stress in the independent clause. The first example emphasizes the cyclists' response while the second example emphasizes the condition of the velodrome.

One Final Note: When it comes to fixing comma splices, variety is the key. Try using different methods so that your sentences aren't all alike.

Exercise

Use one of the four methods to correct each comma splice. If a sentence is correct, write "C." Be sure to use each method at least once in completing the exercise.

Fictional UFC

1. It would be the ultimate fighting championship, a jedi knight and Superman would fight to the end.
2. Both contestants have advantages, deciding who would win would be difficult.
3. A jedi could space travel and find kryptonite, kryptonite weakens Superman.
4. Aside from kryptonite, nothing seems to harm the man of steel, perhaps a light saber would be different.
5. Superman could use his laser eyes to destroy the light saber, but the jedi could use the force to keep Superman away.
6. Superman has speed on his side, not even a spry Yoda could compete.
7. Nothing on Earth seems a worthy match for Superman, however, a jedi, like Superman, is also an alien.
8. Perhaps who would win is not worth debating, both a jedi and Superman possess a moral code that would prevent them from battling each other.

Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement (PA Agr)

Pronoun-antecedent agreement occurs when pronouns agree in gender and number with the word(s) they refer to (their antecedents).

A lack of agreement can confuse your reader, so you always want your pronouns to agree with their antecedents as in the following examples:

Example: **Julia** turned in all **her** essays on time.
 antecedent **pronoun**

Explanation: The pronoun "her" refers to Julia. Because "her" refers to a female and indicates only one person, it completely agrees with the antecedent "Julia."

Example: **Students** should enjoy everything **their** college offers.
 antecedent **pronoun**

Explanation: The pronoun "their" refers to students. Because "their" is plural, it completely agrees with the antecedent "students," which is also plural. Gender isn't a concern in this sentence.

The big problem with pronoun-antecedent agreement occurs when we think the antecedent is plural when it really isn't.

Group Nouns: Antecedents referring to groups (*team, jury, committee*) are usually considered singular, so we refer to them with the singular pronoun *it*.

Example: The **team** lost **its** final match by one goal.

Indefinite Pronouns: The following words are singular and take singular pronouns to refer to them:

"Body" Words	"One" Words	"Thing" Words	Others
nobody	someone	something	each
somebody	no one	everything	neither
anybody	one	anything	either
everybody	anyone	nothing	
	everyone		

Tip: Be extra cautious when using *body*, *one*, and *thing* words. They are always singular.

Most of the words listed above have the word "body," "one," or "thing" in them. These words should tip you off that the words are singular.

Incorrect: Everyone needs to find their inner strength.

Explanation: The pronoun "their" is plural, so it doesn't agree with the antecedent "everyone," which is singular.

Correct: Everyone needs to find his or her inner strength.

Explanation: Because "everyone" is singular and can include both males and females, use "his or her" to refer to "everyone."

Incorrect: Neither of my sisters had their license to drive.

Explanation: The pronoun "their" is plural, so it doesn't agree with the antecedent "neither," which is singular.

Correct: Neither of my sisters had her license to drive.

Explanation: Because "neither" is singular and refers to a female (a sister), use "her" to refer to "neither."

NOTE: The words *each*, *either*, and *neither* are often followed by prepositional phrases that make them seem plural. Don't be fooled!

Exercise

Underline the antecedent and circle the pronoun that agrees with the antecedent.

1. Sometimes a person needs to get in touch with (his or her, their) parents.
2. Terry and her sister are sharing (her, their) room with Aunt Kay this week.
3. Before students register for next semester, (he, she, they) should check their work schedule.
4. Everybody needs to think twice about (their, his or her) actions.
5. Everyone should double check (his or her, their) answers.
6. Neither of the dogs wanted (its, their) day at the dog park to end.
7. If somebody encourages you to drink and drive, you shouldn't listen to (him or her, them).
8. The team did poorly throughout (its, their) regular season.
9. Whenever somebody opens the door, (he or she, they) let a fly in.
10. The band played until (it, they) ran out of songs.

TIP: Try drawing an arrow from the pronoun to its antecedent. Then ask yourself if they match up in gender and number.

Pronoun Reference (Ref)

If it isn't clear what word a pronoun is referring to, a pronoun reference problem is the result.

Confusing sentences result from unclear pronoun reference. Unclear pronoun references can confuse your readers, and your job as a writer is to communicate clearly.

Incorrect: I baited the hook with a worm, but then a fish took it.

Explanation: Was the hook taken or the worm? The pronoun "it" is confusing because it could refer to either noun.

Correct: I baited the hook with a worm, but then a fish took the worm.

Incorrect: Helen has always wanted to go into nursing, and now she's studying to be one.

Explanation: To be one what? A nursing? The word *nurse*, by itself, isn't in the sentence, so there's no noun for "one" to refer to.

Correct: Helen has always wanted to go into nursing, and now she's studying to be a nurse.

Incorrect: I never buy coffee at Starbucks because they charge too much for a simple cup of coffee.

Explanation: Who are "they"? There is no noun that "they" refers to.

Correct: I never buy coffee at Starbucks because the prices are too high.

Correct: I never buy coffee at Starbucks because the owners charge too much for a simple cup of coffee.

TIP: Try drawing a line from the pronoun to the noun it stands for (its antecedent). If you can't find locate a noun antecedent or if you can locate more than one possible antecedent, chances are you have pronoun reference error.

Exercise

Rewrite the sentences below to make the pronoun references clear. You may add, omit, or change words, to make the sentences clear.

1. My mutual fund dividends fluctuate each year depending on how they manage it.
2. Robin told Batman that his cape was stained.
3. I don't try to keep up with the latest ipad because they always change it.
4. My brother is a champion long distance runner, but I've never been any good at it.
5. I didn't like the weather report because they said it would rain.
6. After Cindy told her mother about flunking the math test, she cried.
7. After taking the disk out of the CD player, Beth sold it.
8. The politician won the election even though they indicated his chances were low.
9. The waiters brought out three burnt entrees, so we sent them back to the kitchen.
10. Whenever John and his brother play cards, he loses money.

Parallelism (//)

Parallel structure is good to have. Parallelism is using equivalent grammatical form where appropriate.

Examples of faulty parallelism:

Words: In an attempt to get a piece of candy, the toddler tried begging, screaming, and tears. (The words *begging* and *screaming* end in -ing; the word *tears* doesn't.)

Phrases: The jury heard the lawyers, debated the case, and the decision was to acquit. (Two phrases are followed in this list by a clause.)

Clauses: Motorcyclists have a high accident rate because they weave in and out of traffic, they speed too often, and often times other drivers don't see them. (The first two clauses start with *they* + verb; the last one doesn't.)

Use parallel structure for items in a list:

Words: In my free time I enjoy *hiking*, *swimming*, and *cycling*.

Phrases: When my son grows up he wants *to perform as a mime*, *to design video games*, and *to create television shows*.

Clauses: El Camino College students are great because *they understand the true value of their education*, *they commit to learning as much as possible*, and *they appreciate their instructors*.

Here are a few other places to look for faulty parallelism:

Think of coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS) as an equal sign in math; the grammatical structure on one side should be the same as the grammatical structure on the other side.

Not parallel: Love **and** being married go together.

Parallel: Love **and** marriage go together. (two nouns)

Parallel: Being in love **and** being married go together. (two -ing phrases)

Use parallelism for items being compared by *than* or *as* and for items joined by correlatives like *not only . . . but also*, and *neither . . . nor*.

Not parallel: John is not only *proud of his high grades* but also *of his volunteer service*.

Parallel: John is proud not only *of his high grades* but also *of his volunteer service*. (Each item is a prepositional phrase)

Exercise

Identify and correct the faulty parallelism in the following sentences.

1. At El Camino College, vandalism can result in suspension or even being expelled from school.
2. In English class, students learn to appreciate great literature and analyzing sentence structure.
3. The English club members found the book distasteful, shocking, and they also found it boring.
4. I enjoy going to museums and a pleasant visit with friends.
5. When on a date, I want to engage in good conversation, have wonderful food, and to listen to some music.
6. It is more difficult to dance ballet than dancing the tango.
7. Politicians should be judged on their words and what they do.
8. Having a tutor look over my writing is different than a teacher looking at it.
9. A good field hockey player has speed, power, and can control the ball well.
10. My English teacher is friendly, engaging, and a great source of information.

Misplaced Modifier (MM)

Modifiers are words, phrases, or clauses that describe or give more information about other words in a sentence.

Correct: Working all night, I finally finished grading your essays.

Working all night is the modifier because it gives more information about *I*. Notice that the word being modified (*I*) immediately follows the modifier (*Working all night*). This close relationship is as it should be; modifiers should be placed next to the items they modify.

Misplaced modifiers create unnecessary confusion in writing.

Example: The young man drove the car in a clown suit.

In this sentence the modifier *in a clown suit* is too far removed from what it is intended to describe *the young man*. Consequently, it seems like the car is wearing a clown suit.

To fix, move the modifier close to what is being modified:

Correct: The young man in the clown suit drove the car.

Exercise

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. Flying overhead, I saw the Great Horned Owl.
2. "One morning I shot an elephant in my pajamas." –Groucho Marx
3. The patient was referred to a psychologist with a few emotional issues.
4. My roommate cleaned the sweater covered with lint that she bought at Forever 21.
5. I saw a parade on the way to my doctor's appointment.
6. I read about my cousin fighting an alligator in the newspaper.
7. We paddled to the island in our kayak which was covered with trees.
8. The tuxedo belongs to my father with the torn tail.
9. We saw a plethora of Capuchin monkeys on vacation in Costa Rica.
10. The runway model who had been strutting slowly began laughing.

Dangling Modifier (DM)

Dangling modifiers are so named because what they are modifying isn't even in the sentence. Consequently, they dangle there, doing nothing.

To correct a dangling modifier, be sure to insert what is being described/modified right after the modifier or rewrite the sentence to clear up confusion.

Dangling: After partying all night, the trash was strewn everywhere.

After partying all night is the modifier. The person it's modifying is absent from the sentence. Who was partying? This sentence makes it seem like the trash was partying all night.

Correct: After partying all night, I woke to find the trash was strewn everywhere. (Who was partying? I was.)

Correct: After we partied all night, the trash was strewn everywhere.
(This version has been rewritten to make it clear that "we" partied.)

Exercise

Rewrite the following sentences to correct the dangling modifier.

1. While writing my essay, a mouse scurried across my desk.
2. Balancing on the high wire, the audience held their collective breath.
3. Running in the marathon, the police escort crashed his motorcycle.
4. After reading the magazine, the doorbell rang.
5. Falling off his bicycle, Brian's arm broke at the wrist.
6. While watching the Super Bowl, the television stopped working.
7. After saying farewell to his daughter, dad's eyes became teary.
8. When chasing the UPS truck, the dog's leash snapped in two.
9. Following this new procedure, our grading system will be easier.
10. Having jumped through the window, the glass shattered.

Subject/Verb Agreement (SV Agr)

Subject-verb agreement occurs when subjects agree with one another in number. A singular subject takes a singular verb, and a plural subject takes a plural verb.

- Incorrect: My brother go to UCLA.
 Correct: My brother goes to UCLA. (brother/goes = singular)
 Correct: My brothers go to UCLA. (brothers/go = plural)

An easy way to tell if you're using the correct verb is to substitute the appropriate pronoun for your subject. Substitute a singular pronoun like *he*, *she* or *it* or a plural pronoun like *they* when reading your sentences.

For the first sentence above, you would substitute *he* for *brother* and try both possible verbs to see which one fits best.

He go to UCLA.
 He goes to UCLA.
Which sentence sounds better?

For the second example, you would substitute *they* for *brothers* since it's plural.

They goes to UCLA.
 They go to UCLA.
Which sentence sounds better?

Finding the subject is often the most difficult part of making sure your subject and verb agree. Here are some guidelines to help you:

Sentences Beginning with *there is* or *there are*

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| There is + singular subject | Example: There is a bird on the tree. |
| There are + plural subject | Example: There are birds on the tree. |
| There is + uncountable subject | Example: There is some milk on the floor. |

Subjects Connected with *And*

If two subjects are connected with *and*, they're considered **plural** and will take a plural verb.

Example: The Empire State Building and the Brooklyn Bridge are in New York.

Explanation: Although *Empire State Building* and *Brooklyn Bridge* are both singular, because they are connected with *and*, they are considered plural and take a plural verb (*are*).

Subjects Connected with *Or* or *Nor*

If two subjects are connected with *or* or *nor*, the verb will match the closest subject.

Example: Either the puppies or the kitten is responsible for the mess in the kitchen.

Explanation: The two subjects are *puppies* and *kitten*. Because they are connected with *or*, the one closest to the verb (*kitten*) determines which verb to use (*kitten is*).

Words that are Always Singular

The following words are singular and take a singular verb.

"Body" Words	"One" Words	"Thing" Words	Others
nobody	someone	something	each
somebody	no one	everything	neither
anybody	one	anything	either
everybody	anyone	nothing	
	everyone		

Example: Everyone *needs* to understand his or her potential in life.

Words Between the Subject and the Verb

Ignore words between the subject and verb when determining agreement. These words often suggest a word is plural when it isn't.

TIP: You won't find your subject in a prepositional phrase, so try crossing out prepositional phrases before trying to locate the subject. Then find the verb and ask *who* or *what* did it to find the subject.

Example: Each ~~of my sisters~~ has her own room.

Explanation: *Of my sisters* is a prepositional phrase beginning with *of*. The subject of the sentence is "Each," which is singular.

Example: The mayor, ~~along with the City Council~~, was indicted for fraud.

Explanation: *Along with the City Council* is a prepositional phrase. The subject is "mayor," which is singular.

Sometimes a whole clause can come between the subject and the verb as in the following example:

Example: The president ~~of the company, who gave large contributions to the city's needy~~, is being honored at the awards ceremony.

Explanation: *Of the company* is a prepositional phrase, and "who gave large contributions to the city's needy" is a relative clause that modifies "president." *President* is the subject of the verb *is being honored*.

Exercise

Circle the best verb for each sentence. Remember to cross out prepositional phrases and to look out for compound subjects connected with *or*, *nor*, or *and*.

1. Either the players on the team or the coach (is/are) going to have to make a decision.
2. Kobe Bryant, together with his teammates, (present/presents) a formidable challenge to opponents.
3. There are a lot of good teams in the NBA. The Heat and The Celtics (are/is) two such teams.
4. The prospects for the team with the best players (look/looks) good.
5. Andy Murray and Novak Djokovic (play/plays) tennis.
6. Both Murray and Djokovic (want/wants) to be the best at their sport.
7. Agassi and Sampras (was/were) excellent tennis players.
8. The U.S. men's tennis field (is/are) thin these days, especially since Roddick retired in 2012.
9. Women's U.S. tennis (is/are) a different story; the Williams sisters (is/are) amazing.
10. Serena Williams, who plays against the top women tennis players, (has/have) an impressive winning record.

Common Word Errors

Some words sound alike, but are quite different in meaning. People often confuse one word for its sound-alike cousin. The following is a list of some common sound-alikes (homonyms) and their definitions. Also included are commonly confused words that are not homonyms.

(CCW)

Frequently Confused Words

your: possessive pronoun		you're: you are
its: possessive pronoun		it's: it is or it has
their: possessive pronoun	there: location	they're: they are
whose: possessive pronoun		who's: who is
where: location		were: past tense verb
two: the number 2	to: toward	too: also; excessively

Commonly Confused Words

are: present, plural tense of <i>to be</i>		our: possessive pronoun
everyone: all people		every one: each one
farther: physical distance	father: dad	further: refers to extent of degree
knew: did know		new: not used or old
loose: not tight		lose: not win
maybe: perhaps		may be: may happen
passed: did pass		past: previous time
threw: tossed		through: penetrated; completed

More Confusing Words (v = Verb, N = Noun)

accept: to receive (V)		except: to exclude (V)
advise: to recommend (V)		advice: a recommendation (N)
affect: to produce an influence on (V)		effect: to cause (V)
all ready: completely prepared		already: previously, before
altogether: thoroughly, completely		all together: all in one place
bear: to carry (V)	bear: animal (N)	bare: naked
capital: main; city (N)		Capitol: the building in D.C. (N)
desert: dry land (N)		dessert: after dinner treat (N)
flew: did fly (V)	flu: illness (N)	flue: a chimney (N)
hear: to listen (V)		here: a location (N)
herd: a group of animals (N)		heard: did hear (V)
hoarse: harsh (as in throat)		horse: the animal (N)
lead: A metal (N)	lead: guide (V)	led: past tense of lead (V)
patience: forbearance		patients: doctor's customers (N)
quiet: silence		quite: completely, very
serial		cereal: breakfast food (N)

Exercise

Circle the correct word in parentheses.

1. My simple (advise, advice) is to figure out (whose, who's) the most gentle at giving (flew, flue, flu) shots.
2. While walking in the (desert, dessert), I fantasized about eating (desert, dessert). It also helped to imagine my belt being less (loose, lose).
3. (Where, Were) you with your (further, father, farther) last night? I was (here, hear) calling your name until my voice was (hoarse, horse).
4. (Its, It's) a wonderfully (quiet, quite) day in the neighborhood.
5. People waiting in line at the Department of Motor Vehicles should have some (patience, patients) because (there, their, they're) is no other way to get (passed, past) those long lines.
6. On the way to school, I saw a motorist drive (though, through, threw) (to, two, too) stop signs. Then he (though, through, threw) his cigarette out the window.
7. Never (accept, except) candy from a stranger.
8. (Their, They're, There) are people in the campground who (heard, herd) the (bare, bear) last (knight, night).
9. The rebounding economy will likely (affect, effect) you.
10. (Whose, Who's) turn is it to do the dishes?

4

Mechanics & Punctuation

Italics/Quotation Marks

Commas

Apostrophes

Colons

Semi-colons

Ellipses

Exclamations

Hyphens

Dashes

Brackets

Parentheses

Italics Versus Quotations

Often times you'll be referencing other works in your writing. When you do, you have to be sure to use proper mechanics (italics or quotes) when you write the title.

Generally, italics are used for large works, names of vehicles, and artwork.

Quotation marks are used for sections of works.

	<i>Italics</i>		"Quotation Marks"
Book	<i>The Most Dangerous Animal</i>	Chapter	"Predators, Prey, and Parasites"
Anthology	<i>Prize Stories 1998</i>	Short Story	"The Knife Thrower"
Newspaper	<i>The Boston Globe</i>	Article	"Red Sox Improving"
Magazine	<i>Smithsonian</i>	Article	"The Natural Beauty of Math"
Movie	<i>Spiderman 2</i>	Scene (DVD)*	"Otto Octavius"
T.V. Show	<i>The Simpsons</i>	Episode	"The Tell-Tale Bart"
Album/CD	<i>Thriller</i>	Song	"Billie Jean"
Website	<i>CNN.com</i>	Webpage	"CNNMoney"
Radio Program	<i>This American Life</i>	Episode	"Loopholes"
Play	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	Poem	"Ode to a Nightingale"
Artwork	<i>The Thinker</i> <i>The Last Supper</i>		
Air/space/watercraft	<i>USS Constitution</i>		
Online Database	<i>Opposing Viewpoints</i>		
Foreign words	<i>raison d'etre</i>		

The general pattern is the larger item gets italicized and the smaller item gets quotation marks.

Larger Item



"Smaller Item"

* Although movie titles should be italicized, putting scene titles in quotation marks is not yet an officially recognized practice.

Commas

Commas are the most frequently misused marks of punctuation.

The Magnificent Seven

Learn the following seven rules to prevent most common comma mistakes.

Rule 1: Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction joining independent clauses.

Independent clause	, for	independent clause.
	, and	
	, nor	
	, but	
	, or	
	, yet	
	, so	

Example: Shemp was one of the Three Stooges, but he also had a solo career.

Rule 2: Use a comma to separate items in a series.

Word, word, and word.

Phrase, phrase, and phrase.

Example: The Three Stooges poked, slapped, and kicked.

Example: In one film, Curly smacked Moe, bit a dog, and ate a car tire.

Rule 3: Use a comma in complete dates to separate the day of the month from the year and after the year.

Example: I met Moe Howard on November 12, 1973, in Hollywood.

(If the date is not complete, do not use a comma.)

Example: I met Moe Howard in November 1973 in Hollywood.




Rule 4: Use a comma between two adjectives if you can put *and* between the adjectives and if they can be reversed without changing the meaning.

Examples:

The sly, patient fox waited for the hounds to leave.	(comma)
The song had a beautiful, sad melody.	(comma)
The Kings are a tough hockey team.	(no comma)

Tip: A way to remember the coordinating conjunctions is the word **fanboys**.

Rule 5: Use a comma after introductory phrases, clauses, and words.

Introductory phrase, 
 Introductory clause,  independent clause.
 Introductory word, 

Examples: In the meantime, we lost our place in line.
 For example, she was offered an athletic scholarship at USC.
 After I graduated from high school, I enrolled at El Camino.
 Yes, it's definitely worth it to fill out the financial aid application.

Rule 6: Use a comma to set off parenthetical elements (added information that could be removed from a sentence without changing its essential meaning).

Examples: I love beach sports, such as volleyball and body surfing.
 The USC and UCLA rivalry, which has been going on for generations, is overrated.
 My brother's dream job, to become a potter, may happen one day.
 I would, however, disagree with the senator on this issue.

NOTE: If information is necessary to the meaning of a sentence, do NOT enclose it in commas.

A student who is in my music class was selected for *American Idol*.
 ("who is in my music class" tells which student)

Martin Lopez, who is in my music class, was selected for *American Idol*.
 ("who is in my music class" merely gives added info about the student)

Rule 7: Use a comma to separate quoted words from the rest of the sentence.

Examples: Thomas Jefferson once wrote, "I cannot live without books."
 "Life is not a problem to be solved, but a reality to be experienced," said Soren Kierkegaard.
 "Failure," said Napoleon Hill, "is nature's plan to prepare you for great responsibilities."

Rule 8: Use a comma to indicate direct address.

Examples: Jon, you are the best guitarist I know.
 You are the best guitarist I know, Jon.
 I told you, Jon, that you are the best guitarist I know.

Comma Exercise **Directions:** Insert commas where appropriate.

Bee Keeping 101

My brother who was an avid beekeeper had six hives. Because I always liked to learn new things I would help him with his bees whenever I could find the time. I found the tiny busy insects fascinating. After helping him for some time he suggested I get my own hive. Although I was a little insulted at first he quickly reassured me that he had my best interest in mind. He was he explained convinced that I would learn more if I took full responsibility for a hive. Of course he was right.

I warmed to my brother's idea right away. I thought to myself "How difficult can beekeeping be?" As it turned out I came to realize there was a lot more to raising bees than meets the eye.

First I had to gather all the necessary materials. Luckily my brother let me have a lot of his extra equipment. I did however have to buy a smoker a few supers a protective veil and of course some bees. Yes I actually had to buy some honey bees. They arrived at my house via the postal service in a wire mesh container that was buzzing with activity. The mail carrier who was used to delivering odd things to our farm was a bit hesitant with this particular package. "If you don't mind" he said "I'd rather have you take them off the truck." Once the supplies were gathered I was ready to begin my new exciting hobby.

After I got the bees acclimated with their new home I had to care for them. This was a bit of a learning process for me but the bees seemed to forgive me over time. One important lesson I learned was to not open the hive unnecessarily. That is to say one should open the hive for routine maintenance and honey extraction only. Another lesson I learned was to avoid opening the hive on overcast or rainy days. Inevitably, the bees became a bit more aggressive on cloudy overcast days. In addition I had to remember to wear cotton and other non-animal based clothing when I worked on the hive. Early in the learning process I mistakenly wore a wool shirt a leather belt and leather shoes; consequently I was rewarded with a couple of stings. It turns out that bees don't like what they perceive to be animals messing with their hive.

Over the next few years I became a good beekeeper. I protected my hive from the elements opossums raccoons and parasites. In return they rewarded me with lots of honey. In addition they produced a new queen and enough offspring for me to start a new hive.

Although I don't have a hive today, I still look back fondly on my becoming a beekeeper. Even though beekeeping was a lot of time consuming hard work I found that working so closely with nature's creatures a transcendentalist activity to be sure had many rewards.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes tend to give many students problems. Although there are a few other uses for the apostrophe, it is mainly used to form contractions and to show possession.

Contractions

In a contraction (two words combined as one) the apostrophe almost always is used to show that a letter or letters have been omitted. For example, the words *do not* can be replaced with the word *don't*. The apostrophe stands in place of the *o* in *not*. Without the apostrophe in the correct place, you will have a spelling error.

Think of a contraction as the result of two words having a head-on collision. When the two words collide, a letter or letters are ejected. The apostrophe is placed as a remembrance of those ejected letters.

The following chart is a list of common contractions and their meanings:

Contraction	Meaning	Contraction	Meaning
aren't	are not	she's	she is
can't	can not	she'll	she will
couldn't	could not	there's	there is
didn't	did not	they're	they are
don't	do not	won't	will not
he's	he is	we're	we are
I'll	I will	weren't	were not
I'm	I am	we've	we have
I've	I have	who's	who is
I'd	I had, I would	won't*	will not
isn't	is not	wouldn't	would not
let's	let us	you're	you are

* The only contraction that doesn't follow the collision principle is won't.

Note: Some instructors ask that you not use contractions in academic writing. Be sure to ask your instructor her or his preference.

Possessives are words used to show ownership or belonging. They, like contractions, are formed with the apostrophe. However, the apostrophe in possessive words does not stand for an omitted letter like it does in contractions.

Example: Instructor Peppard's textbook is filled with his notes.

The above sentence contains the possessive noun Peppard's. The 's in the word *Peppard's* indicates that the textbook belongs to Instructor Peppard.

There are two basic rules for forming the possessive case of nouns:

Rule 1: To show possession for a plural noun ending in *s*, add only an apostrophe after the *s*.

Example: The graduates' hats were thrown everywhere after the president announced their graduation.

Explanation: Whose hats were thrown about in the above example? The answer is the hats of all the graduates. Because graduates is a plural noun ending in *s*, all you need to do to show ownership is add an apostrophe (graduates').

Rule 2: To show possession for all other nouns, add 's. It does not matter whether the noun is singular or plural.

Example: The children's food covered the floor and walls of the kitchen.

Explanation: Although *children* is a plural noun, it does not end in *s*. Therefore, to show possession, you have to use Rule 2, which indicates you need to add 's to the word.

Example: Chris's plot to pass English 1A by buying essays off the internet was thwarted by Professor Johnson's use of the web site turnitin.com.

Explanation: Even though it ends in *s*, *Chris* is a singular noun. To show possession, you need to apply Rule 2, which indicates you need to add 's to the word.

Example: The chef's fried squid dish was a success with diners.

Explanation: Because *chef* is a singular noun, to show possession, you need to apply Rule 2, which indicates you need to add 's to the word.

Possessive pronouns show ownership **without** the apostrophe.

Keep in mind that some words are possessive **without the apostrophe**. These words are known as possessive pronouns.

Possessive Pronouns

my, mine
its
his
her, hers
your, yours
our, ours
their, theirs
whose

TIP: Be careful not to confuse possessive pronouns with their contraction semi-look alikes.

it's = it is, it has

its = belongs to it

Other Apostrophe Uses

- 1) To indicate numbers that have been omitted

Example: I was born in '98.

Explanation: In this sentence the apostrophe represents the 19 in 1998.

- 2) To indicate missing letter in slang or informal speech

Example: I'm goin' down to see for myself. (going)

Example: Look at yo'self! (yourself)

Explanation: *Goin'* and *yo'self* should be *going* and *yourself* respectively.

- 3) To form the plural of some numbers or letters in order to prevent misreading

Example: Getting straight A's throughout high school is not easy.

This last use of the apostrophe is optional (some writers omit the apostrophe). Whether or not you choose to use the apostrophe in instances like this, stay consistent throughout your essay.

Exercise

Correct apostrophe errors in the following items.

1. The television show *The Big Bang Theory* had it's premiere in 2007.
2. The show is about four geeky friends and their scientific theories. The show also focuses on the friends relationships.
3. Sheldon's quirky character is frighteningly bright. He got straight As throughout college.
4. Sheldon is also incredibly weird; hes socially awkward.
5. The show's setting is California's greater Los Angeles area.
6. The executive producers' recipe for success seems to have worked.
7. The eclectic blend of geek culture and humor is my daughter's favorite show. And she's not alone.
8. In 2009, the show won the Television Critics Association's award for best comedy series. In 2010 it also won the People's Choice Awards.
9. If you're looking for a clever, fun show to watch, it's all right there in *The Big Bang Theory*.
10. I'm sure if you watch the show, you'll find something that's funny. Maybe you'll even find you're inner geek!

Colons

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

Example: There are three ways to ensure your success in this class: complete all assignments, heed the tutor's advice, and actively participate throughout the semester.

Rule 2: Use a colon after an independent clause before a quotation

Example: Mark Twain thought reading had great value: "A person who won't read has no advantage over one who can't read."

Rule 3: Use a colon between two independent clauses when the second clause explains the first clause.

Example: The recent drought in Australia has most people without water: riverbeds and aquifers are completely dry.

TIP: Be sure to use a colon only when it's preceded by an independent clause.

Incorrect: For her art class, she had to buy: paints, brushes, and a canvas.

Correct: For her art class, she had to buy the following supplies: paints, brushes, and a canvas.

Correct: For her art class, she had to buy paints, brushes, and a canvas.

Explanation: *For her art class, she had to buy* is not a complete thought so it's not an independent clause. Consequently, no colon is used after it.

Semi-colons

Rule 1: Use a semicolon between two independent clauses that are closely related.

Example: The tide came in suddenly; the children were still building sand castles by the water's edge.

Rule 2: To avoid confusion, use a semicolon between items in a series when the items contain commas.

Example: For my next vacation I plan on visiting Phoenix, Arizona; Houston, Texas; and Little Rock, Arkansas.

Ellipses

An ellipsis is a set of three dots with spaces between them. Ellipses are used to show material has been left out of a quotation.

The *New York Times* film critic A.O. Scott writes of the film *Lincoln*:

"Some of the movie's virtues are, at first glance, modest ones, like those of its hero, who is pleased to present himself as a simple backwoods lawyer, even as his folksy mannerisms mask a formidable and cunning political mind. "

You may wish to use just a piece of this quote in your essay. If you leave out anything, you must use an ellipsis to show what you left out.

Example 1:

"Some of the movie's virtues are. . . modest ones, like those of its hero, who is pleased to present himself as a simple backwoods lawyer, even as his folksy mannerisms mask a formidable and cunning political mind. "

Explanation: Left out are the words "at first glance."

Note: If the ellipsis comes at the end of a sentence, there are four dots. One dot is the period; the other is the ellipsis.

TIP: When you omit material, make sure your resulting sentence is grammatically correct.

Exclamations

Exclamation points are used at the end of sentences to show strong emotion or emphasis.

Examples:

I can't believe what she did!

That was the most incredible concert I've ever seen!

Be careful not to overuse the exclamation point! It should be used rarely. Also, don't combine end punctuation marks as is done in the following: You did that!?!

Hyphens

Hyphens are used to join words or word parts to make your intended meaning clear.

Rule 1: Use a hyphen to join some compound words such as mother-in-law and twenty-five. Let your dictionary be your guide.

Rule 2: Use a hyphen to combine two words to create a single adjective.

Example: The *well-known* politician will be attending the funeral.

Rule 3: Use a hyphen between a prefix and a word that is capitalized.

Example: I went to a typical *all-American* high school.

Dashes

While a hyphen tends to join words together, a dash tends to separate them. Dashes are used rarely in formal writing.

To form a dash, type two hyphens with no spaces before or after. Thus, -- is the same as —. Your computer will likely join the two hyphens together for you.

Rule 1: Use a dash to show a sudden change in thought in a sentence.

Example: Recently—actually it was this morning—I drove my car onto a golf course.

Rule 2: Use a dash to set off a summary or an afterthought at the end of a sentence.

Example: Last month the ice cream store added a new flavor to its extensive menu—salty caramel.

Brackets

Rule 1: Use brackets around words you add or change inside a quotation.

Example: After creating Microsoft, “Bill [Gates] became the world’s wealthiest person.” (Bill Gates's last name was added)

Rule 2: Use [sic] in a quotation that has a spelling or grammar mistake. The *sic* stands for a Latin expression that means “that’s really how it appears in the original source” and tells your reader that the error is not your fault.

Example: In an article on human mental health, Dr. Phil states, “people are much too good at lying when it comes to there [sic] relationships.” (*there* should be spelled *they're*)

Note: When quoting someone else, you should never just correct the error. Quotes should always be copied exactly.

Parentheses

Rule 1: Use parentheses to set aside a part of the sentence that is an aside.

Example: It seemed to me that all three customers in front of me paid by check (as if I wasn't late enough already) only to make me even later.

Rule 2: Use parentheses in a citation at the end of a sentence that contains a quote.

Example: Animal rights activist Tom Regan argues, “What’s wrong--fundamentally wrong--with the way animals are treated isn’t the details that vary from case to case. It’s the whole system” (13).

Example: “A brain may be a computer, but it is a distinctly different sort of computer than the silicon chip models on our desks” (Hinrichs 451).

Explanation: The author's name and page number are cited in parentheses to identify who wrote the quote and where it was found. In the first example, since the author's name was used to introduce the quote, only the page number is given in parentheses.

5

MLA Documentation

Overview

In-text Citations

Works Cited

Books

Periodicals

Newspapers

Interviews

Web Publications

Other Sources

Works Cited Page Sample

At times you may want to get information from a book, magazine, or website and use it in your writing. This is a good idea, especially when you are trying to provide examples that help develop your thesis or one of your topic sentences.

There are two basic forms for incorporating information from an outside source into your own writing: a direct quote (exact words from the source) or a paraphrase (idea from the source put in your own words).

When you do use information from an outside source (a source that isn't you), you need to let your reader know that it didn't come from you, and you need to indicate where it did come from.

If you use an outside source but don't properly show you used one, you've committed plagiarism, a major violation of academic standards and ethics.

Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas or words and passing them off as your own. It's a form of cheating that is taken seriously.

Plagiarism is the result of both accidental and intentional misuse of outside sources.

To avoid plagiarism you need to identify your outside sources in a standardized format. The format differs depending on which discipline you're writing for. Most English classes use Modern Language Association (MLA) format.

MLA format requires you to do two things for every outside source you use:

- 1) Acknowledge the outside source within the body of your essay. This is known as an in-text citation.
- 2) List the outside source in a specific way on a final page known as a Works Cited page.

In-text Citations

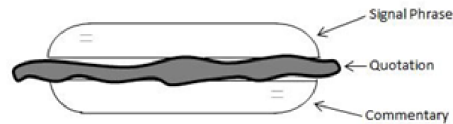
In-text citations come in two basic forms: a direct quote or a paraphrase.

Direct Quotations: A direct quote occurs when you use the exact wording of another source.

MLA requires you to show what you quoted within your essay in a certain way. The requirements are as follows:

1. Introduce the quote with your words. This introduction can be done with a signal phrase or by blending the quote into your sentence.
2. Use quotation marks around direct quotations.
3. Include the author's name and the page number where the quote was found.
4. Provide commentary after the quote to help the reader make sense of why the quote is in your essay.

Many instructors make use of a visual aid called the quote sandwich to help students remember to include the three main MLA requirements when incorporating quotations.



Example of Quote Sandwich

According to Miles Corwin, author of *And Still We Rise*, “the assault on affirmative action could have significant long-term consequences for students rejected from prestigious universities” (127). It is important to examine these consequences before rejecting affirmative action as a vital part of the college admission process.

Introducing Quotes

You should introduce a quotation with your words by using either a signal phrase or by blending the quotation into your sentence.

A Signal Phrase

A signal phrase sets up a quote by identifying the author and/or the source. It gives the quote a context so that it doesn't seem to have been dropped into the essay randomly (sometimes called a "dropped quote").

Example of a Quote that Begins with a Signal Phrase:

As Miles Corwin notes, “the assault on affirmative action could have significant long-term consequences for students rejected from prestigious universities” (127).

Useful signal phrase verbs:

Acknowledges	Claims	Denies	Implies	Refutes
Adds	Comments	Disputes	Insists	Rejects
Admits	Confirms	Emphasizes	Notes	Reports
Addresses	Contends	Endorses	Observes	Responds
Argues	Criticizes	Grants	Proposes	Suggests
Asserts	Declares	Illustrates	Reasons	Thinks
Believes				Writes

Using a Blended Quote

A blended quote is the result when quoted words or phrases from someone else are blended seamlessly into your sentence. No comma precedes a blended quote. Be sure the quote blends in grammatically with the rest of the sentence.

Example: In a study on perceptions of cheating, Emma Gross found there were clear "differences in professor-student expectations" (439).

Parenthetical Citations

The parentheses at the end of a quote contains the author's last name (if not given in the text) and the page number if you found the quote in a print source.

A few final things to keep in mind when you quote material:

- ▶ If your signal phrase is an independent clause, follow the clause with a colon.

Example: The narrator in Rebecca Harding-Davis' *Life in the Iron Mills* suggests the merits of Wolfe's self-reflections are limited: "He held up humanity in its grand total; showed the great world-cancer to his people" (49).

- ▶ You should indicate omitted portions of a quote with an ellipsis (. . .). If a full sentence has been omitted, you should use four dots (. . . .).
- ▶ If you wish to change or add words to better match the quote with your signal phrase or to include necessary information, indicate the changed or added words with brackets. [changed or added word]
- ▶ When the quote you use takes up more than four lines within your essay, use block quote format. Be sure to introduce the block quote with a complete sentence followed by a colon as is done in the example below.

The narrator in Rebecca Harding-Davis' *Life in the Iron Mills* suggests the preacher's words truly reached their intended audience:

He held up humanity in its grand total; showed the great world-cancer to his people. Who could show it better? He was a Christian reformer; he had studied the age thoroughly; his outlook at man had been free, world-wide, over all time. His faith stood sublime upon the Rock of Ages; his fiery zeal guided vast schemes by which the gospel was to be preached to all nations. How did he preach it tonight? In burning, light-laden words he painted the incarnate Life, Love, the universal Man: words that became reality in the lives of these people,--that lived again in beautiful words and actions, trifling, but heroic. (49)

Paraphrase

When you paraphrase, you take someone else's ideas or words and recast them in your own version, complete with your own words and sentence structure. When paraphrasing, you need to be careful to convey the full sense of the original work.

The best way to paraphrase is to read the original until you understand it thoroughly. Set aside the original for a little while, and then write down your version of the original. When you're finished, compare your version with the original to make sure they aren't too similar.

Original Wording: “the assault on affirmative action could have significant long-term consequences for students rejected from prestigious universities” (Corwin 127).

Paraphrase with a signal phrase identifying the author and source: In his book *And Still We Rise*, Miles Corwin predicts enduring problems for minority students when affirmative action ends (127).

Note: Quotation marks are not needed in the paraphrase. However, the author's name and the page number are still needed to give the author credit for the idea.

Checklist for In-text Citations

- Each quote is introduced with your own words.
- Each signal phrase flows smoothly into the quote, and quotes are incorporated grammatically.
- Quotation marks are used wherever necessary.
- Both the author and page number (for a print source) are identified.
- Commentary on the quote or paraphrase is included.

Works Cited

The works cited page is a separate page that you place at the end of your essay. It lists information about the outside sources you used in your essay. This page allows readers to find the original source.

- Entries should be listed in alphabetical order on your works cited page.
- Use double line spacing throughout.
- Use a hanging indent throughout.
- Continue pagination from previous page.
- List only sources you actually use (directly or indirectly) in your essay.

Creating Each Works Cited Entry

MLA emphasizes a specific process to documentation. Each citation should list the following information in the following order (using the punctuation as indicated).

1. Author.
2. Title of source.
3. Title of container,
4. Other contributors,
5. Version,
6. Number,
7. Publisher,
8. Publication date,
9. Location.

Note: not every outside source has each of the elements listed. If your source lacks one or more of these elements, skip them. For example, if no author is identified, you would move on to the next available element, which is the title of the source.

What follows is an explanation of each element followed by an example emphasizing each element.

1. Author.

Begin with the author's last name followed by a comma and then the author's first name.

Hantke, Steffen. *Monsters in the Machine : Science Fiction Film and the Militarization of America after World War II.* Mississippi UP, 2016.

2. Title of Source.

If the title is a stand-alone source (it is not contained in a larger source), italicize the title. An example of a stand-alone source is a book. If it is not a stand-alone source, surround it with quotation marks. An example of a non stand-alone source is an article in a periodical.

Hantke, Steffen. *Monsters in the Machine : Science Fiction Film and the Militarization of America after World War II.* Mississippi UP, 2016.

3. Title of Container,

If your source is found in a larger container such as an anthology, a periodical, or a journal, provide the title of the larger container. If there is a container, its title will be italicized.

Balfour, Ian. "Allegories of Origins: Frankenstein after the Enlightenment."
SEL: Studies in English Literature (Johns Hopkins), vol. 56, no. 4,
Sept. 2016, p. 777. *EBSCOhost*, 0search.ebscohost.com.ecclib.elcamino.
edu/login.aspxdirect=true&db=f5h&AN= 119604829&site=ehost-live.

Note: This entry has two containers, the journal title *Studies in English Literature* and the database *EBSCOhost*

4. Other Contributors,

To be included if your source has other contributors such as translators, editors, or directors.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina.* **Translated by Constance Garnett,** World P, 1946.

5. Version,

Often times there are different versions of a source. You want to indicate which version you are using so your reader has an easier time finding the source you used.

Steinbeck, John. *To a God Unknown*. **Kindle ed.** Amazon Digital Services, 2016.

6. Numbers,

If your source has numbers as journals do, include those here. Be sure to abbreviate number to no. and volume to vol.

Schroeder, Timothy. "Monsters Among Us." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*,
vol. **31**, 01 July 2013, pp. 167-184, DOI 10.1080/00455091.2001.10716001.
161

7. Publisher,

Identify the publisher of your source. If there are more than one publishers, separate them with a slash (/). Omit terms like LLC or Co. Also, abbreviate University to U and Press to P.

Thury, Eva M., and Margaret K. Devinney. *Introduction to Mythology:
Contemporary Approaches to Classical and World Myths*. 4th ed,
Oxford UP, 2016.

8. Publication Date,

If a publication date is indicated, be sure to include it in your citation. Months are abbreviated with the exceptions of May, June, and July. When a full date is required as with newspaper articles, indicate the full date using day month year. End with a period unless more information follows.

Wagner, Curt. "Show Patrol." *Chicago Tribune*. **29 Oct 2010**, ProQuest 0-
search.proquest.com.ecclib.elcamino.edu/news/docview/761156228/
EB9C5137453040EEPQ/5? accountid=10709

9. Location.

Location refers to either page numbers for print sources or web addresses (URL) or digital object identifiers (DOI) for online sources. When using a URL omit the "http://" portion. End with a period.

Abbott, Stacey. "Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the 21st Century." *Edinburgh Scholarship Online*, 2017. **DOI: 10.3366/edinburgh/9780748694907.001.0001.**

Sample Works Cited Page

Last Name, page #

Works Cited

Abbott, Stacey. "Undead Apocalypse: Vampires and Zombies in the 21st Century." *Edinburgh Scholarship Online*, 2017. DOI: 10.3366/edinburgh/9780748694907.001.0001.

Balfour, Ian. "Allegories of Origins: Frankenstein after the Enlightenment." *SEL: Studies in English Literature* (Johns Hopkins), vol. 56, no. 4, Sept. 2016, p. 777. *EBSCOhost*, 0search.ebscohost.com.ecclib.elcamino.edu/login.aspxdirect=true&db=f5h&AN=119604829&site=ehost-live.

Hantke, Steffen. *Monsters in the Machine : Science Fiction Film and the Militarization of America after World War II*. Mississippi UP, 2016.

Schroeder, Timothy. "Monsters Among Us." *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 31, 01 July 2013, pp. 167-184, DOI10.1080/00455091.2001.10716001.

Steinbeck, John. *To a God Unknown*. Kindle ed. Amazon Digital Services, 2016.

Tolstoy, Leo. *Anna Karenina*. Translated by Constance Garnett, World P, 1946.

The works cited page has

- ▶ the essay author's name and pagination
- ▶ the centered title "Works Cited"
- ▶ 1" margins
- ▶ entries listed in alphabetical order
- ▶ double line spacing throughout
- ▶ hanging indent throughout
- ▶ all sources used in the essay

Exercise 1 Creating Signal Phrases

Practice integrating quotes smoothly into your text by mastering the signal phrase. To lend authority to your quotes, you can include in the signal phrase the author's credentials or the title of the source along with the name of the author.

Remember, a signal phrase smoothly moves readers from your writing to the writing of another. Two handy but overused signal phrases are *according to the author* and *the author argues*. Rather than use these all of the time, try using a variety of verbs. The following list of verbs should prove useful:

acknowledges, adds, admits, affirms, agrees, argues, asserts, believes, claims, comments, compares, confirms, contends, declares, demonstrates, denies, describes, disputes, emphasizes, endorses, grants, hints, illustrates, implies, insists, notes, observes, offers, points out, reasons, refutes, rejects, reports, responds, suggests, thinks, writes

On a separate piece of paper, create a signal phrase for each of the following quotes. Be sure your signal phrase smoothly leads into the quoted material.

1. “Courage is going from failure to failure without losing enthusiasm.” –Winston Churchill p.8
2. “One has not only a legal, but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws.” –Martin Luther King Jr. from “Letter from Birmingham Jail” p.4
3. “The notion of banning frivolous lawsuits is antithetical to the Constitution. If anything, more people should be exercising their right to sue people.” –Ivanna Soo from the law firm of Dewee, Cheetem, and Howe p.666
4. “To get the economy back on top, the government should provide \$50,000 no-interest loans to each small business.” –Dasha Chekov p.12
5. Animals kept in zoos should be released into the wild because it is analogous to torture to keep them imprisoned in such unnatural environments.” –Turner Luce p.45

Exercise 2

Creating a Works Cited Page

Suppose you have just completed an essay on superheroes. Create a works cited page for the following sources which you have used in your essay. If you have access to a computer, use it for this exercise. Don't forget to title your page, double space, and place the entries in alphabetical order.

1. The following article was found by using El Camino's online database, EBSCOhost MasterFILE Premier on February 15, 2014. "Can the Hulk Kick Batman's Butt?" Found in *Fast Company* magazine. Author, Mark Harris. Date published July 2012. Issue 167, pages 96-101.
2. The following source is from a page on a website. The page is titled "The Ultimate Superhero Quiz." The author is unknown. The website is HowStuffWorks. Use today's date for the date of access. The publisher is HowStuffWorks, Inc.
3. The following article was found by using El Camino's online database, EBSCOhost MasterFILE Premier on February 17, 2014. "What about Wonder Woman?" Found in *Entertainment Weekly* magazine. Author Benjamin Svetkey. Date published November 26, 2010. Issue 1130, pages 42-46.
4. Today you unearthed a video of mythologist Joseph Campbell on YouTube. It is titled "Joseph Campbell—Myth as the Mirror for the Ego" and was uploaded by the Campbell Foundation on August 26, 2010.
5. The following article was found by using El Camino's online database JSTOR two days ago. Jeffrey Brown wrote the article "Comic Book Masculinity and the New Black Superhero" published in *African American Review* Vol. 33, No. 1 (1999), pp. 25-42.

Exercise 3

Practicing Paraphrasing

Directions: Paraphrase each quote from Exercise 1. Include signal phrases and any necessary citation information.

Appendix A: Transition Words

Transition words help you smoothly move from one point to the next. The following is a list of transition words you may find useful as you write.

Relationship	Transitional Words
Addition	also, in addition, too, moreover, and, besides, furthermore, equally important, then, finally
Example	for example, for instance, thus, as an illustration, namely, specifically, for one thing, in this case
Comparison	in addition, furthermore, again, plus, like, likewise, similarly, as well as, by the same token
Contrast	however, conversely, in contrast, nevertheless, on the other hand, still, yet, but, nonetheless
Result	as a result, therefore, thus, so, accordingly
Concession	certainly, granted, unarguably, of course, to be sure
Time	first, second, third, next, afterwards, finally, before, soon, later, meanwhile, simultaneously, immediately, subsequently, currently
Direction	there, here, beyond, in the distance, opposite, to the left, to the right, under, over, opposite
Summary	in conclusion, in short, hence, finally, in brief

Appendix B: Sentence Combining

Pattern #1: Coordination

Independent clause	, for	independent clause.
Independent clause	, and	independent clause.
Independent clause	, nor	independent clause.
Independent clause	, but	independent clause.
Independent clause	, or	independent clause.
Independent clause	, yet	independent clause.
Independent clause	, so	independent clause.

Pattern #2: Conjunctive Adverbs

Independent clause	; consequently,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; furthermore,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; however,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; in fact,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; moreover,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; nevertheless,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; then,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; therefore,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; similarly,	independent clause.
Independent clause	; subsequently,	independent clause.

Pattern #3: Subordinating Conjunctions

Independent clause	after	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	although	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	as	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	because	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	before	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	if	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	since	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	unless	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	until	finish dependent clause.
Independent clause	whereas	finish dependent clause.

Pattern #4: Subordinating Conjunctions

While (finish dependent clause)	,	independent clause.
When (finish dependent clause)	,	independent clause.
Because (finish dependent clause)	,	independent clause.
Although (finish dependent clause)	,	independent clause.
If (finish dependent clause)	,	independent clause.
After (finish dependent clause)	,	independent clause.

It's a good idea to make sure your writing exhibits sentence variety.

Although there are many ways to combine sentences, the four patterns to the right will serve you well.

Go through your essay and consider changing a few of your sentences to add variety.

Pay particular attention to punctuation!

Appendix C: Active Verb List

Practice using active verbs in your writing.

accept	differ	include	relay
access	discover	incorporate	remain
address	discuss	indicate	remark
affect	dispute	infer	repeat
allow	dissect	intend	report
analyze	distinguish	involve	resolve
appeal	divide	justify	resist
argue	divulge	observe	respond
ascertain	document	overestimate	reveal
assert	elaborate	persuade	review
assume	emerge	place	seek
avoid	emphasize	ponder	show
cite	establish	portray	simplify
claim	exhibit	predict	specify
clarify	experience	prevent	speculate
compel	explain	proclaim	submit
conceal	explore	produce	support
concur	exploit	proffer	surmise
confine	express	promote	test
confirm	find	prompt	theorize
connect	focus	propose	transform
consider	follow	protest	transpose
contain	form	provide	underestimate
contribute	formulate	qualify	underline
convey	gather	question	underscore
create	grant	realize	undertake
debate	guide	reassure	validate
decide	highlight	recognize	value
defend	hold	recommend	verify
define	hypothesize	record	vindicate
delve	identify	refer	weigh
derive	illuminate	reflect	wonder
detail	illustrate	regard	
determine	imagine	reject	
develop	imply	relate	

Appendix D: Common Prepositions

A preposition is a word used with a noun, pronoun, or noun phrase to show location, time, or direction. What follows is a list of common prepositions.

about
above
across
after
against
along
among
around
at
before
behind
below
beneath
beside
between
by
down
during
except
for
from
in
in back of
in front of
inside
instead of
into
like

near
next
of
off
on
onto
on top of
out
out of
outside
over
past
since
through
throughout
to
toward
under
underneath
until
up
upon
up to
with
within
without

Appendix E: Editing and Proofreading Checklists

Revising and Editing Checklist

- I have given my essay a creative title.
- My thesis clearly states my subject and the point I'm going to make about that subject.
- My intro paragraph has enough background information.
- I have several body paragraphs that support my thesis.
- Each body paragraph has a topic sentence that relates directly to my thesis.
- I have ample details in each body paragraph to develop the topic sentence.
- All of my sentences in each body paragraph relate directly to the topic sentence.
- My sentences are clear.
- I have used a consistent tone throughout the essay.
- My word choice is appropriate to my audience.
- My essay follows a logical order.
- I have used transition words where appropriate throughout my essay.
- I have a concluding paragraph that sums up my essay.

Proofreading Checklist

- I have used the spell and grammar check feature on my computer.
- I have also checked for spelling and grammar errors on my own.
- I have spelled out words rather than abbreviated them.
- I have made sure my subjects and verbs agree in number.
- I have corrected any commonly confused words (their/there/they're).
- I have checked for run-ons, comma-splices, and fragments.
- I have checked for proper capitalization.
- I have checked for other punctuation errors.
- I have followed MLA format.
- This essay represents my best writing.

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