

OLD TOWN HIGH SCHOOL
WRITING GUIDE

A
RESOURCE
FOR
STUDENTS
FACULTY
AND
PARENTS

Purpose of the Old Town High School Writing Guide

Student writing will improve only if students have a clear understanding of what constitutes good writing. The purpose of the ***Old Town High School Writing Guide*** is to make students aware of the standards of good writing and to provide information on how to achieve those standards.

Standards for good writing hold true no matter what the content area. In an effort to provide consistent expectations for students across the curriculum, teachers in all learning areas are encouraged to use this guide and to provide suggestions for future revisions.

An excellent on-line source for more in-depth information on any topic cited here is the Purdue University English Department site at <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>. This site is easily searchable and is indexed.

Academic Honesty

All members of the Old Town High School community are expected to maintain and to exhibit academic honesty and integrity at all times. Copying or allowing others to copy outside class work; plagiarism of other people's words or ideas, including failure to properly cite sources; cheating on exams; or the theft, distribution, or unauthorized use of testing materials will not be tolerated.

Plagiarism is the equivalent of cheating. There are two types of plagiarism: intentional and unintentional. Intentional consists of: copying a friend's work, buying or borrowing papers, cutting and pasting blocks of text from electronic sources without documentation, using media outside fair use guidelines, and Web publishing without permissions of the creators. Unintentional plagiarism is: careless paraphrasing, poor documentation, quoting excessively, and failure to use your own "voice". Both kinds of plagiarism could lead to a zero for the assignment. When in doubt, cite!

From the student handbook: "Learning is a personal responsibility for each and every student. Any student found to be cheating or plagiarizing shall be given a zero for the assignment/exam or project and the incident will be reported to the administration and parents. Students should be aware that cheating may jeopardize their selection for many school academic awards and honors."

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Writing a Good Paragraph

A paragraph is a collection of related sentences dealing with a single topic. A useful format is to begin with the topic sentence, then give three or four sentences for supporting detail. If the paragraphs are very short, they may really be parts of a larger paragraph and should be combined. Another option is to give more supporting detail in these short paragraphs.

To be as effective as possible, a paragraph should contain each of the following: **a topic sentence, unity, coherence, and adequate development.** All of these traits overlap. Unity means that the entire paragraph should concern itself with a single focus. Coherence is the trait that makes the paragraph easily understandable to the reader. The paragraph is built around the topic sentence. Usually the topic sentence is at the beginning, although it can be placed anywhere in the paragraph. Adequate development is necessary to make the paragraph effective.

Some methods to ensure adequate development of the paragraph are:

- use examples and illustrations
- cite data (facts, statistics, evidence, detail, etc.)
- examine testimony (what other people say, such as quotations and paraphrases)
- use an anecdote or story
- define terms in the paragraph
- compare and contrast
- evaluate causes and reasons
- analyze the topic
- describe the topic
- offer a chronology of an event (time segments)

Transition

In order to make the paper flow smoothly, there must be transitions between paragraphs. Transitional devices help to carry a thought from one paragraph to another with words or phrases. There are several types of transitional devices. They are:

- to add – using the words and, again, and then, besides, equally important, finally, further, furthermore, next, lastly, what's more, moreover, in addition, first (second, etc.)

- to compare – whereas, but, yet, on the other hand, however, nonetheless, on the contrary, by comparison, where, compared to, up against, balanced against, although, conversely, meanwhile, after all, in contrast, although this may be true
- to prove – because, for, since, for the same reason, obviously, evidently, furthermore, moreover, besides, indeed, in fact, in addition, in any case, that is
- to show exception – yet, still, however, nevertheless, in spite of, despite, of course, once in a while, sometimes
- to show time – immediately, thereafter, soon, finally, then, later, previously, formerly, first (second, etc.), next, and then
- to repeat – in brief, as I have said (appropriate for I Search papers), as has been noted
- to emphasize – definitely, extremely, obviously, in fact, indeed, in any case, absolutely, positively, naturally, surprisingly, always, forever, perennially, eternally, never, unquestionably, without a doubt, certainly, undeniably, without reservation
- to show sequence – first, second, third, and so forth, next, then, following this, at this time, now, at this point, after, afterward, subsequently, finally, consequently, previously, before this, simultaneously, concurrently, thus, therefore, next, and then, soon
- to give an example – for example, for instance, in this case, in another case, on this occasion, in this situation, take the case of, to demonstrate, to illustrate, as an illustration
- to summarize or conclude – in brief, on the whole, summing up, to conclude, in conclusion, as I have shown, as I have said (again, first person appropriate for I Search papers), hence, therefore, accordingly, thus, as a result, consequently, on the whole

Developing a Thesis Statement

A thesis statement reflects a point of view or attitude about the topic. Make sure the thesis :

- focuses on a clear, single, limited subject
- is written in a clear, direct sentence
- can be supported by the material you have found
- is approved by your teacher

A thesis statement can be developed in several ways. Some of the more common are:

- literary theme
- chronology
- analysis
- procedure
- cause/effect
- comparison or contrast
- pro or con

Supporting the Thesis Statement

In writing essays and research papers use solid evidence and sound reasoning to support the thesis statement. Use valid sources to gather the following support:

- facts
- statistics
- examples
- quotations
- paraphrased information

Make sure that the evidence is clearly and thoroughly tied to the thesis statement. This supporting material is how the thesis statement will be proven.

Avoiding Illogical Thinking

Good support for a thesis comes through careful reasoning. Avoid the following flaws in logic:

- emotional appeal – using loaded words, bandwagon appeal, broad generalities, or unsubstantiated testimony
- fallacies – hasty generalizations, attacking the person instead of the issue, circular reasoning, limiting possibilities, or oversimplification

Revising the Essay

Once the first draft is completed, put it aside for a day or so. Then it is time to begin the editing process. First, be sure the paper is saved on disk, and on the hard drive or student profile. Use a spell-checking program, and correct all errors. Some homophones, such as effect/affect, their/there, will not be found by a spell-check program. Review the paper carefully for any wrong usage. Grammar checkers have varying degrees of reliability. They are helpful, but do not depend on them entirely. Review the punctuation carefully. Some writers find it easier to print out a paper for editing, some prefer to do it on screen. In any case, it is imperative to review the entire paper carefully. After all mechanical aspects of the paper are corrected, it is time to review content. Look for the following:

- clear and adequate introduction
- a clear thesis statement
- text that carries out the thesis statement
- clearly ordered ideas
- logical argument
- logically developed paragraphs
- adequate transition from one idea to the next
- conclusion that refers to the thesis statement
- consistent and appropriate

Creating Note Cards

Note cards provide an effective method for keeping track of information and sources, and then organizing it to write the paper. These are the items needed on the note cards:

- the sources used (one works cited card per source)
- paraphrased information
- direct quotations
- facts and statistics
- page numbers of the above

Works cited card for a book

This is a source card. You need an individual source card for each source used in your paper. The information you put on this card will be used on your works cited page. Each card should be labeled with a number.

1
Brokaw, Tom. <i>A Long Way Home: Growing up in the American Heartland</i> . New York, NY: Random House, 2002.

This is a note card. Each card needs to have a number in the upper right hand corner to indicate the source from which the information came. Information should be paraphrased (put into your own words) OR should be directly quoted. Direct quotations must be in quotation marks. The number on the bottom right is very important so that you can easily identify the correct page where you found the information. If it is not written, you will have to find it again.

1
South Dakota was a hard place to live in the 1930's. Drought had burned the land, there were dust clouds, insects, and fear for the crumbling economy.
p. 5

USING QUOTATIONS

Quotations are an excellent way to provide support for the thesis. However, they must be used properly. Be sure to cite all sources. Weave the quotation into the text, so that it flows smoothly with your writing. Remember that papers should be YOUR ideas. You should always try to paraphrase before using a direct quotation. If you aren't sure, talk to your teacher.

For quotations of four lines or fewer, place the quotations within double quotation marks. If the quotation ends the sentence, and parenthetical citation is required, put the period after the reference. For example:

Virginia Rankin, in her discussion of ways to research, says “KWL is probably the most widely known and commonly employed presearch. The K stands for what you already know about a topic, the W for what you want to learn, and the L for what you did learn” (24).

Note in the above example Rankin was stated in the text, so it did not need to be repeated in the parenthetical citation, just the page is given. Otherwise, the citation would have been (Rankin 24).

For quotations of more than four lines:

- set off from the text by indenting one inch from the left margin
- double space
- put parenthetical citation after punctuation at the end of the last sentence
- long quotations like the following do not use quotation marks at all

Rankin goes on to discuss students doing reports on illnesses.

Students begin the presearch by making individual lists of all the words that come to mind when they recall their own illnesses and those of relatives and friends. Some students also like to picture television shows or movies that revolve around hospitals and sick people. After they make their own lists, they contribute to a group list on an overhead transparency. (26)

Again, Rankin is cited in the text.

Periods and commas go inside quotation marks. Question marks and exclamation points not originally in the quotation go outside the quotation marks.

Ellipsis

Use three periods enclosed in brackets with a space before and after them to indicate that words or phrases have been omitted. If the ellipsis ends a sentence, add a period.

PUNCTUATION

In General, use two spaces after end punctuation (periods, exclamation points, question marks) and only one space after colons and semicolons.

Apostrophes When indicating the possessive for names, use an apostrophe followed by an *s* even when the person's name ends in *s* or another sibilant. The two traditional exceptions are *Jesus' and Moses'*.

Kansas's team
Jones's theorem
Marx's ideas

With a few exceptions, the possessive of a singular common noun is formed by the addition of an apostrophe and *s*, and the possessive of a plural common noun by the addition of an apostrophe only.

The horse's mouth
the puppies' tails
the children's desk

Do not use an apostrophe to indicate plurals, including the plurals of acronyms and abbreviations, unless confusion would result without the apostrophe (as in the first example).

There are five s's in that word.
There are five 5s in that number.

Colons Use colons to introduce a series or a list, especially a list preceded by *as follows* or *the following*. Capitalize material after a colon if it constitutes a complete sentence. Use a colon to introduce an explanatory phrase or sentence.

Conference participants should bring the following items: alarm clock, laptop computer, eye drops, coffee maker, and pillow.

The implication of the chancellor's challenge was clear: Students must not be overburdened by bureaucracy if they are to enjoy a fulfilling educational experience.

Commas

- **Between Proper Nouns** Use a comma between two proper nouns (or a year and a proper noun) to aid reading.

*When he gave his invited paper at the conference in June, Roy attracted a huge crowd.
In 1996, CU introduced the TLE initiative.*

- **In Complex and Compound Sentences** Use a comma before a conjunction that introduces an independent clause. Note that you do not need a comma before every *and*, *but*, *because*, and *or*. If what follows the conjunction is not a complete clause, you don't need a comma (as in the second example).

The orchestra is giving a concert in Macky Auditorium on Friday night, and the University Singers are performing in Grusin Music Hall on Saturday night.

- **With Appositives** Use commas with appositives.

Justin Time, director of Parking Services, hired two additional students to monitor parking facilities during the conference.

- **With Dates** No comma is needed between a month and a year. Do use a comma before and after the year if month, date, and year are used.

*The deadline is April 1, 2000, for on-campus applicants and April 2, 2000, for off-campus applicants.
A hiring decision will be made in May 2000.*

- **With Introductory Phrases** Omit commas after short introductory phrases, except if confusion might result or if the introductory phrase ends with a date or proper noun and the main clause begins with a date or proper noun.

*On July 4, Chancellor Hoff will address a local veterans group.
When it's windy the kinetic sculpture on the north side of the school is fascinating to watch.*

- **In Lists (Serial Comma)** Use a comma before the conjunction and the final element in a list.

Those in attendance included students, faculty and staff, and donors.

- **With Nonrestrictive and Parenthetical Phrases** Use commas to set off nonrestrictive and parenthetical phrases.

*That bike, which is a racing model, cost more than my used car.
My alternate route, the one I take when I have time, follows Boulder Creek.*

- **With Place Names** Names of states (or countries) are enclosed in commas when they are preceded by a city or state.

The conference will be held in Eugene, Oregon, but the planning meeting will be held in Frankfurt, Germany. The guest speaker is from Washington, DC.

Dashes Use dashes to show an interruption to a thought or sentence. To make a dash, use two hyphens, without spaces, between the words you are interrupting. Use dashes sparingly.

I thought I was prepared – fool that I was – for the long hike.

.Hyphens Common uses for hyphens:

- abbreviations of university campuses: CU-Boulder
- compound adjectives such as well-prepared and self-sufficient Do **not** use a hyphen between a compound that begins with an adverb ending in *ly*:
- in compound adjectives beginning with ill, better, best, little, or well. for example, ill-behaved, well-mannered

Periods Use periods in the following situations:

- when you come to the end of a declarative sentence
- when you come to the end of a quoted passage that also ends a sentence, even if it is not the end of the sentence in the original passage (rather than using ellipses)
- with abbreviations at the end of items in a vertical list, such as this one, if some or all of the list items are complete sentences (which these are not—and wouldn't be even if the first word were capitalized)
- at the end of a vertical list that is punctuated (as this one is not) with commas at the end of each item

A sentence can have only one terminal punctuation mark. When you've reached the terminal, you've reached the end.

Quotation Marks Commas and periods always go inside quotation marks. Colons and semicolons always go outside quotation marks. With question marks and exclamation points, it depends: If the punctuation is part of the quotation, put it inside the quotation marks; if it's not part of the quotation, put it outside.

Use quotation marks

- to indicate the exact words that someone spoke or published
- the first time you refer to a nickname
- the first time you use a term or phrase ironically or sarcastically (don't overuse)

Semicolons Use semicolons in lists whose items include commas. Use semicolons to separate closely related clauses.

CU officials at the meeting included: Elizabeth "Betsy" Hoffman, president; Richard Byyny, Boulder campus chancellor; and Maria Versace, UCSU representative.

Evaluating Websites and Other Sources

In order to be useful in your research, you need to be sure the source you are using is credible. The following questions can be used to judge any source, but it is especially important to use these criteria for websites. Books, magazines, and databases used in the library have been evaluated for inclusion in the collection. However, no such prior evaluation has been done on sites you may find. The questions to ask are:

- Who? Who is the author? What is his or her expertise? What is the author's background and education?
- What? What types of information are available from this source?
- Where? Where did the author get the information? Was it from original research, or other researchers? If others, are there citations?
- When? When was this source produced? For a book the copyright, for articles the publication date, for websites the date created or last updated.
- Why? Why was the resource created? Is it to entertain, present factual information, or present a point of view? Is there bias evident in the work?
- How? How extensive is the information presented? Does it have the depth you need?

Types of Writing

During your high school career you will be introduced to various types of writing. The most common are: cause and effect essays, comparison/contrast essays, definition essays, description essays, narrative essays, persuasive essays, and process analysis essays. Here is a brief explanation of each of the types.

- Cause and effect: this is writing about meaningful relationships between events and their results. A cause is what makes the event happen, and the effect is what happens as a result of that action. Good essays of this type clearly distinguish between the cause and effect, establish a clear thesis statement, and present information in an effective order.
- Comparison/contrast: when you write about similarities and differences you are doing this type of essay. A good one uses subjects that can effectively be compared/contrasted, presents several points to compare or contrast, and arranges these points in a logical order.
- Definition: this type of writing simply tells what something means. A good one will clearly present the definition, use appropriate examples to show the definition, and speaks to the reading audience.
- Description: this type of essay has often been said to “paint a picture with words”. A good descriptive essay gives an over-all effect, uses concrete, specific details to support that effect, and uses detail that apply to all five senses.
- Narration: a narration essay is one that tells a story. To do so effectively, this essay should include specific details, focus on the incident, and convey a feeling or emotion.
- Persuasive essay: in this type of essay you are writing to convince others of a particular point of view. A well-done persuasive essay takes a strong and definite position. There can be no “maybes” here, so be sure the position you take is one you can defend. This type of essay considers the other points of view, and presents arguments against them. Arguments must follow a logical pattern.
- Process analysis : this is an essay to explain how something works, or how to do something. A good process essay presents each step in a logical order, explains these steps in sufficient detail, and does not assume a great deal of prior knowledge on the part of the reader.

Formatting Your Papers

Some basics for ALL papers ...

- Use size 12 Times New Roman
- Double space everything, even your works cited (if you aren't sure how to do this, see your teacher)
- 1 inch margins on top, bottom, left, and right
- DO NOT include an extra space between your paragraphs
- Be sure to add the proper header (instructions follow)
- In the top **LEFT** of your paper, double spaced, you must include the following
 - Your name
 - Teacher's name
 - Class period
 - Date due
- After the due date, hit enter once and type the title of your paper. The title is centered, and still in Size 12 font. After the title, hit enter once and start your paper.

Formatting your header (instructions will vary based on your program)

- Go to view OR insert and select "header"
- Change the justification to the RIGHT, and type your last name and hit the spacebar
- While you are still in the HEADER, select insert "page numbers" click ok.

Citation Examples

Nearly all research writing relies on work done by others or information gathered by others. In your own writing, you must show what you have borrowed (e.g., facts, opinions and/or quotations) and where the information was found.

The format presented here is that of The Modern Language Association of America. We recognize that there are other styles, but this one is most commonly used.

Parenthetical Documentation:

By providing a list of works cited you let your reader know what resources you used in your writing; but the reader doesn't know what source provided which information and exactly where the material was found. The MLA Format requires that, rather than using footnotes or endnotes, citations should be included within parentheses in the in the paper as you write it. Usually the author's last name and a page reference are enough to identify the source and the specific location (Gibaldi 204).

The parenthetical reference (Gibaldi 204) indicates that the information is from page 204 of a book written by Gibaldi. Referring to my lists of sources the reader would find:

Gibaldi, Joseph. MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 5th edition. New York: The Modern Language Association of America, 1999.

Note the hanging indentation for the citation. This format is found under "format", then "paragraph" on the tool bar. Select "hanging" under the "special" tab. At the end of this paper is an example of a sample list.

Make the references in the text clearly point to specific sources in the list of works cited. Identify the location of the borrowed information clearly.

Creating a "Works Cited" List

We will not be providing examples for all possible sources. The following are for: books, magazines/periodicals, on-line databases, CD-ROMs and Web pages. We recommend Joseph Gibaldi's MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, newest edition, for detailed entries.

- *Article in Familiar Reference Book*
"Title of Article." Title of the book. Edition (if stated) and year of publication.

Example:

"Mandarin." The Encyclopedia Americana. 1998 ed.

- *Book by single author*
Author's name. Title of the book. Publication information (place: publisher, copyright date).

Example:

Miller, Robert. Bob Miller's Calc for the Clueless. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998.

- *Book by multiple authors*
Hyde, Margaret O., and Elizabeth Held Forsyth. Suicide: The Hidden Epidemic. Rev. Ed. New York: Watts, 1986.
- *An anthology with an editor or compiler*
Editor's name, ed. Title of the book. Publication information (place: publisher, copyright date).

Example:

McRae, Murdo William, ed. The Literature of Science: Perspectives on Popular Science Writing. Athens: U. Of Georgia, 1983.

- *An article in a weekly magazine, periodical, or journal*
Author's name. "Title of the article." Title of the magazine day month year: pages.

Example:

Peterson, Ivars. "Mathematician on Ice." Science News 12 August 2000: 106-108.

- *An article in a monthly or bimonthly magazine, periodical, or journal*

Author's name. "Title of the article." Title of the magazine month year: pages.

Example:

Heartney, Eleanor. "A Turbo-Powered Tale." Art in America September 2000: 98-102+.

- *An article in a newspaper*

Author's name. "Title of article." Name of newspaper day month year: section page number.

Example:

Cohen, Ted. "Troubled youngsters take to kayaking as metaphor for life." Maine Sunday Telegram 27 Aug 200:B3

- *An Editorial*

Author's name. "Title." Title of Publication publication information.

Example:

Gerhardt, Lillian N. "Follow the Yellow Brick Road." School Library Journal October 2000: 11.

- *An interview*

Person interviewed. Person who interviewed. Show or place. Date.

Example: Karen Larson. Interview with Joseph Gallant. Old Town High School. 11 January 2005.

Online Databases

- *Citing ProQuest*

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of work." Article's original source and publication date: page numbers. Product name. Publisher. Date researcher visited site. <Electronic Address, or URL, of the source>.

Example:

Lanken, Dane. "When the Earth Moves." Canadian Geographic March-April 1996: 66-73. Proquest. 15 April 1998. <proquest.umi.com/pqdweb>.

- *World Wide Web*

Author's name. Title of the Site. Name of institution or organization. (Date of access). Network address.

Example:

Jones, Robert. USA Today (20 October 2000). <http://www.usatoday.com>.

Note: Sometimes there is no author given on the web site. Skip that and go to title of the site. Give as much of the required information as you can find on the site.

Note: to have the hanging indent style for your bibliography, go to format on the tool bar, choose paragraph, and under "special" you will see "hanging indent." Note also that the entries are doublespaced, and should be in alphabetical order. It is imperative that you follow the punctuation guidelines.

Works Cited

Karper, Erin. "Writing a Thesis Statement." Purdue University English

Department. 10 May 2004 <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

[handout/print/general/gl_thesis.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handout/print/general/gl_thesis.html)

Koechlin, Carol and Sandi Zwaan. Build Your Own Information Literate School.

Salt Lake City, UT: Hi Willow Research & Publishing, 2003.

Loertscher, David and Douglas Achterman. Increasing Academic Achievement

Through the Library Media Center. Salt lake City, UT: Hi Willow Research

& Publishing, 2003.

Rankin, Virginia. The Thoughtful Researcher: Teaching the Research Process to

Middle School Students. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1999.

Todd, Ross J. "Irrefutable Evidence: How to Prove You Boost Student

Achievement." School Library Journal April 2003: 52-54.

