



**SCSU English
Department**

BLUE BOOK

**Writing Guide
for Majors and Minors**

How to Use this Guide

This Blue Book is for *you*—in several senses. First, it is a writing guide for English Majors and Minors at Southern. Its purpose is to help you write college-level papers and other assignments in your literature, advanced composition, and professional writing classes. It covers the *basics* of formatting, use of quoted evidence, voice, and sentence mechanics and grammar needed to draft an English essay. It adheres to the MLA (Modern Language Association) guidelines—the rulebook for English literature specialists—and may not always be applicable to other disciplines or majors. It also does not take the place of any specific writing instruction or handouts your instructor provides.

Second, it is for you, personally. Keep the Blue Book with you—on campus, on your home desk, in your bag—throughout your time at Southern. We have designed this guide as a quick reference tool for those routine writing issues you may have known but forgotten, or may have never known but didn't know how to find the answers easily. Many of these concepts are fundamentals that will *not* be covered in your English courses, **so use this book to take charge of your own writing**. For further writing help, visit the SCSU Writing Center, the Purdue Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>), or your professor during office hours.

Why a “Blue Book”? Simple: so you'll remember it. To that end, we have designed the pages below for ease of reference. When things are in **bold**, pay attention—those are the main skills and principles to follow. When things are in Times New Roman, those are examples. Look at them carefully for models of what to do (and what not to do). Skim, dog-ear, circle, re-read as needed. Fresh copies can be downloaded (PDF) from the English Department website.

The English Department Faculty

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I. The Basics of Essays in MLA Style

(I.A) MLA Style: In-Text Citations

Following MLA guidelines, cite your sources in the body of your paper parenthetically. Cite *all* quotations and any important information, ideas, or words not your own.

Parenthetical citations typically occur at the ends of sentences or after quotations. With the exception of block quotations, the parenthetical citation always comes *after* the quotation marks but *before* the period or semi-colon.

1. Basic parenthetical citation

To cite a source in the body of your paper, include the author's last name and page number in the parentheses; do *not* use "p." or "page":

(Ruhl 25)

As one critic has argued, "*Measure for Measure* raises the issue of embodied experience in the opening scenes" (Knapp 262).

If you have already named the author in the preceding clause or sentence(s), simply cite the page number:

As Jeffrey Knapp has argued, "*Measure for Measure* raises the issue of embodied experience in the opening scenes" (262).

2. Citing a source quoted in another source

To cite an author quoted in another article, essay, or book, include the author's name in your prose and credit the work in which you found it, using "quoted in":

Empson claimed that "A word may become a sort of solid entity" (quoted in Frenkel 190).

3. Citing literary works: poems, plays, etc.

To cite poetry, give line numbers, using "line" for the first citation and the number for every subsequent citation. Use stanza numbers for larger works:

(line 13), (17-19), (16.78-9), etc.

Donne begins *Satire I* pleading, "Away thou changling motley humorist" (line 1). By the middle of the poem, however, he calls his companion "a contrite penitent / Charitably warn'd of thy sins" (49-50).

To cite plays in dramatic verse, give act, scene, and line numbers:

(3.3.54-7)

In Shakespeare's final act, Coriolanus prepares to storm out before hearing his mother's complaint, declaring, "I have sat too long" (5.3.151).

To cite works of literary prose—such as novels or short stories—use the basic format above, citing author and page number. When needed, include chapters for novels: e.g., (105; ch. 12).

4. Special Cases

- If there is more than one work by the same author in your Works Cited, include an abbreviated title in the parenthetical citation: e.g., (Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 50).
- If the author is unknown, include only the abbreviated title and page number in the parenthetical citation: e.g., (*Pilgrim* 63).
- If you are citing a block quotation—a longer indented quotation, to be used when you quote more than four lines of poet—the parenthetical citation comes *after* the final punctuation.

(I.B) MLA Style: Works Cited

Below are examples of some of the most common bibliographic citations used in Works Cited pages. Use this for papers and for any other assignment for which you need to cite a work (an annotated bibliography, a paper proposal, etc.) following MLA guidelines.

Remember that these are examples. You need to be able to locate the author, title, editor(s), publication information, page numbers, and any other relevant information on your own. Be sure also to follow the correct format *exactly*, including punctuation, order of information, italics, etc.

How to cite ...

1. A book

When citing an entire book by one or more authors, include author(s), book title, publisher, date:

Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Basic Books, 2011.

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed., Yale UP, 2000.

2. A critical edition or translation

When citing an entire book by an author that has also been edited or translated by someone else, add the editor or translator after the title:

Donne, John. *The Complete English Poems*. Edited by A. J. Smith, Penguin, 1996.

Sloterdijk, Peter. *You Must Change Your Life*. Translated by Wieland Hoban, Polity Press, 2013.

3. An essay or chapter in an edited volume

When citing an essay or chapter contained *within* a book that has essays or chapters by other writers as well, include the author of the essay or chapter itself, the title of the essay or chapter in quotations, the book title, editor(s), publication information, and the page range of the essay or chapter:

Arnold, Miah. "You Owe Me." *The Best American Essays 2012*, edited by David Brooks, Houghton Mifflin, 2012, pp. 1-5.

Hauerwas, Stanley. "Why Gays (as a Group) Are Morally Superior to Christians (as a Group)." *The Hauerwas Reader*, edited by John Berkman and Michael Cartwright, Duke UP, 2001, pp. 519-21.

4. A literary work (poem, short story, play, etc.) in an anthology or textbook

When citing an individual literary work in an anthology or textbook containing multiple works, follow the same format as a work in an edited volume above, including the number of the edition after the title, if necessary.

Borges, Jorge Luis. "The Immortal." *Collected Fictions*, translated by Andrew Hurley, Penguin, 1998, pp. 185-93.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Hero and Leander*. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th ed., edited by Stephen Greenblatt, et al., Norton, 2012, pp. 510-30.

5. A literary work online

When citing a short work (poem, short story, etc.) found on a web page, include author, title of the work, title and date of book from which it was derived (if provided), title of website, a URL or Permalink, and the date you accessed it:

Wyatt, Sir Thomas. "They Flee From Me." *Luminarium*, <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/theyflee.htm>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2013.

Lee, Li Young. "Arise, Go Down." *The City in Which I Love You*, 1990, *Poetry Foundation*, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43327. Accessed 13 Dec. 2013.

6. A scholarly article in an academic journal (in print or PDF)

When citing a scholarly article in an academic journal that you have in print or a PDF copy of the printed page, include author of article, article title, title of journal, volume and issue number, year, and page range of the article:

Randel, Fred V. "The Political Geography of Horror in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*." *ELH*, vol. 70, no. 2, 2003, pp. 465-91.

Nydam, Arlen. "Philip Sidney's Extended Family and the Catholic Petition of 1585." *Sidney Journal*, vol. 28, no. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 53-79.

7. A scholarly article in an academic journal (in an online database)

When citing a scholarly article in an academic journal that you are viewing as a web page in a library database (i.e., not in PDF), use the same format as above but include a URL and the date you accessed it. If no page numbers to a print edition are listed, omit them or provide paragraph (par.) numbers:

Heyen, William. "Sunlight." *American Poetry Review*, vo. 36, no. 2, 2007, pp. 55-56.
ebshost.com. www.consuls.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=24224660&site=ehost-live. Accessed 24 Sept. 2008.

8. A non-scholarly article in an online newspaper or magazine

When citing a popular newspaper or magazine article online (not found in a library database), include author, title of the article, name of the online publication, the date of the article, a URL or Permalink, and the date you accessed it:

Korb, Scott. "Anywhere, Nowhere, Elsewhere, Everywhere." *Slate*, 10 Jan. 2014, www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2014/01/richard_powers_novel_orfeo_reviewed.single.html. Accessed 15 Jan. 2014.

Cavett, Dick. "Booze, Revisited." *New York Times*, 10 Jan. 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/opinion/booze-revisited.html>. Accessed 13 Jan. 2014.

Other cases not covered above

If you have a source not covered in the examples above—e.g., a print newspaper article, an online book, a blog, a YouTube clip, etc.—consult the MLA Guidelines at <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Things to remember

- Always compile your Works Cited in alphabetical order, author's last name first
- Book titles take *italics*; articles, essays, short stories, and short poems take quotation marks (" ")
- If the citation is longer than one line, indent each line *after* the first (called a "hanging indent")
- Page numbers are required for any essay, journal article, or work within a larger work
- If there are more than two editors, use "et al." (Latin for "and others") after the first editor's name
- Don't mistake authors with editors—the author is the person who wrote the work you're using, the editor is the one who put it where it is

(I.C) MLA Style: Sample Formatted Paper

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Riley Smart

Prof. Royall Payne

English 666

September 25, 2017

All (or Nearly All) About MLA Formatting

This page both explains and demonstrates the primary page set-up parameters for an MLA-formatted essay, according to the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook* (8th edition, 2016). That is to say, this document gives instructions for how to create an MLA-formatted paper, and it shows you what an essay following those instructions should look like. All instructions assume that you're using Microsoft Word, but the commands in most other word-processing programs are similar.

First, "select" the entire document (from the "Editing" tab in the upper right corner of the toolbars above) so that your formatting changes will be applied to the entire document. Next, select the "Paragraph" menu and set to double spacing. While you're there, make sure "Alignment" is set to "Left": the entire essay must be left-justified (not full-justified). This means that the left-hand edge of your type is perfectly straight but the right-hand edge is uneven. While you're in this menu, too, be sure the box labeled "Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style" is checked. This command will prevent MSWord from automatically adding extra spaces between paragraphs. Save your changes.

Still in the "Home" tab, in the "Font" menu this time, choose a normal font (like Times New Roman or Courier or Arial), "Regular" font style, and font size 10, 11, or 12.

Next, go to the "Page Layout" tab choose "Margins," and set to one (1) inch, all the way around (left & right, top and bottom). That does it for basic page set-up.

To insert a running header with your name and page number, choose the "Insert" tab and look for "Page Number." Choose "Top of Page" from the menu and click on the option for the upper righthand corner of the header. Once you've inserted the page number, type your name

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and a single space before the number. Make sure the font you're using in the header matches the size and type of the font in the main text of your essay. If the header is set correctly, your typing should appear ½ inch from the top of the page—midway down the one-inch top margin—and flush with the right margin. If it doesn't, use the "Header and Footer" menu to adjust the vertical placement of the header within the margin.

Note the four-line heading at the top left of the first page. Unless your instructor gives you alternative instructions, follow the example exactly. No title page is necessary.

Note also the title, centered and double-spaced, with major words capitalized, but otherwise in normal typeface—no all-caps; no boldface; no italics, no quotation marks.

The entire essay must be double-spaced—even the parts that you don't think should be double-spaced. Notice the headings and title at the top of the page: they're double-spaced. Block quotations? Double-spaced. Works Cited entries? Double-spaced. *Everything* is double-spaced—no exceptions.

A new paragraph is indented one standard tab-space: five spaces or, more precisely, one-half inch. No extra spaces between paragraphs because—you guessed it—*everything* is double-spaced. (As I wrote earlier, check the box labeled "Don't add space between paragraphs of the same style" in the "Paragraph" menu to prevent MSWord from adding extra spaces between paragraphs.)

So much for formatting. Yes, it's a pain. But correct formatting sends a clear message to your readers that you know what you're doing and therefore that the content of your writing should be taken seriously. The more formatting mistakes you make, the more likely it becomes that readers will assume the opposite: that you *don't* know what you're doing and therefore that they should *not* take your writing seriously. Fairly or not, that's a cue to readers that they really don't need to pay much attention to whatever your essay is trying to communicate, because its content is likely to show the same sloppiness and lack of seriousness that the formatting does. In other words, your handling of the technicalities of formatting directly effects your audience's

perception of your authority as a writer.

One essential element of any essay in literary analysis or interpretation is quotation and citation of outside sources, whether they are primary sources (a novel, story, poem, play or other work about which you are writing) or secondary sources (an essay, historical document, book, website, or other work whose words and/or ideas you're citing in support of your argument).

A short prose quotation, one that is four or fewer typewritten lines long, should be handled as an embedded quotation, indicated by quotation marks but run in with the typography of your sentence as though all the words in the sentence are your own. This sentence is an example: noted grammarian Joe Blow notes that "embedded quotations must function grammatically and mechanically in a sentence as though they are not quotations at all, but simply a part of the sentence in which they appear" (47).

Longer prose quotations, ones that are more than four typewritten lines long, should be formatted as block quotations instead of embedded quotations. MLA scholar Anita Lotta Trivia says this about the use of block quotations:

Quoted material that amounts to more than four lines of typewritten text in your document should appear as a block quote—like this one— instead of an embedded quote. Block quotes appear without quotation marks, because the block itself indicates that the material is a quotation. Block quotes retain a normal (one-inch) right margin, but their left margin is an extra half inch from the margin. This is a change from previous editions of the *MLA Handbook*, which instructed writers to indent block quotations one full inch from the left margin. (872)

Your decision about whether to use a block quotation or an embedded quotation should be based on the number of typewritten lines in the quotation *as it appears in your essay*, not as it appears in the source.

Never leave a quotation "dangling" at the end of your paragraph; don't give "the other

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guy” the last word in your paragraph. Instead, use your sentences after a quotation to explain to your readers exactly how you want them to understand the quoted material so that it supports whatever point you’re trying to make. If it doesn’t do so, then you shouldn’t be quoting it.

Now look back at the preceding paragraphs about quotations. Notice the source citations: the parenthetical information giving author and page information about the sources I have quoted. The first citation (three paragraphs back from here) includes only the page number of the source material, because the sentence itself identified the author. If the sentence had not identified Joe Blow as the quotation’s source (as in the following clause), “then the end-of-sentence source citation and punctuation would look like this instead” (Blow 47). Note, too, that punctuation at the end of the block quote (two paragraphs back from here) differs from that of an embedded quotation: for embedded quotations, punctuation occurs after the citation, but in block quotations, punctuation occurs before the citation. Just as in the embedded quotation, had the author not been named in the “signal” sentence before the block quote, the author’s last name would need to be included in the in-text citation.

Formatting and citation of poetry and drama work a little differently from prose. First, the rule for deciding between an embedded or a block quotation differs for poetry from prose, in two different ways. When quoting poetry, use a block quotation when you quote *more than three lines* of poetry (as opposed to more than four lines of prose). Count lines of poetry *as they appear in the source* (as opposed to their appearance in your document, for prose quotations). Lines of poetry must be capitalized and punctuated exactly as they appear in the source poem, just as the following three lines of poetry do: “Poetic quotes appear / With line breaks indicated by a slash / Just like those shown here for these three lines” (Opus, “Poetic,” lines 14-17).

Note the extra information in that last citation. It’s there for two reasons: because one should cite poetry by line number rather than page, and because this essay also includes “another quotation / By the same poet writ / But taken from a second poem” (Opus, *Rhyming*, 7-10). Because the essay cites two different works by a single author, the parenthetical citations

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must indicate which of the two works the quotation comes from. If your essay included only one work by the author Magnum Q. Opus, then the work's title would be omitted from the parenthetical reference. Note also that the second instance of poetic quotation omits the word "lines" from the citation; once is enough to establish the pattern for readers. Notice, too, that the title information in each of these two citations is formatted differently from the other. That's because the first quotation comes from a short work (a lyric poem, in this case) and therefore appears in quotation marks, while the latter quotation is taken from a long work (a book-length poem) and therefore appears in italics. The rules for formatting quotations from plays are similar in their logic, but would take too much space to demonstrate here, so see the *MLA Handbook* for further instructions.

This document outlines most of the greatest hits of MLA: rules for the formatting and citation feats that you'll need to perform most regularly. The Works Cited page that follows doesn't refer to works (real or imagined) that were actually cited in the body of this essay. Instead, it includes one example of each of the kinds of sources you are most likely to use in a literary studies essay. More information about constructing a Works Cited page can be found in the *English@SCSU Bluebook*, Buley Library's "MLA Style Guide" (which is linked from the "Research Guides" menu on the library website), and straight from the source: the MLA website: <https://style.mla.org/formatting-papers/>. See especially the "Sample Papers in MLA Style" link and the paper there labeled "Fourth-Year Course in English Literature." English majors and graduate students should consider buying their own copies of the latest edition of the *MLA Handbook* (the 8th, at the time of this writing) and get in the habit of consulting it routinely.

Works Cited

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- Ingoldsby, Richard. "A Non-Scholarly Article in an Online Newspaper or Magazine." *New York Times*, 10 Jan. 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/opinion/booze-revisited.html>.

(I.D) *Italics* or “Quotation Marks”?: The Basics of Source Titles

1. Formatting Source Titles

Correctly format and punctuate the titles of your sources in your prose.

Short works such as lyric poems, articles, essays, and song titles take quotation marks:

Michelle Goldberg’s op-ed “Will the Birthplace of the Modern Right Turn Blue?” begins by quoting the Republican congressman from Orange County.

In his essay “The Hanging,” George Orwell describes in painful detail the execution of Burmese prisoners.

The poem “What Kind of Times are These,” by Adrienne Rich, stirs up old memories of the Cold War.

Book titles and longer works (e.g., narrative poems, films, TV series, albums) take italics:

By the end of *A Mercy*, Morrison has changed the narrative perspective more than five times.

I have never read Edmund Burke’s *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

Walter White, the anti-hero of *Breaking Bad*, is a classic Faustian character.

Do not use other inventive formatting—bold, cool fonts, or single quotation marks—to denote a title.

2. Describing and Referring to Sources

Some readings you are assigned in college will appear as they were originally published: in a book, in a collection, or in a newspaper. Others, however, you will encounter as photocopies, web-links, or PDFs. Regardless of the medium in which a text is given to you for a particular class, it is your job to describe the original source you are writing about accurately.

Avoid relying on vague descriptors like “a piece,” “his/her written work,” etc. Think carefully about the original source and what kind of text it represents. Here are some very common examples:

- An “essay” is a broad term for a short written argument—creative or expository, historical or contemporary—that may appear in a collection of essays, online, or in a journal

- An “article” is a slightly more specific term for a work of reporting appearing in a periodical (newspaper, magazine, etc.), or a scholarly paper published in an academic journal
- An “Op-Ed” refers to an opinion article published in a periodical (newspaper, magazine, etc.)
- A “book” may refer either to a long monograph (a book by a single author) or an edited anthology, or collection of essays, compiled by an editor or group of editors
- A “novel” is a long work of creative fiction. *Don’t use “novel” loosely—not all long works or books are novels!*
- A “dialogue,” “treatise,” “manifesto,” etc. usually refers to a major philosophical, economic, or scientific work of historical significance (often pre-1900)
- A “report,” “survey,” “statement,” etc. usually refers to a formal publication of data or quantifiable research by an organization
- A “study” is a broader term that refers to any short or long work detailing the findings of an author or group of authors
- A “play” is a dramatic work, written for the stage or theatrical performance
- And many, many others: *letter, editorial, memoir, speech, transcript, etc.*

II. Working with Quoted Evidence

(II.A) Punctuating Quotations

Quotations need to be correctly punctuated in order to avoid creating run-on sentences, comma splices, or other sentence errors.

Enclose all quotations in **double quotation marks** (“...”). Do not bold, italicize, or use other inventive formatting to mark off quoted text. Single quotation marks should be preserved for quotations within quotations.

1. Before a quotation

There are three basic ways to punctuate the beginning of a quotation:

- **A comma after a signal verb**

Quotations beginning with an introductory clause that ends in a signal verb (e.g., *says*, *claims*, *suggests*, *observes*, *implies*, *argues*, *believes*, etc.) take a comma:

Shakespeare’s sexual ambiguity in Sonnet 120 can be seen in the next quatrain, where the poet warns, “Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!” (9).

- **A colon and *no* signal verb**

When the introductory clause before the quotation is a complete thought that does *not* end in a signal verb, use a colon:

Shakespeare’s sexual ambiguity in Sonnet 120 can be seen in the warning that begins the next quatrain: “Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!” (9).

- **Continuing the sentence grammatically (no additional punctuation)**

When the quoted text logically and grammatically *continues* your own sentence, *no additional punctuation* is needed preceding the quotation:

The poet in Sonnet 120 speaks of a boy “Who hast by waning grown” (3).

A very common instance of a quotation completing one’s own sentence is the use of *that* clauses; if the quotation logically follows an introductory clause ending in “that,” no punctuation is needed:

Shortly thereafter, the poet remarks that “Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack” has defeated him (5).

Finally, a quotation may also complete your sentence grammatically if it follows a subordinate clause or introductory phrase (e.g., *As a result*, *According to the narrator*, etc.). In this case, a comma follows the subordinate or introductory element, just as it would a typical sentence:

According to the next quatrain, “Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack” has nevertheless defeated the speaker (5).

2. At the end of a quotation

In American prose, the punctuation at the end of the quotation *as it appears in the original text* goes *inside* the quotation marks:

Barack Obama said, “We must honor the memory of those lost in Arizona.”

However, when the quotation is followed by a parenthetical page or line citation, the closing punctuation goes *outside* the quotation marks.

The narrator then captures the protagonist’s unacknowledged feelings: “Her husband did not make her feel like this” (Bowen 83).

When the original passage ends in either a question mark (?) or an exclamation point (!), preserve *both* the original punctuation *and* the period after the citation.

Faustus’s famous speech to Helen begins, “Was this the face that launched a thousand ships?” (5.1.120).

Finally, when eliding – or omitting – part of the end of a quotation, remove any ending commas or colons, and add *three dots (...)* *plus* the final period. This is called an ellipsis. Ellipses should be used *sparingly* in your prose, and *only* when they accurately preserve the basic sense of the original.

As Wharton’s story opens, “It was three o’clock in the morning, and the cotillion was at its height...” (1).

4. Punctuating Lines of Poetic or Dramatic Verse

When quoting two or more lines of poetic or dramatic verse, *mark all line divisions* using a forward slash (/):

Jonson’s poem is evenly divided into halves when the speaker wonders, “For why / Will man lament the state he should envy?” (5-6).

Scene 4 begins with Angelo painting a vivid image of his sin and its bodily effects: “When I would pray and think, I think and pray / To several subjects. Heav’n in my mouth / As if I did but chew his name” (2.4.1-3).

(II.B) Integrating Quotations

Correct punctuation is not enough. Quoted material in your writing needs to make *grammatical, syntactical, and semantic sense* with your surrounding sentence(s); that is, the quotation needs to fit with the sentence's grammar, word order, and meaning. Here are three rules of thumb for integrating quotations clearly into your prose:

1. Your surrounding sentence and the quotation need to *combine to form a complete thought*.

Unrevised

According to Jonson, "As what he loves" (line 12).

The quotation itself is only a partial phrase, rendering the sentence as a whole an incomplete thought.

Revised

In the last line, Jonson forswears all long-term commitments on behalf of his son, saying, "For whose sake henceforth all his vows be such / As what he loves may never like too much" (lines 11-12).

2. Never use a stand-alone quotation. Introduce *all* quotations.

Unrevised

Simmel discusses modern city life. "The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation* that results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli" (25).

The quotation is left standing on its own. It's a separate sentence, without context or an introductory clause, and has only a vague relationship to the previous sentence.

Revised

Simmel wanted to explore the mental effects of modern city life, which he describes early in his essay as an experience of almost constant overstimulation: "The psychological basis of the metropolitan type of individuality consists in the *intensification of nervous stimulation* that results from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli" (25).

The quotation now follows logically from the previous sentence, which announces the main idea of the quotation with an introductory clause (correctly punctuated).

3. Provide textual cues in introductory clauses and phrases to guide the reader.

• Prose

When writing about fiction or non-fiction prose, provide descriptive textual cues to guide your reader to the context of the quotation. Do *not* use page numbers, as pages may vary between editions (and this information is in your parenthetical citation anyway).

Descriptive textual cues may include mini-summary, references to key events, chapters or other section breaks, or even a simple “beginning,” “middle,” or “end” where appropriate.

Unrevised

On page 83 of *Fun Home*, the narrator reflects, “Dad’s death was not a new catastrophe but an old one that had been unfolding very slowly for a long time” (83).

Revised

When Alison’s mother presents her girlfriend with her father’s copy of Wallace Stevens’ poetry, the narrator reflects, “Dad’s death was not a new catastrophe but an old one that had been unfolding very slowly for a long time” (83).

Coates opens the first chapter of *Between the World and Me* with a seemingly counter-intuitive claim: “But race is the child of racism, not the father” (7).

On his first glimpse of the African coast, Marlow sees “The edge of a colossal jungle so dark green as to be almost black...” (13).

• **Poetry**

When writing about poetry, use formal cues – line numbers, stanzas, and other structural devices – to guide your reader around the text of the poem:

In line 3 of “The Good Morrow,” the speaker muses whether he and his lover “sucked on country pleasures childishly” in a previous life.

By the time we’ve reached the final stanza, however, the imagery has changed: “My face in thine eye, thine in mine appears” (15)

Donne’s closing couplet creates a paradox: “If our two loves be one, or, thou and I / Love so alike, that none do slacken, none can die” (20-21).

• **Drama**

Plays, particularly those written in dramatic verse like Shakespeare’s, often require a combination of the above textual cues. Where appropriate, use a combination of mini-description of staged action, as well as formal references to act or scene number, to guide your reader:

Lear utters his fateful words in the first scene of the play: “Nothing will come of nothing, speak again” (1.1.88).

Act Three begins with Kent wondering, “Who’s there, besides foul weather?” (3.1.1).

Lear’s words to Cordelia as they are led away to prison imagine them together as “birds i’t’h’cage” and “God’s spies” (5.3.9, 17).

(II.C) Analyzing Quoted Evidence

Working with quoted evidence in a literary essay requires analyzing and using that evidence effectively in your prose. Simply “inserting” or “adding more quotes” does not produce lucid (or particularly meaningful) writing. It’s what you do with the quoted evidence that matters. For you as an English Major or Minor, quoted evidence is the means to something larger: treating the **literary text as the subject of your analysis**. Practically speaking, this means:

- “Sandwiching” every quotation with appropriate summary, context, and explanation
- Providing a judicious mix of full and partial quotations, including quoting key terms and phrases where helpful
- Keeping your own words and ideas in the driver’s seat, while rooting *everything* you say in the language of the text

1. Sandwiching quotations

A “quotation sandwich” means that your quotations *always* must have something *before* and *after* them:

Before - An introductory clause that introduces the quotation, providing sufficient context for what you’re quoting and who’s speaking.

Quotation - “ ... ” (citation).

After - 2-3 follow-up sentences that summarize, explain, and analyze what you’ve just quoted, building to your next piece of evidence.

Example

At the end of the first quatrain, Hopkins raises a larger question, given the grandeur he’s just described: “Why do men then now not reckon his rod?” (line 4). The poet wonders why humans do not “reck”—reckon or recognize—God’s authority. Specifically, the speaker imagines that authority metaphorically as a rod, which oddly implies both a kingly sceptre and a whip or bludgeon.

2. Mixing full and partial quotation

Strong writers rarely string together a long list of quotations, one after another. They provide a judicious mix of full and partial quotations in order to focus their prose on the *language* of what they’re analyzing. For example:

Hopkins’s sonnet goes on to imagine how humans “have trod, have trod, have trod” (line 3), using iambic repetition to reinforce his point.

Chapter One of *Exit West* opens with the image of a “city swollen,” full of “clothing,” “choices,” “branding,” and “luxury” (Hamid 1).

3. Sample paragraph

Notice how the writer of this paragraph combines quotation sandwiches and a mix of full and partial quotation to drive his or her *own* ideas, while rooting *every sentence* in the language of the text.

Donne uses the word “sense” only once in the middle of “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” in a parenthesis that nevertheless carries great weight: “Dull sublunary lovers’ love / (Whose soul is sense) cannot admit / Absence ...” (lines 13-15). The speaker contrasts his “refined” (17) love with the love of those who are “dull” because they are “sublunary,” or live on earth, below the moon. He suggests that he and his beloved are defined by their minds, not physical things, and therefore do not care about being absent from each other. Dull or superficial love, by contrast, relies on “Those things which elemented it” (16), or sense, to keep it alive. On one hand, by putting “soul is sense” in parentheses, Donne might be taken to mean that his thoughts are free from such superficial things. The word “sense” in line 14 serves as a metaphor to imply that other lovers’ souls are like mere blocks of wood or stone. On the other hand, the same word can be read literally to mean that some lovers’ souls are preoccupied with the bodily or emotional senses. This latter connotation of “sense” is ironic because Donne’s poem seems preoccupied itself with physical imagery for emotional connection. The poem closes, “Thy firmness makes my circle just, / And makes me end where I begun” (44-45). If Donne needs to sense his lover’s “firmness” in order to feel justified, or complete, one wonders if their love is really that different from the rest of the “dull” world.

The writer correctly integrates and punctuates full quotations throughout the paragraph using introductory colons and commas, parenthetical citations, and line breaks.

Notice how the writer pulls out key words and phrases *from* the previous quotation and its surrounding lines for further analysis.

The writer continues to treat the text as the subject of his or her analysis by considering two contrasting interpretations of the original quotation.

Using helpful textual cues (e.g., “closes”), the writer advances the paragraph’s analysis by linking the original passage discussed to a quotation at the end of the poem, “sandwiching” the quotation with context and follow-up.

(II.D) Block Quotations

Block quotations are long quotations that are more than four lines of prose or more than three lines of verse, indented and offset from the main body of your text.

Block quotations should always be used *sparingly* in any essay or writing assignment under ten pages. In very short papers (under three pages), you should avoid them entirely, unless it is absolutely necessary or you have been specifically instructed to use them.

Here are two rules of thumb for the use of block quotations:

1. Never end a paragraph with a block quotation.

If the quotation is that important, surely it deserves extended explanation and analysis.

2. Devote at least *twice* as many lines of explanation to a block quotation as the quotation itself.

If the block quotation is four lines long, you need eight lines of explanation, analysis, or commentary. If it's eight lines, you guessed it: you need sixteen (and probably two paragraphs of explanation). If it's over ten lines, it's too long!

For an example of a properly formatted block quotation, see page 12 of this Blue Book.

(II.E) Revising Quotations: Additional Tips

Here are some additional rules to keep in mind when working with and revising your use of quotations:

1. Avoid telling us that you're interpreting or analyzing. Just do it.

In a literary essay, there is rarely a need to tell us you're interpreting or analyzing something. Just make the interpretation or assert the analysis. Be confident. (And if asserting it confidently looks wrong, then you may need to re-think your analysis or interpretation.) For example:

Unrevised

The screaming horses could be interpreted as threats to the character's connection to their tribal history and identity.

Revised

The image of screaming horses represents threats to the characters' connection to their tribal history and identity.

2. "Quotations" don't do the talking.

Discuss the content of quotations directly, rather than wasting space referring to the fact that you're writing about a quotation. "Quotations" or "quotes" don't do the talking; the author, speaker, or content of the passage is doing the talking. This means you should always avoid beginning your discussion of quoted material with words like "This quote is saying that" For example:

Unrevised

The quote is saying that Coates is addressing his memoir to his son.

Revised

Coates addresses his memoir, here, to his son.

3. Replace lazy or unnecessary quotation with smart summary.

Don't be a lazy quoter. Paraphrase or summarize the text when it's the content of the text (a plot event or a dramatic interaction between characters, etc.) that helps you make your point. Use direct quotation only when the specific language of the text is directly related to whatever point you're trying to make. *Never* use direct quotation as a substitute for basic summary or as filler for your own argument.

III. Voice and Clarity

(III.A) Beyond “I”: Varying Subject Nouns

Often, students think that they can’t express an opinion or an original interpretation in their writing without using the word “I.” Not so. There are many other possibilities.

At times, “I” is indeed the best option. Turns of phrase like “In this paper, I will argue that...” or “As I have tried to show ...” can announce explicitly to your reader what you’re trying to prove. When “I” serves as a statement of *mere* opinion, however (“I can see links between...,” “I like when Wordsworth says...,” etc.), it improperly takes the place of argumentation and evidence.

Strong writers, instead, *vary* their subject nouns. They experiment with different ways of referring to author, speaker, text, reader, and the language of a work itself in order to express complex ideas using strong subjects and action verbs.

Here is a list of guidelines and suggestions. Think about what fits best with what you’re trying to do and say in a given sentence, paragraph, or essay.

1. Author

When first referring to the author of a text in an essay, use his or her **full name**. Afterward, use his or her **last name**.

Virginia Woolf wrote the character Septimus Warren Smith in *Mrs. Dalloway* based on cases of shell-shock from World War I. **Woolf** later portrays Septimus as a psychological parallel to the disaffected Clarissa.

2. Speaker

The author is not always the one doing the talking in a poem, story, or novel. Even when the speaker is not an actual character or persona, it is an effect of the text—an effect you can more formally denote with words like **speaker, poet, narrator, etc.**

In the beginning of the poem, **the speaker** conveys a tone of assurance and confidence.

In the closing couplet, however, **the poet** uses enjambment to call that confidence into question.

When Mangin’s sister appears on the balcony, Joyce’s **first-person narrator** focalizes the story so that we see her from the perspective of a young ten- or twelve-year-old boy.

3. Text

Overall, the text itself is the main speaker in any literary essay. More than author or speaker, there are many ways to make the text as a whole or a portion of it the agent of your sentences. Here are just a few:

poem	scene	narrative
line	act	discourse
sonnet	passage	structure
stanza	dialogue	metaphor
refrain	chorus	imagery
couplet (octave, sestet, etc.)	prologue	ending
	chapter	beginning

Scene Two suggests an entirely different picture of Shakespeare’s Prospero, as seen in his dialogue with Miranda.

The **structure of line 2**, which relates the “approach” with “taste,” implies Herbert’s reluctance toward Christian worship in “Superluminarium.”

With an entire page devoted to fog, **the imagery** of *Bleak House* sends an early signal about its allegorical intentions.

4. Reader

At the same time, the reader—real or imagined—is just as much an active subject in the construction of a text. Beyond “I,” your words can indicate that effect formally or informally with subject nouns like **one**, **the reader**, or simply **we**.

In Auden’s imagery of jack-boots marching, **one** detects a direct response to 1930s fascism.

We first meet Barabas in *The Jew of Malta* counting his “Infinite riches in a little room” (1.2.1), and **our impression** is of a character paradoxically both large and small.

By the story’s conclusion, **the reader** wonders what has happened to the opening premise, which concerned a man getting hit by a truck and being taken to a hospital.

5. Language

What ties all these options together, of course, is words—the language of the poem, play, or narrative you’re analyzing. Keep it simple: sometimes the clearest subject noun for making your point in a paper is a word or phrase itself.

“**Quintessence of dust**” relates two seemingly opposing ideas, essence and ephemera.

Taken together, **these words** capture the tension Shakespeare wants us to feel in Hamlet.

(III.B) Avoiding “You”

While “I” may sometimes be useful in announcing a thesis, clarifying your point, or drawing your essay to a conclusion, one should always avoid “you” as the subject noun in academic prose. The present Blue Book, of courses, addresses “you” because it contains instructions for *you* to follow. An academic essay, by contrast, elaborates ideas, concepts, and evidence whose clarity and reasoning should be able to stand on their own, regardless of the given reader.

“You,” in this respect, is presumptuous. It presumes what an imaginary reader feels or thinks, rather than assuming the burden of proof that the kinds of subject nouns in the previous section force one to adopt.

“You” is also imprecise. It’s often a way to avoid either making a stronger claim of your own or providing sufficient evidence about the author’s point in question.

Here are some examples. Consider how changing the “you” to another subject noun makes the analysis sharper in each:

Unrevised

You can see Aristotle’s point in the final two sections of *Politics*.

Revised

Aristotle’s point in the final two sections of *Politics* is that knowing the various kinds of government encourages genuine political action.

Unrevised

When Hopkins imagines the “Holy Ghost over the bent / World” (13-14), you can picture it perfectly in your head.

Revised

When Hopkins imagines the “Holy Ghost over the bent / World” (13-14), the poem paints an apocalyptic picture of a simultaneously loving and threatening God for the reader.

(III.C) Literary Present Tense

When we write about texts we are always, in a sense, writing about the present. Though any text under consideration was written in the past (even if it was written 15 seconds ago), the act of *interpreting* it is happening in the present. The text is communicating to its readers in the present moment.

These ways of referring to texts have been handed down to academic writers and readers as conventions. In order to comply with those conventions, we use the present tense to discuss both what is happening in the “now” of the text and what is happening during the acts of interpretation and analysis. When we are discussing the “past” or “future” within or relative to the world of the text, we make our choices about verb tense accordingly.

Katyal proceeds in the latter half of her *Times* op-ed to explain why conspiracy to commit a crime is a greater offense. She provides evidence from the Anglo-American legal tradition. **[present tense]**

Five hundred years ago, in Renaissance England, that legal tradition was first articulated by humanist thinkers. **[past tense]**

Here’s a longer example from Paul Petrie’s Introduction to William Dean Howells’s *An Imperative Duty*:

...This scientifically authorized deterioration of African Americans’ legal status culminated in the US Supreme Court’s infamous acceptance of the “separate but equal” doctrine of racial segregation in public life in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896) that would stand until the middle of the twentieth century....

Here Petrie uses the past tense to discuss the novella’s historical context.

Howells’s novel of interracial marriage participates unmistakably in this ongoing national pseudoscientific dialogue. The novel’s opening chapters appropriate the language and concerns of the contemporary sciences of race primarily through their center of consciousness, Dr. Edward Olney, a trained physician recently returned to the United States after long absence in Europe.

Here Petrie is discussing what the text is “doing” in the moment when it is being read, so he uses the present tense.

(III.D) “This”: Fixing Vague Pronoun Reference

Pronouns always refer to something else. As such, they help create connections between clauses and sentences. “He” or “she” refers to a gendered character or speaker you’ve been discussing. “It” continues a point about a subject at stake. “This” links your coming thought to a previous thought.

Vague pronoun reference, however, occurs when we don’t know to which “this,” “it,” “he,” “she,” or “they” refers.

Fix vague pronoun references, especially when beginning a sentence or clause with “this.” Often, you can fix personal pronouns by naming to whom “he” or “she” refers. But “this” is a special case because it’s such a useful linking word. Unless it’s followed by a clarifying noun (e.g., “this event,” “this habit,” “this idea”), the word “this” gestures vaguely in the direction of things the writer has already mentioned in previous sentences but leaves readers to guess what specific things are being referenced.

So here’s the rule of thumb: always *add* a specific, accurate noun immediately after the pronoun “this” to designate what the “this” is to which you mean to refer. For example:

Unrevised

This suggests that the novelist’s thinking about race “science” was unsettled.

What, precisely, is the “this” that makes this suggestion? Readers are left to guess what idea or event (or etc.) in the previous sentences the writer means to reference.

Revised

This pattern of self-contradiction in the narrator’s comments on race suggests that the novelist’s thinking about race “science” was unsettled.

By adding the thing to which “this” refers (the narrator’s “pattern of self-contradiction”), the writer tells readers exactly what earlier content in the essay this new sentence is referring to.

(III.E) Cutting Fluff

“Fluff” includes any unnecessary sentences, clauses, or adjectival or adverbial phrases in your prose. Your goal as a college-level writer is not to be wordy. Your goal is to be clear, precise, and expressive in your writing so that *every* sentence counts within the body of the paper as a whole. Any sentence that isn’t necessary, cut.

Here are some common examples of fluff to avoid:

1. Dawn of time statements

Cut all sentences that state what has or has not been the case for a vague, exaggerated, or clichéd period of time: “Since the dawn of time,” “For centuries,” “In modern society,” “In the digital age,” “Ever since women were liberated,” etc.

2. Webster’s Dictionary says ...

Your reader does not need you to refer to Webster’s, Collins, or Dictionary.com to define basic words or concepts. Refer to a dictionary in the body of your paper only if a word’s meaning, usage, or etymology is historically contested or problematic (and use the *Oxford English Dictionary* or *American Heritage Dictionary*).

3. Redundant words or phrases

Eliminate needless repetition of words within a single sentence or adjacent sentences.

Unrevised

In George Orwell’s essay “On Shooting an Elephant,” Orwell writes

Revised

In his essay “On Shooting an Elephant,” George Orwell writes

4. Repetitive beginnings of sentences or paragraphs

Vary the beginnings of subsequent sentences and paragraphs.

Unrevised

Brooks argues that the Republican party needs to embrace centrism. Brooks believes that centrism is key to American democracy and reasoned debate.

Revised

Brooks argues that the Republican party needs to embrace centrism. Centrism, he reasons, has long been key to American democracy and reasoned debate.

5. There is, there are, it is

As much as possible, avoid beginning sentences with “There is,” “There are,” “It is....” Such “to be” verbs describe general states of being, rather than the specific subjects, actions, and ideas that constitute good prose and interesting sentences.

Unrevised

There is a point in her essay where the author argues that we should re-think Title IX.

Revised

The author argues, ultimately, that we should re-think Title IX.

(III.F) Titling Your Paper

Students often ignore the titles of their papers until the last minute, leaving them time only to produce a vague or general heading for their paper. But titles are an important part of a polished paper. Rather than seeing them as announcing the topic of your paper, see your titles as the *beginning of your argument*. They should not only draw your reader in but help your reader see what original contribution your thesis will be making to the topic at hand. Here are some strategies:

1. Keep it specific

A specific title is better than a general title because it clues your reader into the original idea you are bringing to the “conversation” around your topic. Rather than,

Unrevised

“Immigration Debate in the U.S.”

Revised

“Anti-Immigrant Stigma in Arizona Politics”

2. Cluster Key Terms

Think about the key terms of your essay, and group or cluster them into a persuasive idea in your title. Rather than,

Unrevised

“Problems in *King Lear*”

Revised

“Fatherhood, Rule, and the Missing Mother in *King Lear*”

3. Use the Colon to Show the Conversation

Authors of papers often use a colon in their titles to show a relationship between ideas and the larger conversation at stake:

“Between the World and Them: The Black Lives Matter Movement in Baldwin and Coates”

“Joking Our Way to Adulthood: The Everyday Rhetoric of David Foster Wallace’s Kenyon Commencement Speech”

IV. Sentence Mechanics and Grammar

(IV.A) Writing Complete Sentences (1): Sentence Fragments, Run-ons, and Comma Splices

Many people think that writing grammatically correct sentences is a kind of mystery. They feel unsure how to recognize a complete sentence and how to avoid writing sentence fragments. They may feel confused about commas or about punctuation in general. The temptation, as a result, is to treat good writing as a set of arcane, punitive rules—an unknowable set of principles that are just around the corner, out to get you.

Rather than focusing on how to avoid *bad* sentences, it is more helpful to focus on how to write *good* sentences. Better yet, it makes sense to think about *strong* sentences—sentences that *do* something, make strong claims, and show a command of the grammatical building blocks necessary to make those claims persuasively.

These building blocks can be learned. The trick is to remember some basic principles of sentence writing, to practice them, and then to build toward more sophisticated sentences. Avoid seeing these principles as mysteries. See them as a basic framework for expressing your most interesting thoughts and ideas.

1. Complete Sentences

A complete sentence must have a subject and a verb:

Jane laughed.
[subject] [verb]

I thought long and hard about the matter.
[subject] [verb]

It can have other things too, but it needs an identifiable subject doing a complete action:

Jane laughed at the clown in the circus while eating a hot dog.
[subject] [verb]

When I got home from the appointment, I thought long and hard about the matter of my health.

[subject] **[verb]**

2. Fixing Sentence Fragments

A sentence without an identifiable subject and verb is an incomplete sentence, or **sentence fragment**.

Will do.

This has an action but no subject. Who will do? "That"? "He"?

The one with the brown coat.

This has a subject but no verb. What about the “one”? What is “the one with the brown coat” doing?

This idea at the heart of the article.

This also has a subject but no verb. What about “this idea”?

People write sentence fragments for common reasons. Again, it's not a mystery! Usually, they have separated out as a fragment part of a larger, complete sentence.

Unrevised

Although he came home.

This is a dependent clause without a main, or independent, clause. A “dependent clause” relies on an independent clause to make sense. Here’s a complete sentence using the above fragment.

Revised

Although he came home, he went back out.
[subject] [verb]

“He went back out” is a complete sentence. It can stand on its own. “Although he came home” is an unfinished thought without it. Sentences that begin with words like *Although*, *While*, *Because*, *Unless*, *Since*, *After*, *When*, *If*, and *Even though* will produce sentence fragments unless they are attached to a complete action. Examples:

Unrevised

While I was outside.

Revised

While I was outside, I mowed the lawn.

Unrevised

Even though the sign said “Stop.”

Revised

He went anyway, even though the sign said “Stop.”

Another common source of incomplete sentences is “garbled sentences,” or sentences that have missing or jumbled words. These you should be able to avoid with proof-reading.

Incorrect

I the article is wrong.

The sentence is missing a verb ("I think," "I believe," etc.).

Berry's claims that would not work.

The writer confuses the possessive “Berry’s claims” with a sentence about what “Berry claims....”

3. Compound Sentences

Once you know how to write complete sentences, you can start building longer sentences, such as **compound sentences**.

A compound sentence joins two complete sentences together with a comma plus the words *and*, *but*, *yet*, *so*, *for*, or *nor*. The latter are called “coordinating conjunctions,” or connecting words.

Jane laughed, and I cried.
[subject] [verb] [subject] [verb]

Jane laughed at the movie while we waited, but I cried from hunger.
[subject] [verb] [subject] [verb]

A compound sentence *must* have a complete clause—with subject and verb—on both sides of the comma.

Unrevised

Jane laughed, and cried.
[subject] [verb] [verb]

Here, Jane is doing both the laughing and crying. Either add a subject to the second clause (e.g., “she cried”) or drop the comma (e.g., “Jane laughed and cried.”)

Why write compound sentences at all? Compound sentences are a step toward stronger sentences because they convey a *relationship* between two ideas or statements. Note how “but” conveys a very different relationship than “and.”

Jane laughed, *and* I cried.
The two events happened together.

Jane laughed, *but* I cried.
The writer means to draw attention to the disconnect between these two events.

Berry argues that we need to think about the role of education in our sense of “place,” *and* he gives a minimal definition of what he means by education.
The writer is listing what Berry says in his article.

Berry argues that we need to think about the role of education in our sense of “place,” *but* he gives only a minimal definition of what he means by education.
The writer is turning the screws on Berry. The “but” conveys that Berry’s minimal definition is a problem.

4. Fixing Comma Splices

One of the most common errors of student writing is comma splices – two parts of a compound sentence “spliced” together with a comma and no coordinating conjunction (*and*, *yet*, *but*, *so*, *for...*).

Unrevised

Jane laughed, I cried.

I went to the store, I bought a watermelon.

Derrick Rose is the best basketball player, he plays to win.

These comma splices are run-on sentences. They have multiple complete thoughts, or clauses, tacked together without appropriate stops or connecting words.

To fix a comma splice, you can (a) add a connecting word, or (b) add a period or harder punctuation, like a semi-colon.

Revised

Jane laughed, but I cried.

or

Jane laughed. I cried.

or

Jane laughed; I cried.

I went to the store, where I bought a watermelon.

or

I went to the store. I bought a watermelon.

Derrick Rose is the best basketball player; he plays to win.

or

Because he plays to win, Derrick Rose is the best basketball player.

(IV.B) Writing Complete Sentences (2): From Compound to Complex

In academic writing, sentences rarely, if ever, occur on their own. They are always a part of a conversation—a conversation between the ideas that your own writing advances, the evidence of other written work you discuss, and the line of thought tying them together into a whole. Strong sentences *show* that line of thought running through each paragraph of an essay by conveying a *relationship* between ideas. There are several ways to build sentences that demonstrate such relationships:

1. From Simple to Compound Sentences

Simple, declarative sentences can be clear and grammatically correct while leaving the reader unclear about what a writer is trying to convey.

Smith's book argues that we need to explore new approaches to education. Teachers are an important asset in the future of America. Students are falling more and more behind today. We need a technological innovation in the classroom.

These sentences are intelligible but hard to follow. Why? First, the reader cannot tell which sentences refer to information in Smith's book, and which do not. Second, the reader cannot tell the relationship between the ideas provided: if teachers, for example, are an important asset, why are students failing?

One way to convey a relationship between ideas is to tie separate sentences into compound sentences—sentences that tie two independent clauses together with ***and, but, yet, for, or so***.

Teachers are an important asset in the future of America, yet students are falling more and more behind today.

Students are falling more and more behind today, so we need a technological innovation in the classroom.

Note how the addition of “yet” or “so” radically changes the implied meaning. The ideas are no longer simply adjacent, sitting beside each other like people on a bench. They are now *doing* things to each other. “But” and “yet” push *against* each other, showing contrasts or antitheses. “So” pushes something *forward*, showing an idea that results from another one.

Note: Be careful to avoid the common error of treating transition words as conjunctions: ***however, nevertheless, on the contrary, etc.*** are **not** connecting words in a compound sentence.

2. From Compound to Complex Sentences

Compound sentences can only do so much. Separate sentences can only line up or push against each other for so long before the reader feels like he or she is reading a series of back and forth

statements. We often need more complex ways to convey the relationship between ideas and sentences. For example:

Smith's book argues that we need to explore new approaches to education. **Even though teachers are an important asset in the future of America**, students are also falling more and more behind today. **Because of this decline**, improving the quality of our teachers is not enough. **According to Smith**, we need a technological innovation in the classroom.

The sentences highlighted in bold help create what we call “complex” sentences. A “complex” sentence does not mean a *confusing* sentence. Rather, it means a sentence that shows a more complex relationship between ideas than simply sticking independent thoughts together in a compound sentence. A complex sentence shows *how one or more ideas depend on another idea*. Thus, a complex sentence contains what we call *dependent*, or subordinate, clauses.

You can usually spot complex sentences because they contain clauses that begin with words like the following—what we call “subordinating” terms:

While	Whereas	During
Although	According to	As a result of
Even though	After	By
Because	Before	If ... then ...

Left on their own, sentences that begin with words like these can produce sentence fragments:

Unrevised

While I agree with Johnson.

Even though she has no idea what she is talking about.

Once these “dependents” are hitched to independent clauses, however, they can combine to form stronger, more interesting thoughts:

Revised

While I agree with Johnson, his theory of childhood education is only partly accurate.

Even though she has no idea what she is talking about, Beatrice makes a valid point about healthcare.

Because of the team's inadequate offensive line, Dickinson looks like a weak quarterback.

As a result of our long struggle to improve its research, the program is now thriving.

After careful consideration of all the evidence above, Johnson's article concludes with a call to arms.

These sentences are interesting because they imply ideas that do not merely sit next to or push against one another. They show complex relationships between ideas: ideas that draw distinctions (“While,” “Even though,” “Although”), ideas that result from other ones (“As a result of,” “Because,” “If...then...”), ideas that are chronological (“After,” “Before,” “During,”), and ideas that attribute responsibility (“According to”).

(IV.C) Avoiding Mixed Sentence Constructions

One of the most common sentence errors students make is what is loosely called a “mixed construction”: a sentence that begins with one grammatical construction and switches to another, without thinking, partway through.

In most cases, mixed constructions arise from incorrectly trying to use words in a prepositional or introductory phrase as the *subject* of the sentence. Prepositional phrases can be spotted with words like “By,” “In,” “Because,” “On,” etc. But because a prepositional phrase always introduces or modifies some other noun elsewhere in the sentence, it cannot serve itself as the noun or subject of the sentence. It’s *setting up* the subject of the sentence.

Here’s an example of a common mixed construction:

Unrevised

In Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* explores the ways that women’s lives intersect.

In this sentence, the writer has “mixed” or blurred together two sentence constructions—an introductory clause and an independent clause. Because “Toni Morrison’s Paradise” occurs in a prepositional phrase (“In Toni Morrison’s Paradise...”), none of the words in that phrase can serve as the subject of the sentence; they are introducing an independent thought to follow. Therefore, the verb “explores” has no subject: there is no noun in this sentence to “do” the exploring.

How can you correct a mixed construction? Easily—by distinguishing the prepositional phrase from the noun, or by getting rid of the preposition. For example:

Revised

In her novel *Paradise*, Toni Morrison explores the ways that women’s lives intersect.

In this sentence, “Toni Morrison” is the subject and “explores” is the verb: “Toni Morrison explores.”

Revised

In Toni Morrison’s *Paradise*, the author explores the ways that women’s lives intersect.

In this sentence, “author” is the subject and “explores” is the verb: “The author explores.”

Revised

Toni Morrison’s *Paradise* explores the ways that women’s lives intersect.

In this sentence, “Paradise” is the subject and “explores” is the verb: “Paradise explores.”

(IV.D) Commas, Colons, and Semicolons

Many of us were taught to put commas where a reader would naturally pause or take a breath. According to that logic, semicolons would indicate places where a reader would stop breathing for a moment, and colons would signal that it's time to call 911.

In fact, commas (and colons and semicolons) are not about breathing; they are tools that communicate the logical relationships among words, phrases, and clauses within your sentences. These three punctuation marks are meant to clarify, not resuscitate. Below are a few of their most common uses.

1. Commas and Semicolons in Compound Sentences

Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction that joins two independent clauses. A “coordinating conjunction” is a word that connects two things of equal importance in the sentence. The coordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *or*, *for*, *nor*, *so*, and *yet*.

Readers are likely to find *The Underground Railroad* narratively dense, so the book club materials on Oprah's website will be very useful.

Frederick Douglass eloquently details his desire for freedom, but he does not narrate his actual escape.

In each case, the conjunction links the two statements and signals a particular logical relationship between them; they are doing things to one another. In the first case, the relationship is cause/effect: the materials will be useful *because* the narrative is so dense. In the second, the relationship is one of contrast: if Douglass has told us about his desire for freedom, we might expect that he would describe how he escaped from slavery; *however*, our expectations are not fulfilled.

When the two independent clauses are so closely related that they seem to want to be the same sentence, you can use a semicolon (without a coordinating conjunction) to connect them.

The narrator interjects almost nothing beyond a brief description of the train station; what we learn of setting comes almost entirely from the girl.

Frederick Douglass eloquently details his desire for freedom; however, he does not narrate his actual escape.

Note that *however*—like *therefore*, *indeed*, *in fact*, *for example*, etc.—is not a coordinating conjunction, so it takes a semicolon in this case.

2. Commas after Introductory Elements

Use a comma after most introductory words, phrases, or clauses. These introductory elements provide some context or set up for the main clause of the sentence. Generally, these elements

tell when, where, why, or how the action of the sentence occurs or within what context it is to be understood:

Since he had established himself as an accomplished slave breaker, Covey was respected by his white neighbors despite his relative poverty.

To gain financial stability, Lily Bart must either marry or go to work. Unfortunately, she has no marketable skills.

While swimming with Robert, Edna felt free.

Abandoned, Maggie turns to prostitution.

In each case the comma separates the information that provides context from the actual sentence. “Covey was respected by his neighbors” is the main point the writer is trying to convey, but the *context* within which that matters or makes sense *for this writer* is Covey’s reputation as a slave breaker. Lily must marry or go to work, but why? She has no marketable skills, but how does the writer want us to feel about that? When did Edna feel free? Why did Maggie turn to prostitution?

The commas, therefore, are not where they are because those are the places where readers take a breath. Instead, the commas help signal the logical relationships between the ideas. They say, “here’s where the context stops and the main action begins.”

When the contextual information comes at the end of the sentence, it is not usually set off by a comma. The connecting words signal the shift from main idea to context.

Covey was respected by his white neighbors since he had established himself as an accomplished slave breaker.

Edna felt free while swimming with Robert.

3. Commas with Interrupting Elements

Use commas to set off words or phrases that “interrupt” the main clause. Usually, those interruptions will provide “extra” information about some aspect of the main clause. Sometimes they rename the subject of the sentence; sometimes they will seem almost parenthetical. We say that information is extra because you could literally remove it and the sentence would still make sense.

Tom Joad, home from a stint in prison, finds the family farm deserted.

Noah, the Joads’ eldest son, leaves the family just before they reach California.

Tom, who had been convicted of manslaughter, risks his own life to fight for migrant workers’ rights.

Rose of Sharon, however, will figure significantly in the novel’s conclusion.

4. Commas and Semicolons in Lists

Use commas in lists of more than two items. Be sure to use a comma before the conjunction if doing so is necessary for clarity!

Unrevised

It would have been easy for Tom to blame his parents, God and the boss.

The lack of a comma before and makes it sound like Tom is the love-child of God and the boss.

Revised

Edna left her husband, children, and respectable life in order to live in the pigeon house.

Here's a famous example of how the punctuation of the list affects the logic of the sentence:

The panda eats shoots and leaves. (*Good panda.*)

The panda eats, shoots, and leaves. (*Bad panda.*)

Use semicolons in lists when one or more of the items in the list contains a comma or other punctuation. The semicolons will help readers keep track of the items themselves.

Along with literary history per se, contemporary literary critics often draw on several fields: cultural, political, and economic history; philosophy; cultural theory; and psychology.

5. Colons

Unlike a semicolon, a colon signals that what comes next follows directly from what came before it. The colon says to a reader, "Here it comes!" When used to introduce an explanation, example, quotation, or appositive (words that rename), a colon should be used only after an independent clause. That means that you do *not* need a colon after *such as*, *including*, or *consists of*.

With no marriage options left, Lily's options are stark: trim hats or become Gus's concubine.

Finally, Lily must face the same struggles as the working-class women she has shunned, such as long hours, meager wages, and soul-deadening poverty. But her resolve is complicated by a her suspicion that she is incapable of becoming a "worker among workers":

Inherited tendencies had combined with early training to make her the highly specialized product she was: an organism as helpless out of its narrow range as the sea-anemone torn from the rock. She had been fashioned to adorn and delight; to what other end does nature round the rose-leaf and paint the humming-bird's breast? And was it her fault that the purely decorative mission is less easily and harmoniously fulfilled among social beings than in the world of nature? (281)

You may notice exceptions to the "complete sentence" rule like the following:

Woman, without her man, is nothing.

Woman: without her, man is nothing.

Cows: Please close gate!

Cows, please close gate! (*...because everybody knows horses can't read*)

(IV.E) Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs, like actors and actions, should agree. By *agree* we mean the number of the subject should match or correspond with the number of the verb. Here is the basic rule:

a singular **subject** (*she, phone, dog*) **takes** a singular verb (*writes, rings, sleeps*) and plural **subjects** (*we, machines, animals*) **take** a plural verb (*write, rule, sleep*).

Note the example in the sentence above: “**subject... takes**” and “**subjects... take.**”

Be sure not to confuse the *s* on the verb *takes* (present-tense, singular) with the *s* on the plural noun *subjects*. Remember, it’s the *number* that must agree: singular subject/singular verb; plural subject/plural verb.

She writes all day long. The *phone rings* most of the time. The *dog sleeps* through it all. (*singular s/v*)

We write less often. The *machines rule* anyway. *Animals sleep* through it all. (*plural s/v*)

Paying attention to the number of the subject and verb will help prevent most errors of agreement, but a few more complicated subject-verb relations require special attention.

1. Compound Subjects

When two nouns or pronouns form a “compound subject” (*Dick and Jane, a car or a bike, neither fish nor frogs*), they still must agree with the verb, but sometimes, it gets a bit tricky.

•Two or more subjects joined by *and* take a plural verb

Unrevised

Dick and Jane and baby Tim swims in the pond. (*Swims is singular.*)

Revised

Dick and Jane and baby Tim swim in the pond.

•Singular subjects joined by *or, nor, either...or, neither...nor* take a singular verb

Unrevised

A car or a bike need care to function properly. (*Need is plural.*)

Revised

A car or a bike needs care to function properly.

Neither the main character nor the narrator knows the secret of the man’s mysterious origin.

2. Collective Nouns: singular for a unit, plural for the individual members

When nouns such as *team, family, audience, or group* refer to the whole as single unit, use a singular verb. In the example below, the *audience* is regarded as one entity.

The audience was thrilled with the violence at the end of the play.

If the collective noun refers to the individual members of a group, use the plural form of the verb. In this example, *audience* refers to an action of the individual members of the group.

Many in the audience were thrilled at the bloodthirsty behavior of the protagonist as the final curtain fell.

3. *Anyone, Everyone* and Other Indefinite Pronouns take a singular verb

Everything agrees with everything else. Nobody knows why or how.

Indefinite pronouns such as *somebody, nobody, no one, someone, everything, anything* take a singular verb, but there are a few exceptions to the general rule.

Both, few, others, many, and several always take a plural.

Others understood what he could not grasp. Several told him, but he could not comprehend.

Just to keep us on our toes, some indefinite pronouns, including *most, more, some, none, any, enough, and all* follow the normal rules: they take a singular verb when referring to a singular noun and a plural verb when they refer to a plural noun.

4. *Who, That, Which...* Relative Pronouns follow the number of the noun.

If the relative pronouns *who, that, or which* refer to a singular noun, they take a singular verb. If they refer to a plural noun, they take a plural verb.

Students in English classes, who *are* always the smartest in the university, learn the art of writing well.

5. Subjects Separated from the Verb: Tricky Situations

A verb must agree with its subject even if separated by other words or a parenthetical phrase. In the first example below, the singular noun *poem* is the subject not the plural word *metaphors*.

A *poem* full of metaphors *provides* a rich field for literary interpretation.

An effective literary *interpretation* (one of the primary products in most English classes) *presents* one compelling way of understanding a poem, but there is always room for another.

Even if the verb comes before the subject, the subject and verb must agree.

In this poem there *are several* examples of inventive metaphors and figures of speech.

Agreed.

(IV.F) Restrictive and Non-Restrictive Elements

One of the most challenging parts of writing interesting sentences is knowing where to add commas around things which aren't essential to the sentence but matter to its overall meaning.

The technical term for these parts of a sentence are restrictive and non-restrictive elements:

- **Restrictive elements** *restrict* the grammar and meaning of the sentence. They *have* to be there for *both* the sentence's grammar *and* meaning to make sense.
- **Non-restrictive elements** are the *extra* stuff we add to a sentence to make it more meaningful. They do *not* have to be there for the sentence to form a complete grammatical thought, but they matter to the writer's meaning.

Here is a brief example of the same sentence with a restrictive and a non-restrictive element:

The boy **wearing a black hat** walked the dog.

In this sentence, "wearing a black hat" is a *restrictive element* because it restricts, or is essential to, both the grammar and sense of the sentence. The sentence is pointing out which boy walked the dog - i.e., the one and only the one with the black hat. Compare with the following version:

The boy, **wearing a black hat**, walked the dog.

Now, "wearing a black hat" is a *non-restrictive element*. It is added detail, extra information for describing how the boy looked when he walked the dog. It is not essential, or does not restrict, the grammatical sense of the sentence, but it does matter to the larger meaning writer wants to convey.

In general, the rule is this: *non-restrictive elements are enclosed with commas, restrictive elements are not.*

The following are some common examples of non-restrictive elements with correct punctuation.

1. Introductory Phrases or Clauses

Introductory phrases or clauses in a sentence are usually enclosed with a comma as they are *non-restrictive* elements that add a transition or help set up the rest of the sentence:

As a result, the book fails to give us closure.

In fact, "Frankenstein" is not the name of the monster but rather his creator, Victor Frankenstein.

Specifically, Tolkien's Middle Earth is divided into three regions.

2. Parenthetical Ideas

Things that are *really* extra to a sentence might be put in parentheses, but we often add *non-restrictive* remarks, words, phrases, or ideas to our sentences even without parentheses.

It's easiest to imagine these kinds of non-restrictive elements as asides—as the additional information you're nudging your reader or whispering in her ear to notice, in order to move your point along.

He walked into the drawing room, **embarrassed and ashamed**, to a chorus of murmurs.

W. H. Auden, **often identified as both an American and British poet**, had a transatlantic reputation by the age of thirty.

His poetic forebear in this regard might be T. S. Eliot, **a native of St. Louis who spent much of his twentieth-century career in London**.

3. That vs. Which

The answer to the pesky question of when to use “that” or “which” in a sentence has to do with restrictive and non-restrictive elements.

If the clause is a *restrictive element*, essential to the sentence, use “that”:

This is the famous 1649 sword **that chopped off Charles I's head**.

“Was this the face **that launched a thousand ships**?”

In both of these examples, the element following “that” restricts the grammatical sense of the sentence: only the sword that killed Charles I is being discussed; only Helen of Troy, who “launched” the legion of Greek ships in Homer's *Iliad*, is being adored.

If the clause is a *non-restrictive element*, offering additional information, use “which”:

This is the famous 1649 sword that Chopped off Charles I's head, **which can now be found in the British Museum**.”

Marlowe's play ends with Faustus's tortured vision of Helen, **which can be read as an enchanting or disenchanting moment**.

(IV.G) Modifiers

When we “modify” something, we change it, usually to enhance or make it more to our taste. For instance, we might know people who modify their cars by adding sound systems or by installing hydraulics that allow the car to hop or ride very low. We could even say that the old Burger King motto “Have it your way” was an invitation to modify your burger.

The same is true with sentences. We add words or phrases in order to clarify and elaborate on an idea. By providing detail and description, we aim to make the sentence serve our purpose as precisely as possible.

The general rule of thumb for modifiers is to *keep related words together*. When we don’t, it’s difficult for readers to know for sure what the modifier is describing. Sometimes, the results are hilarious, but most of the time modifier errors are just annoying.

1. Misplaced Modifiers

When there’s too much space between modifiers and the words they modify or when the modifiers are in the wrong spot, readers can get confused.

Unrevised

Henry threw a pinecone at a squirrel desperate to assert his agency and justify his desertion.

Hmm...that’s one desperate squirrel.

Revised

Desperate to assert his agency and justify his desertion, Henry threw a pinecone at a squirrel.

Unrevised

As Vvry soon realized, sharecroppers whose crops failed often found themselves at the mercy of their unscrupulous landlords.

Do the crops often fail or are the sharecroppers frequently at the mercy of the landlords?

Revised

As Vvry soon realized, sharecroppers whose crops failed found themselves at the mercy of their unscrupulous landlords.

2. Disruptive Modifiers

Think of these as a subset of misplaced modifiers. These phrases or clauses cause confusion because they take up too much space between closely related elements of a sentence and thus make it difficult to keep track of the main point.

Gatsby, because he had grown up in small-town Minnesota and had followed a Franklinesque program of self-improvement that ultimately encouraged social climbing over morality, was obsessed with Daisy’s poise.

I’m exhausted by the time I get to the verb.

3. Dangling Modifiers

Unconnected to a noun, these modifiers hang off the front or rear of a sentence. The referent for the modifier is, at best, implied.

Unrevised

After fighting heroically, the sun shone “bright and gay in the blue, enameled sky.”

Did the sun do the fighting?

Revised

After the men fought heroically, the sun shone “bright and gay in the blue, enameled sky.”

Unrevised

Wasting away in jail for vagrancy, the Employer visited Bartleby.

So, even if it were the Employer who was jailed, it would be strange for him to be able to visit someone, unless, of course, the person he was visiting were also in jail...

Revised

The Employer visited Bartleby, who wasting away in jail for vagrancy.

Unrevised

Waiting for the train, the hills looked “like white elephants.”

Technically, this says that the hills were waiting for the train.

Revised

Waiting for the train, the girl remarked that the hills looked “like white elephants.”

4. Word choices and sentence constructions that often lead to modifier glitches

- Limiting words like *only, almost, hardly, just, scarcely, merely, simply, even*. If these are in the wrong place, the meaning of the sentence can change significantly.
- Modifying phrases that begin with *who, whose, which, that, when, although, because, and while*. Put these phrases as close as possible to the words they modify.
- -ing words. Misplaced modifiers are often caused by -ing words that are too far from the “doer” of the action.

Note: much of this section is borrowed from the Temple University Writing Center: www.temple.edu/wc

(IV.H) Getting Apostrophes and Possessives Right

Apostrophes are primarily used to indicate ownership by a “possessive” noun or pronoun. They are also used in contractions in place of missing or omitted letters. In general, these two rules are pretty logical but not always.

For example, the possessive of “it” is “its” rather than “it’s” (which is the contraction for “it is”). Don’t ask why. If you dared to in the olden days, here’s how it would go: “Why?” “‘Cuz!” “‘Cuz, why?” “‘Cuz, I said so!” Fortunately, most occasions requiring the use of an apostrophe are more logical.

1. Possessives

The most common use of the apostrophe is to show ownership or possession. How we do this, though, varies depending on the situation.

• Singular Nouns

Most often, we add an apostrophe and an “s” to make a possessive singular noun.

Hawthorne’s story “The Birth-mark” suggests that human imperfection may be impossible to avoid without potentially fatal costs.

Once her *husband’s* chemical concoction erases *Georgiana’s* “visible mark of earthly imperfection,” she can no longer remain in this life.

• Plural Nouns

If a plural noun does not end in “s,” simply add the apostrophe and an “s.” Add only the apostrophe if a plural noun ends in “s.”

In Hawthorne’s conception, *humanity’s* imperfections are a gift as well as a limitation. They are signs of our mortality without which we would not experience earthly love and affection.

Last semester, the **classes’** response to this story was surprising. **Students’** opinions were divided about the merits of aspiring toward physical perfection, even if it required surgery.

• Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are words like “someone,” “everyone,” etc. Add an apostrophe and “s” for indefinite pronouns.

It’s everybody’s problem when the world ends, and nobody’s going to do anything about it if you don’t own it.

Note the slippery apostrophe here: “nobody’s” uses an apostrophe for a contraction not a possessive.

- **Joint Possession**

Sometimes two or more individuals share joint possession. In this case, use the possessive for the last noun only.

Gilbert and Gubar's book *The Madwoman in the Attic* helped recuperate the contributions of women to literary history and changed the way we teach and read the literature of the past. Its influence continues to this day.

Note the absence of an apostrophe in the possessive "Its." Just learn this one!

To indicate individual possession by two or more persons, use an apostrophe and "s" for each.

Gilbert's and Gubar's other books have also been well received by many critics and scholars.

- **Compound Nouns**

As with "joint possession" make only the second noun of a compound noun possessive.

The United Nations' report described a startling array of bodily modifications in countries around the world.

2. Contractions

Apostrophes in contractions mark omitted or missing letters. Contractions are usually used to indicate the informal pronunciations of spoken language. They also appear in literature to suggest local dialects or the use of non-standard English. Contractions are an informal mode of writing and should be used with caution. But used strategically, contractions can be an effective tool for adding emphasis and inflecting the tone of your prose.

This isn't your problem 'cuz you're going nowhere fast in your little world.

Today's the day to discuss this problem because we're ready for the challenge.

Note "isn't" is a common contraction for "is not," but the apostrophe in "'cuz" indicates both missing letters and a written imitation of verbal slang. Also be careful not to confuse the contraction "you're" with the possessive pronoun "your." They sound the same but mean different things.

Appendix A – English Department Plagiarism Policy

To plagiarize is "to steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own; . . . [to] use (a created production) without crediting the source; . . . [to] present as new and original an idea or product derived from an existing source" (Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary 870).

Academic writing is an ongoing dialogue among scholars, both professionals and students. When you write an academic paper, you are entering into a textual conversation with other writers who have written on the same topic. Any time that one's writing in any way gives readers the impression that words or ideas belonging to others are your own, you have taken the intellectual property of those other writers. This is plagiarism.

Since academic writing is a conversation, it is both necessary and desirable to use others' words and ideas as you build your own original arguments on topics that others have visited before you. But in order to use other people's ideas legitimately, while avoiding even the appearance of having stolen their words or ideas and passed them off as your own, you must use the conventions of quotation and documentation to make it absolutely clear where your own words and ideas end and others' words and ideas begin.

Use quotation marks to denote direct borrowing of language from other sources and introductory comments to indicate paraphrases of material from other sources, crediting their author. To avoid plagiarism, you must also indicate precisely the location of your source material, so that your reader may easily find and consult your sources.

For English papers, this task is accomplished by using parenthetical page citations in your writing wherever you have quoted material from an outside source, following the MLA format provided to you in this Blue Book, and by giving complete publication information about each source in a Works Cited page at the end of your paper.

Make sure you understand the definition of plagiarism and the university's policies and penalties regarding academic dishonesty, which are spelled out in detail in the University Catalog and the Student Handbook, as well as the SCSU English Department Plagiarism Policy, provided for you in this appendix. For help on recognizing plagiarism, you can also visit these useful sites:

MLA Style Center – Plagiarism and Academic Dishonesty

<https://style.mla.org/plagiarism-and-academic-dishonesty/>

Purdue Online Writing Lab – Is It Plagiarism?

https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/using_research/avoiding_plagiarism/is_it_plagiarism.html

English Department Procedures for Cases of Plagiarism
Approved by vote of the English department faculty 11/5/2010

Both the university catalog and the student handbook have university-wide policies on academic dishonesty with which all students and instructors should become familiar. Plagiarism is a particularly problematic and not infrequent variety of academic dishonesty that calls for more specific policy than either the catalog or the handbook offer.

As a department, we rely on individual instructors to devise their own plagiarism policies and make them known to students as part of each course syllabus or as an ancillary document referenced in the syllabus. Doing this in writing has the dual benefit of communicating the information unambiguously and providing a “legal” reference point should a student dispute your handling of a particular instance of plagiarism.

Instructors have the freedom and the responsibility to deal with each individual case of plagiarism as they see fit, tailoring the approach to the circumstances, seriousness, and degree of certainty of the offense. However, no constructive educational purpose is served by keeping such matters secret—particularly in upper-division courses populated primarily by English majors and minors. Likewise, no constructive pedagogical purpose is served by letting the most serious cases of plagiarism go unpenalized. For these reasons, the department agrees to abide by the following, minimal standards for handling and reporting cases of plagiarism in our courses.

According to the particular circumstances, instructors may choose to deal with plagiarism in any way ranging from requiring a rewrite of the assignment, to failing the assignment, to failing the student for the course, to referring the matter to the Dean of Arts & Sciences with a request to pursue university disciplinary action. (The Dean will typically not pursue disciplinary action without the recommendation / request of the instructor.) We recognize that in some courses and situations, particularly in entry-level courses, “grey-area” plagiarism may occur as part of a student’s normal learning process and should probably be engaged by the instructor on that basis. Serious cases of plagiarism, however, should be reported to both the department chair and the Dean, to be added to a registry so that repeat offenders can be identified and dealt with appropriately.

Instructor's Responsibilities

When confronted with serious cases of plagiarism, English instructors, in addition to whatever other measures they deem educationally appropriate to the particular situation, are strongly encouraged to

- Obtain from the student a written response to the plagiarism charge, in which the student may accept or deny the charge, demonstrate his or her understanding of how and why this instance of plagiarism occurred, and articulate a strategy for avoiding future occurrences.

- Submit to the department chair and to the Dean of Arts & Sciences a packet of information about the case, as follows:
 - A cover note explaining the action the instructor has taken to address the plagiarism, and/or copies of written communication between the instructor and the student about the plagiarism, including the student letter mentioned in item 1, above;
 - A copy of the course plagiarism policy as published to students in the syllabus or ancillary document;
 - A copy of the plagiarized student work, with plagiarized portions marked;
 - A copy of the stolen source, or a web address for it;
 - A copy of the assignment.
 -

Chair's Responsibilities and Next Steps

Upon receipt of the plagiarism report, the department chair will add the student's name to the department plagiarism registry. If the student's name already appears in the registry, then the case will be referred by the chair to the student's advisor. The chair will also notify the student that this action has been taken. The advisor, chair, and instructor will meet to discuss the adequacy of the student's response to the charge of plagiarism and strategy for avoiding future acts of plagiarism (see step 1, above). On the basis of this meeting, the chair and instructor may make further recommendations to the Dean concerning further disposition of the plagiarism charge. The instructor will report the results of this meeting, in writing, to the student, unless the instructor asks the chair to do so instead. Second plagiarism offenses will also be reported by the chair to the English Secondary Education program coordinator and to the Graduate Program coordinator, both of whom will have access to the department plagiarism registry.

At no stage of implementation of these plagiarism procedures shall information about a plagiarizing student's case be shared with anyone other than the individuals explicitly named in the policy.

Appendix B – English@SCSU MLA Quick Tip Sheet

Feel free to detach, photocopy, and keep with you extra copies of the “quick tip” sheet below, which distills some of the basic MLA format, citation, and quotation punctuation rules from Section I and II of the Blue Book above.

MLA Quick Tip Sheet | English @ SCSU

The following is a style sheet for your English classes at SCSU, based on the MLA (Modern Language Association) guidelines for how to cite sources in a Works Cited page and parenthetically in a paper.

A full explanation of the MLA guidelines for In-Text Documentation and Works Cited can be found online at the Purdue Online Writing Lab (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/1/>) and in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, 8th edition (2016). Remember that other majors and disciplines at SCSU may require different style guidelines (APA, Chicago, etc.).

Works Cited

Below are examples of some of the most common bibliographic citations used in Works Cited pages. Use this for papers and for any other assignment for which you need to cite a work (an annotated bibliography, a paper proposal, etc.) following MLA guidelines.

Remember that these are examples. You need to be able to locate the author, title, editor(s), publication information, page numbers, and any other relevant information on your own. Be sure also to follow the correct format *exactly*, including punctuation, order of information, italics, hanging indent, etc.

How to cite ...

• A book

When citing an entire book by one or more authors, include author(s), book title, publisher, date:

Turkle, Sherry. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*. Basic Books, 2011.

Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. 2nd ed., Yale UP, 2000.

• A critical edition or translation

When citing an entire book by an author that has also been edited or translated by someone else, add the editor or translator after the title:

Donne, John. *The Complete English Poems*. Edited by A. J. Smith, Penguin, 1996.

Sloterdijk, Peter. *You Must Change Your Life*. Translated by Wieland Hoban, Polity Press, 2013.

• An essay or chapter in an edited volume

When citing an essay or chapter contained *within* a book that has essays or chapters by other writers as well, include the author of the essay or chapter itself, the title of the essay or chapter in quotations, the book title, editor(s), publication information, and the page range of the essay or chapter. (Note that p. is for “page” and pp. for “pages”):

Arnold, Miah. “You Owe Me.” *The Best American Essays 2012*, edited by David Brooks, Houghton Mifflin, 2012, pp. 1-5.

Hauerwas, Stanley. “Why Gays (as a Group) Are Morally Superior to Christians (as a Group).” *The Hauerwas Reader*, edited by John Berkman and Michael Cartwright, Duke UP, 2001, pp. 519-21.

• A literary work (poem, short story, play, etc.) in an anthology or textbook

When citing an individual literary work in an anthology or textbook containing multiple works, follow the same format as a work in an edited volume above, including the number of the edition after the title, if necessary.

Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Immortal.” *Collected Fictions*, translated by Andrew Hurley, Penguin, 1998, pp. 185-93.

Marlowe, Christopher. *Hero and Leander*. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, 9th ed., edited by Stephen Greenblatt, et al., Norton, 2012, pp. 510-30.

• A literary work online

When citing a short work (poem, short story, etc.) found on a web page, include author, title of the work, title and date of book from which it was derived (if provided), title of website, a URL or Permalink, and the date you accessed it:

Wyatt, Sir Thomas. “They Flee From Me.” *Luminarium*, <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/theyflee.htm>. Accessed 10 Nov. 2013.

Lee, Li Young. “Arise, Go Down.” *The City in Which I Love You*, 1990, *Poetry Foundation*, www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43327. Accessed 13 Dec. 2013.

• A scholarly article in an academic journal (in print or PDF)

When citing a scholarly article in an academic journal that you have in print or a PDF copy of the printed page, include author of article, article title, title of journal, volume and issue number, year, and page range of the article:

Randel, Fred V. “The Political Geography of Horror in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*.” *ELH*, vol. 70, no. 2, 2003, pp. 465-91.

Nydam, Arlen. “Philip Sidney’s Extended Family and the Catholic Petition of 1585.” *Sidney Journal*, vol. 28, no. 1, Spring 2010, pp. 53-79.

• A scholarly article in an academic journal (in an online database)

When citing a scholarly article in an academic journal that you are viewing as a web page in a library database (i.e., not in PDF), use the same format as above but include a URL and the date you accessed it. If no page numbers to a print edition are listed, omit them or provide paragraph (par.) numbers:

Heyen, William. “Sunlight.” *American Poetry Review*, vol. 36, no. 2, 2007, pp. 55-56. www.ebscohost.com/www.consults.org/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=24224660&site=ehost-live. Accessed 24 Sept. 2008.

• A non-scholarly article in an online newspaper or magazine

When citing a popular newspaper or magazine article online (not found in a library database), include author, title of the article, name of the online publication, the date of the article, a URL or Permalink, and the date you accessed it:

Korb, Scott. “Anywhere, Nowhere, Elsewhere, Everywhere.” *Slate*, 10 Jan. 2014, www.slate.com/articles/arts/books/2014/01/richard_powers_novel_orfeo_reviewed.single.html. Accessed 15 Jan. 2014.

Cavett, Dick. “Booze, Revisited.” *New York Times*, 10 Jan. 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/11/opinion/booze-revisited.html>. Accessed 13 Jan. 2014.

• Other cases not covered above

If you have a source not covered in the examples above—e.g., a print newspaper article, an online book, a blog, a YouTube clip, etc.—consult the MLA Guidelines at:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Things to remember ...

- Always compile your Works Cited in alphabetical order, author’s last name first
- Book titles take *italics*; articles, essays, short stories, and short poems take quotation marks (“ ”)
- If the citation is longer than one line, indent each line *after* the first
- Page numbers are required for any essay, journal article, or work within a larger work
- If there are more than two editors, use “et al.” (Latin for “and others”) after the first editor’s name
- Don’t mistake authors with editors – the author is the person who wrote the work you’re using, the editor is the one who put it where it is

In-Text Citation

Following MLA guidelines, cite your sources in the body of your paper parenthetically. Cite *all* quotations and any important information, ideas, or words not your own.

Parenthetical citations typically occur at the ends of sentences or after quotations. With the exception of block quotations, the parenthetical citation always comes *after* quotation marks but *before* the period or semi-colon.

Basic parenthetical citation

To cite a source in your paper, include the author's last name and page number in the parentheses; do *not* use "p." or "page":

e.g., (Ruhl 25)

As one critic has argued, "*Measure for Measure* raises the issue of embodied experience in the opening scenes" (Knapp 262).

If you have already named the author in the preceding clause or sentence(s), simply cite the page number:

As Jeffrey Knapp has argued, "*Measure for Measure* raises the issue of embodied experience in the opening scenes" (262).

Citing a source quoted in another source

To cite an author quoted in another article, essay, or book, include the author's name in your prose and credit the work in which you found it, using "quoted in":

Empson claimed that "A word may become a sort of solid entity" (quoted in Frenkel 190).

Citing literary works (poems, plays, etc.)

To cite poetry, give line numbers, using "line" for the first citation and the number for every subsequent citation. Use stanza numbers for larger works:

e.g., (line 13), (17-19), (16.78-9), etc.

Donne begins *Satire I* pleading, "Away thou changling motley humorist" (line 1). By the middle of the poem, however, he calls his companion "a contrite penitent / Charitably warn'd of thy sins" (49-50).

To cite plays in dramatic verse, give act, scene, and line numbers:

e.g., (3.3.54-7)

To cite works of literary prose—such as novels or short stories—use the basic format above, citing author and page number. When needed, include chapters for novels: e.g., (105; ch. 12).

Special Cases

- If there is more than one work by the same author in your Works Cited, include an abbreviated title in the parenthetical citation: e.g., (Donne, *Pseudo-Martyr* 50).
- If the author is unknown, include only the abbreviated title and page number in the parenthetical citation.
- If you are citing a block quotation—a longer indented quotation, to be used when you quote more than four lines of poetry—the parenthetical citation comes *after* the final punctuation.

Punctuating Quotations

Remember that the correct use of quotations in your papers is important. Punctuation and capitalization must be exact. In American prose, commas and periods at the end of a quotation go inside the quotation marks, outside if the quotation is followed by a parenthetical citation.

When quoting verse, mark line breaks using a back-slash (/).

Everyone has heard the saying, "He came, he saw, he conquered."

"That thou hast her, it is not all my grief, / And yet it may be said I loved her dearly" (lines 1-2).

Integrate all quotations properly, with a signal clause and proper punctuation; there should be no "dangling" quotations. To introduce a quotation, you need a signal clause containing either a speaking verb with a comma (,) or no speaking verb and a colon (:).

You may also use the quotation to continue your own sentence grammatically, using a "that" clause or a subordinate clause.

Regardless, the quotation *must* make semantic and grammatical sense in the sentence as a whole, meaning it needs to form a complete thought together with the surrounding clause.

Incorrect

Shakespeare is confused about his gender, "Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!" (9).

After this, the poet says, "though delayed, answered must be" (11).

The next quote begins; "And her quietus is to render thee." (12)

According to the speaker, "minion of her pleasure!" (9).

Correct

Shakespeare's gender confusion in Sonnet 120 can be seen in the next quatrain, where the poet complains, "Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!" (9).

Shakespeare's gender confusion in Sonnet 120 is clear in the final quatrain: "Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!" (9).

The poet speaks of a boy "Who hast by waning grown" (3) but turns eventually to remark that "Nature, sovereign mistress over wrack" (5) has defeated him.

According to the speaker, "Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds" (14).