

**MEDGAR EVERS COLLEGE**

**FRESHMAN  
COMPOSITION  
COURSE BOOKLET**

**ENGLISH 112**

**PROFESSOR GREVENITIS**



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# GRAMMAR

## CORRECTION SYMBOLS

T            wrong tense

VF           wrong verb form

S/V          wrong subject/verb agreement

Shift        shift (in time, person, number, or discourse)

R-O         Run-on sentence

CS          Comma Splice

Frag.        Fragment

P            faulty possessive (spelling or absent)

WW         wrong word (vocabulary)

sp          spelling error

¶            new paragraph needed

no ¶        no need for a new paragraph

missing word, phrase, punctuation



## USING VERBS

### PART I: THE FIVE VERB FORMS

1. **BASE FORM** which you use after **can, may, shall, will, could, might, should, would, must, do, does, did.**

ask            Didn't you ask him for an invitation?  
feel            Will I feel better tonight?

2. **PRESENT FORM** which is used for the present tense—do not forget to add an “-s” for the 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular.

enjoy(s)        I surely enjoy painting.  
eat(s)           She eats an apple each day.

3. **PAST FORM** which is used to express an action in the past—do not forget that some verbs have an irregular past form.

opened         Paul just opened the door.  
drove           Last night we drove our car.

4. **PAST PARTICIPLE FORM** which is used after **have, has, had,** or after some form of be to describe the subject (see part II)—do not forget that some verbs have an irregular past participle form.

walked         They have walked to the top.  
spoken         He had spoken Creole to them.

5. **PRESENT PARTICIPLE FORM** which is used after some form of **be.**

screaming        These babies have been screaming all day.  
sliding           He was sliding down the slope.

**NOTE:** when there are several helping verbs, it is the last one that determines which form of the main verb should be used.

You should start soon.

You should have started sooner.

PART II: WHEN THE PAST PARTICIPLE IS USED AS A SUBJECT

A. Sometimes the past participle is used after some form of state of being verbs (**be, seem, appear, look, feel, get, act, become**) to describe the subject.

She was confused, and she looked surprised.

These past participles are **describing words**: they **describe** the subject. The only important thing is to be sure you use the correct form of the past participle.

B. When do you write *ask, finish, suppose, use*? And when do you write *asked, finished, supposed, used*?

**Write *asked, finished, supposed, used*:**

1. when it's in the past.

They supposed we were home two hours ago.

She used to practice piano years ago.

2. when some form of **be** (not be itself) comes before the word.

They were supposed to write an essay.

He is used to getting up early.

3. when some form of have comes before the word.

He has asked her to go out with him.



She had finished writing her paper.

**Write *ask, finish, suppose, use* in all other instances.**



Remember that **with, along with, as well as, including,** and **like** function as prepositions, not conjunctions.

Malcolm, with several of his friends, walks to school every day.

S

V

B. Expletive (There)

**There** is a hole in the bucket.

**There** are four birds in this cage.

In these two examples, the meaningless "there" is called an **expletive**, and it is never the subject. "There" is followed by the verb. **The noun that follows the verb is its subject.**

There comes a message from the king.

V

S

Once upon a time, there were seven dwarves.

V

S

C. Who, which, what, and that

Who, which, what, and that can be either singular or plural. **When you use one of these pronouns as subjects, check its antecedent to determine whether the verb should be singular or plural.**

Who is the next person on line?

S

V

Antecedent

Who are the next people on line?

S

V

Antecedent

Leah is a person who is determined to succeed.

Antecedent

S

V

Leah is one of those people who are determined to succeed.

Antecedent

S

V

D. Do not be misled by one!

One of the tires is flat.

S                          V

Patrick is the only one of my classmates who votes.

                                 Antecedent    S                  V

Mary is one of the many people who don't vote.

                                 Antecedent                  S                  V

## RUN-ON SENTENCE AND COMMA SPLICE

In Authorized American English there are two types of clauses: the **independent clause** (I.C.) and the **dependent clause** (D.C.). In order to write correctly punctuated sentences, you need to know how to connect independent and dependent clauses.

### TWO TYPES OF CLAUSES

An independent clause is a complete sentence; it can stand on its own grammatically.

I began to study for my test tomorrow.

I studied.

A dependent clause is an incomplete sentence; it cannot stand on its own grammatically. If on its own, it is also called a fragment (see lesson on fragment).

Because I had a test the next day.

### WHAT'S A RUN-ON SENTENCE?

When two or more independent clauses are written together in one sentence with no punctuation between the clauses whatsoever, you have a run-on sentence.

The book was interesting so I read it rapidly.

I.C.

I.C.

I couldn't go to the movies I had no money.

I.C.

I.C.

### WHAT'S A COMMA SPLICE?

When two or more independent clauses are connected together only with a comma, you have a comma splice.

The book was interesting, I read it rapidly.

I.C.

I.C.

### 3 WAYS TO PUNCTUATE INDEPENDENT CLAUSES.

- Turn the independent clauses into sentences:

The book was interesting. I read it rapidly.

I couldn't go to the movies. I had no money.

- Connect the independent clauses with a semi-colon (or colon) and a transition word (optional):

The book was interesting; therefore, I read it rapidly.

I couldn't go to the movies: I had no money.

Note: if you decide to use a transition word, make sure to put the semi-colon before the transition word and a comma after it.

The speaker was late; however, he was worth waiting for.

- Connect the independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction. There are only **7** coordinating conjunctions (**f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et, **s**o): make sure you are using one of them when connecting two or more independent clauses with a comma!

The book was interesting, so I read it rapidly.

I couldn't go to the movies, for I had no money.

## **FRAGMENT**

### WHAT IS A FRAGMENT?

A fragment is a word group that pretends to be a sentence.

On the wooden stool in the corner of my grandmother's kitchen.

When it started raining.

To be a sentence, a word group must consist of at least one full **independent clause (I. C.)**.

An independent clause has a verb and a subject, and it either stands alone or can stand alone.

I ate dinner.

I.C.

I ate dinner because my lunch was so small that I was

I.C.

starving when I got home.

So basically, you have a fragment when your sentence:

- has no verb,

On the wooden stool in my aunt's kitchen.

- has no subject,

On that morning was sitting in my usual spot.

- or is not an independent clause

The panther lay motionless behind the rock. Waiting patiently for its prey.

#### 4 WAYS OF REPAIRING FRAGMENTS

1. Add a verb to your fragment.

Fragment: On the wooden stool in my aunt's kitchen.

Revised sentence: I sat on the wooden stool in my aunt's kitchen.

2. Add a subject to your fragment.

Fragment: On that morning was sitting in my usual spot.

Revised sentence: On that morning I was sitting in my usual spot.

3. Attach your fragment to an independent clause.

Fragment: The panther lay motionless behind the rock. Waiting silently for its prey.

Revised sentence: The panther lay motionless behind the rock, waiting patiently for its prey.

4. Turn your fragment into an independent clause.

Fragment: The panther lay motionless behind the rock. Waiting for its prey.



Revised sentence: The panther lay motionless behind  
the rock. It was waiting for its prey.

## REVIEW OF RUN-ON SENTENCE, COMMA SPLICE, AND FRAGMENT

Six sentences that show how to punctuate clauses:

I gave a party. Everybody came.

→ 2 simple sentences.

I gave a party; everybody came.

→ 2 independent clauses connected with a semi-colon.

I gave a party; moreover, everybody came.

→ 2 independent clauses connected with a semi-colon and a transition word such as *also, consequently, finally, furthermore, however, likewise, moreover, nevertheless, otherwise, then, therefore, thus*.

I gave a party, and everybody came.

→ 2 independent clauses connected by a comma and *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*.

When I gave a party, everybody came.

→ a dependent clause, at the beginning of the sentence, connected to an independent clause with a comma. Some of the dependent words are: *after, although, as, as if, because, before, even if, even though, ever since, how, if, in order that, since, so that, than, that, though, unless, until, what, whatever, when, whenever, where, whereas, wherever, whether, which, whichever, while, who, whom, whose, why*.

Everybody came when I gave a party.

→ an independent clause, at the beginning of the sentence, connected to a dependent clause.

## SHIFTS

### A. Keep the Point of View Consistent

In Authorized American English, the point of view of a piece of writing is the perspective from which it is written:

- **First Person:** I, we → personal essay, personal experience narrative, informal letter.
- **Second Person:** you → giving advice, order, or showing how to do something (recipe)
- **Third Person:** He, she, it, they, one → formal academic and professional writing

It may happen that you have a hard time settling on an appropriate point of view for your essay. This is when you shift from one person to the next with no logical reason.

In order to avoid the shift in person, once you made up your mind about a point of view, stick to it.

One week our class met in a junkyard to practice rescuing a victim trapped in a wrecked car. We learned to dismantle the car with the essential tools. You were graded on your speed and your skill in extricating the victim.

In this short paragraph, the writer shifts from first person point of view to second with no apparent logical reason. Indeed, since the paragraph was about a personal experience, the writer should have kept the first person point of view:

We were graded on our speed and our skill in extricating the victim.

NOTE: shifts from third person singular (he/she) to third person plural (they) are especially common. Make sure you avoid them!

A police officer is often criticized for always being there when they aren't needed and never being there when they are.

Here the writer shifted from third person singular (a police officer) to third person plural (they) for no logical reason.

Police officers are often criticized for always being there when they aren't needed and never being there when they are.

#### B. Maintain Consistent Verb Tenses

Consistent verb tenses clearly establish the time of the actions being described. When a passage begins in one tense and then shifts without warning and for no logical reason to another, the consistency of the paragraph or essay is broken.

There was no way I could fight the current. Just as I was losing hope, a stranger jumps off a passing boat and swims towards me.

Here there is no logical reason to shift from past tense to present because all the different actions occurred in the past, so all tenses in the sentences should be in the past tense:

There was no way I could fight the current. Just as I was losing hope, a stranger jumped off a passing boat and swam towards me.

If you need to express another time of action (present, past, or future) in a paragraph or in your essay, make sure you indicate the change in time by using words or transition words expressing time or sequence (i.e.: today, yesterday, next year, now, then, later on,...).

I was 13 when I got my first summer job in my neighborhood retail store. Now at 23, I am the manager of this store.

#### C. Avoid Sudden Shifts from Indirect to Direct Questions or Quotations (Shifts in Discourse)

An **indirect question** reports a question without asking it: I asked whether I could leave the room.

A **direct question** asks directly: Can I leave the room?

Sudden shifts from indirect to direct questions are awkward and illogical. Avoid or revise them.

They wonder whether the weather is going to be sunny in the Catskills this weekend, and if so, is there going to be any snow left for snowboarding?

→ They wonder whether the weather is going to be sunny in the Catskills this weekend, and if so, whether there is going to be any snow left for snowboarding.

An **indirect quotation** reports someone's words without quoting word for word: Anna said she is a Tiger.

A **direct quotation** presents someone's exact words, set off with quotation marks: Anna said: "I am a Tiger."

Unannounced shifts from indirect to direct quotations are illogical and confusing. Avoid or revise them.

Mother said she would be late for dinner and please do not leave for dance practice until Dad comes home.

→ Mother said she would be late for dinner and asked me not to leave for dance practice until Dad came home.

Once you spot shifts in your essay—be they shifts in person, tense, or discourse—make sure you take into account the whole paragraph (even the whole essay) before making any significant changes. You are seeking to improve the consistency of your essay, so keep it clear while revising.

## POSSESSIVE

In Authorized American English, we usually express ownership through **possessive**.

the roots of the tree → the tree's roots

As you can see, the possessive is shown by **-'s**. What's tricky about the possessive is that although we usually indicate it when we speak (by pronouncing the s), we often misspell it when we write. Indeed it's hard to hear where exactly the **-'** (**apostrophe**) is placed at the end of a noun!

Here are some rules for you to realize how, where and when to use the possessive:

### 1) When to add -'s

a.) If the noun doesn't end in -s, add -'s.

Your mom's carrot cake is the most delicious.

Thank you for helping with my children's homework.

b) If the noun is singular and ends in -s, add -'s.

Lois's sister plays in the little league.

Note: if pronunciation is awkward when you add -'s to proper nouns (first or last names), you can use only -'. Either use is acceptable.

Sophocles' plays are among my favorites.

### 2) When to add only -'

If the noun is plural and ends in -s, add only -'.

The jurors' verdict was fair.





## COMMON SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION ERRORS

### LIST OF MISPELLED WORDS

**Accept** (verb) means "to receive willingly"

I accept your suggestion.

**Except** (adverb) means "excluding" or "but"

All were there except you.

**Affect** (verb) means "to influence"

The weather does affect my mood.

**Effect** (noun) means "result"

That letter had an effect on her plans.

**Conscious** (adjective) means "aware"

I wasn't conscious that you were waiting.

**Conscience** (noun) means "awareness"

My conscience told me to observe the speed limit.

**Have** (verb/helping verb)

I could have gone to China last summer.

**Of** (preposition)

I often think of him.

**It's** (contraction) means "it is" or "it has"

It's been a good game.

**Its** (possessive pronoun)

The team reached its goal.

**Knew** (verb) means "to know" in the past tense

He knew what she wanted.

**New** (adjective) means "not old"

He just bought a new car.

**Lay** (past tense: **laid**, past participle: **laid**) (irregular verb) means "to put on or against a surface"

I laid the table cloth on the dining room table.

**Lie** (past tense: **lied**) (regular verb) means "falsehood"

I lied to my mother in order to go out.

**Lie** (past tense: **lay**, past participle: **lain**) (irregular verb) means "to recline"

After running, he lay on the floor exhausted.

**Passed** (verb) means "to pass" in the past tense

Her grandmother passed away last year.

**Past** (adjective, noun, or adverb)

I walked past his house this morning.

**Principal** (noun or adjective) means "main"

The principal of my school is retiring.

**Principle** (noun) means "rule"

That goes against my principles.

**Than** compares two things

I enjoy skiing more than ice-skating.

**Then** tells when

First He took a hot shower, then he went to bed.

**Their** (possessive pronoun)

Their house is for sale.

**There** (expletive or adverb)

There was a well in the middle of the garden.

**They're** (contraction) means "they are"

They're always late!

**Threw** (verb) means "to throw" in the past tense

I threw all my old furniture away.

**Through** (adverb) means "in the middle" or "done"

I walked through the door.

**To** (preposition)

He's going to the beach.

**Too** (preposition) means "also" or "more than enough"

I was too tired to go out.

**Two** (numeral adverb)

I have two brothers.

**Weather** (noun) means "atmospheric conditions"

The weather was too hot for me.

**Whether** (dependent word) means "if"

Whether I'll go depends on my mother.

**Woman** (noun singular)

That woman is my mother.

**Women** (noun plural)

Those women are helping with the cooking.

**You're** (contraction) means "you are"

You're a lucky person.

**Your** (possessive pronoun)

Your car was never stolen.

## COMMON PUNCTUATION PROBLEMS

### The Six Comma Rules

- Put a comma before *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so* when they connect 2 independent clauses: *We may leave Friday, or we may wait until Monday.*
- Put a comma between items in a series: *I bought apple, Swiss chard, and tofu at the market.*
- Put a comma after an introductory expression or before an afterthought: *Well, we'll try again.*
- Put comma around the name of a person spoken to: *I think, Jane, that you are absolutely right.*
- Put commas around interruptive transition words: *We were late. We did not expect, therefore, to get seats.*
- Put commas around non-essential material: *Our Volkswagen, which we bought last year, is now a wreck.*

### When to Use Semi-colon, Colon, and Dash?

- Put a **semi-colon** between two closely related independent clauses (unless they are joined by coordinating conjunctions: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*): *The blizzard continued; the drifts piled higher.*
- Put a **colon** after a complete statement when a list or long quotation follows (you can also use a colon to link 2 independent clauses when the second summarizes or explains the first): *We took the following items: hot dogs, fruit, and coffee.*
- Put a **dash** to indicate an abrupt change of thought or to throw emphasis upon what follows: *The little old lady sat in front of her spinning wheel—in Las Vegas.*

### Capital Letters

Capitalize:

- The first word of every sentence: *They are leaving now.*
- The first word of every direct quote: *He said: "You won."*
- The first, last, and every important word in a title: *"What a Property Owner Needs to Know."* Do not capitalize prepositions, short connecting words, the *to* in front of a verb, or *a*, *an*, and *the*.
- Names of people, places, languages, races, and nationalities: *Mother Theresa, Tibet, English, Chicano, Pakistani.*
- Names of months, days of the week, and special days, but not the seasons: *November, Tuesday, Christmas.*
- A title of relationship if it takes the place of the person's name: *I think Mother will come but I think my mother will come.*
- Names of particular people or things, but not general ones: *I spoke to Professor Kelley but I spoke to the professor.*  
*I sailed down the Hudson River but I sailed down the river.*

# COMPOSITION

## AVOID PLAGIARISM

To plagiarize is to steal someone else's ideas or words and present them as your own. It is regarded as a **very serious offense** in Western academic culture and public life.

### A.) To avoid plagiarism, follow these guidelines:

1. Never include in your own essay a passage, an identifiable phrase, or an idea that you copied from someone else's work without acknowledging and documenting the source.
2. Never use the exact same sequence of ideas and organization of argument as your source.
3. Always put an author's exact words inside quotation marks.
4. Always cite the source of any summary or paraphrase.
5. Never use in your essay long sections that have been written or rewritten by a friend or a tutor.
6. Never buy, find, or receive a paper that was written by someone and that you turn in as your own work.

### B.) Use summary, paraphrase, and quotation—and integrate and cite them all:

1. Summary. It is useful to give your reader basic information about the work you are discussing. To summarize:
  - a. write in your own words,
  - b. write a short version of the source (1 page for 1 article/1 paragraph for 1 page/1 sentence for 1 paragraph), and
  - c. document your summary using MLA documentation system.
2. Paraphrase. It is useful when you need more details than a summary provides. To paraphrase:

- a. write in your own words,
- b. write a similar version in length than the original one (it can even be longer), and
- c. document your paraphrase using MLA documentation system.

### 3. Quotation

When an author says something in a particularly clever or dramatic way, you may want to quote his/her words directly in your essay. When you do so, make sure you repeat words and punctuation exactly as in the original (see MLA Documentation System section).

#### **Original Text**

A recent Rand study, with research supported by the Markle Foundation, concluded that in the foreseeable future the free market is likely to deliver e-mail to only half of America. Without a government-led drive toward universality, some e-mail systems may prove to be incompatible with others. And without included subsidies, perhaps from Internet access fees, the computer industry may never produce the inexpensive technologies that would enable television sets, telephones and computer games to bring e-mail into the home. Interim subsidies and technologies would also be needed if less affluent citizens are to get their e-mail outside the home, in apartment lobbies, libraries and schools.

--Max Frankel, "The Moon, This Time Around," New York Times Magazine, 42.

#### **Summary**

A Rand study says government direction and subsidy may be required to make e-mail technology universal and accessible to all (Frankel 42).

#### **Paraphrase**

If market forces prevail, according to Rand, e-mail may fail to reach many Americans. The government may have to direct an effort to make e-mail technology compatible and may have to underwrite the adaptation of household devices to e-mail, possibly by changing the use of the Internet. Similar measures will be required in the short term to make e-mail available to poorer people in public places (Frankel 42).

## Quotation

In the article "The Moon, This Time Around," Max Frankel states that: "A recent Rand study, with research supported by the Markle Foundation, concluded that in the foreseeable future the free market is likely to deliver e-mail to only half of America"(42).

### C.) All in all

It is necessary to cite:

- a. all facts, statistics, and pieces of information unless they are common knowledge and are accessible in many sources,
- b. exact words from your source, enclosed in quotation marks,
- c. somebody else's ideas and opinions, even if you restate them in your own words in a summary or paraphrase, and
- d. each sentence in a long paraphrase (if it is not clear that all the sentences paraphrase the same original source).

But it is not necessary to cite:

- a. facts that are regarded common knowledge (ex: dates of the Civil War),
- b. facts available in many sources (ex: author's birth and death dates; chronological events), or
- c. allusion to folk tales or sayings that have been handed down through the ages (ex: don't judge a book by its cover).

NOTE: when you are in doubt about whether a fact is common knowledge, cite your source.



## FREE WRITING AND JOURNAL WRITING

### Free Writing

"Writing is good for you because it brings thoughts out into the open, as a boy turns his pockets inside out to see what's in them."

--Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Try "turning your pockets inside out" by writing as fast as you can for five minutes. Write anything that comes to your mind. Put your thoughts down as fast as they come. What you write may not make sense, but that doesn't matter. Write fast. Don't stop for a moment. Don't even take the pen off of the page. If you can't think of anything, just write "I can't think of anything to write, nothing, nothing,..." until something happens.

Free writing should limber up your mind and your pen so that you'll write more freely.

Another form of free writing is called **focused free writing**, and it is basically that same process as free writing except that you focus on one particular topic or issue while free writing. Focused free writing is what we will do at the beginning of each class session. I'll put a sentence on the board that will prompt you to free write for ten minutes.

What's extremely important while free writing is not to focus at all on the form (grammar, syntax, spelling errors) but to concentrate only on the content (generating ideas and examples for further discussion on a specific topic).

Here is a sample of a student's free writing on the topic of "Name and Identity":

I have an unusual name, Zhe. My friends in China say it's a boys name. My friends in America think it has only one letter. Most of my American friends have difficulty pronouncing my name. Some people ask me why don't I Americanize my name so that it would be easier to pronounce. But I say if I change my name, it will not be me any more. What else can I write? When I was seven years old. I asked my mother what my name meant. Ask your father,

she said as she washed dishes. It was raining outside, and the room was so quiet that I could hear the rain pattering (?) on the window-panes. My father's thoughts returned to another rainy day in 1967 when the Cultural Revolution just begun, looos of people had been banished to countryside and all the school were closed. My grandparents fled to Hong Kong but my father and aunt stayed in China. Life was so difficult! Gangs sent them to the countryside to work. It was here my parents met. Back to my name again. My father named me Zhe. In Chinese my name means remember hope. He wanted me to remember the Cultural Revolution, he wanted me to remember to finish college: he did not have that chance.

### Journal Writing

When writing in a journal you are writing to yourself. That means you don't have to worry about main ideas, organization, correct grammar and spelling, or any requirements of academic writing. You can work out your ideas and feelings without the pressure of an audience. The freedom and flexibility of a journal can be liberating. Like many others you may find writing easier, more fun, and more rewarding than you thought possible.

A journal can be far more than a personal diary. Many writers carry a notebook and write in it every day. Journal entries can be observations, references, quotations, questions for research, notes on events and ideas about assigned texts and topics, as well as specific pieces of writing in progress. A journal can also serve as a review for final examinations or essay tests, reminding you of areas of interest or subjects that you didn't understand.

You will be asked to write journal entries at home and in class in response to readings and class/group discussion. At times you will be asked to write a journal entry in the form of a double-entry reading log (see **Readings** section).

## REVISING DRAFTS: EDITING AND PROOFREADING

### EDITING A DRAFT

Whether you write an essay in class or at home, the editing process is similar: after your draft has been written, read over the draft and

1. Check the **flow** of the ideas: do you like their overall arrangement? If not, make necessary changes.
2. Check for **excessive verbiage**: delete it because you don't need it: it's boring. Look particularly for,
  - **Repetitiousness**: unnecessary repetition of the same word or phrase. If you can't eliminate the word or phrase, use a synonym.
  - **Redundancy**: repetition of the same idea in different words.

"In this modern world of today in which we live"="today"

- **Deadwood**: the fine art of saying in 17 words what you could say in 3.

"due to the fact that" = "because" or "since"

"in order to" = "to"

3. Check for **vague spots**. Will your reader require further explanation to understand what you mean? Are there places where more details or a concrete example would clarify what you are saying? Add what's needed.
4. Check the **paragraphing** and the order of each sentence in your paragraphs. You can use numbers to indicate the order of both paragraphs and sentences.
5. Check also for smooth **transitions** from one idea to the next.

## PROOFREADING

After your draft has been written and edited, you still need to do a systematic proofreading for your draft to become a satisfactory finished product. This is how to do it:

- Do not proofread right after you finish your draft (except for an in-class essay).
- Do not proofread hastily: you need to take one issue at a time and go over your draft very slowly.
- Be very orderly: proofread your draft from the largest issue (syntax) to the smallest details.

To proofread:

1. Check for **syntax** errors. Of course look for run-ons, comma splices, and fragments, but also try to turn the "correct" sentences into better ones.
2. Check for **grammar** errors **separately**: verbs (tense, s/v agreement, and form); pronouns; adjectives... each time you make a change, re-read the whole sentence to see if it stays consistent.
3. Check **details**: usage, capitalization, spelling, documentation system, punctuation, missing words, missing punctuation marks (apostrophe)...

Before you start proofreading, you should know what to look for. You may want to list the most common errors that you find systematically in your marked drafts and focus only on these when you proofread. It will make your proofreading more accurate and more effective.

The best way to proofread is to use a pen and go over each line of your essay, one word at a time. If you are proofreading an in-class essay, use the same method but starting from the bottom of your essay to the top—this will break the flow of your ideas and help you focus only on the writing.

You can consider your draft ready to be submitted only after it has been written, edited, and proofread conscientiously.

## FORMULATING A WORKING THESIS—AND WHY YOU NEED ONE

“What is the main idea that you want to communicate to your reader in your piece of writing?” The answer to that question is your **thesis**.

Basically, your thesis tells your reader what points you are going to make about your topic (explanatory essay, report) or what stand you are going to take (argumentative essay). In addition, having a thesis will focus your thoughts as you do research, read, and write.

### I.) A GOOD WORKING THESIS

- narrows your topic to a single main idea that you want to communicate;
- asserts your position clearly and firmly in a sentence that makes a claim about a topic;
- states not simply a fact but an opinion;
- makes a generalization that can be supported by details, facts, and examples within the assigned limitation of time and space, and
- stimulates curiosity and interest in readers and prompts them to read on.

### II.) A GOOD THESIS STATEMENT MAY BE

- a strong, thought-provoking, or controversial statement,

*Bilingual education has not fulfilled its early promise.*

- a call to action,

*All inner-city schools should set up bilingual education.*

- a question that will be answered in detail in the essay, or

*What can bilingual education accomplish for a child?*

It can lead to academic and personal development.

- a preview or reflection of the structure of the essay.

Bilingual education suffers from two main problems: a shortage of trained teachers and a lack of parental involvement.

### III.) STATING YOUR THESIS IN YOUR PAPER

- First, see your thesis as a signpost—both for you as you write your draft, and later for your readers as they read your essay. A clear thesis prepares readers well for the rest of the essay. That's why in most academic writing in the humanities and social sciences, a thesis is clearly stated in the essay, usually near the beginning.
- Sometimes, especially in descriptive, narrative, and informative writing, you may choose to imply your thesis and not explicitly state it. In such a case you make your thesis clear through examples, details, and information you include.
- Also, you may choose to state your thesis at the end of your essay instead of the beginning. If so, you present all the evidence to build a case and then make the thesis act as a climax and logical statement about the outcome of the evidence.
- Finally, do not fall in love with your thesis. You will start writing the drafts of your paper with a tentative thesis that you should refine and change as you find more information and work with your material. Be flexible and change your thesis as you go along.

## **INTRODUCTION AND CONCLUSION**

For most kinds of writing, an introduction announces a main idea, several body paragraphs develop it, and a conclusion drives it home.

### Introduction

For most writing tasks, the introduction will be a paragraph of 50 to 150 words. The most common strategy is to open the introductory paragraph with a few sentences that engage the reader and to conclude it with a statement of the essay's main point (= thesis).

Ideally the sentences leading to the thesis should hook the reader's attention—perhaps with one of the following:

- a startling statistic or unusual fact
- a vivid example
- a description
- a paradoxical statement
- a quotation or a bit of dialogue
- a question
- an analogy
- a joke or anecdote

Of course, any hook that you decide to use must be directly linked to the thesis you want to develop in your essay. Above all try to avoid the trite openings: "Since the beginning of time man has been ..." or "In today's society ...". The introduction of your essay is a great place for you to be creative, so take advantage of this opportunity and catch your reader's attention with some wit and imagination!

Although the thesis frequently appears at the end of the introduction, it can just as easily appear at the beginning or in the middle. Also, in some cases, the thesis can be more than one sentence.



## Conclusion

The conclusion should echo the thesis, without dully repeating it. Often the concluding paragraph can be relatively short. In addition to restating your thesis in other words, your conclusion might:

- summarize your main points (= topic sentences)
- pose a question of future study
- offer advice
- propose a course of action

To make the conclusion memorable, consider including a detail, an example or image from the introduction to bring the reader in a full circle.

Above all, in your conclusion try to avoid:

- introducing new ideas
- apologizing
- ending on a negative note

Remember that the conclusion is the last thing the reader will read; therefore, the conclusion is most likely to be the thing the reader will remember most about your writing!

## MAKING AN OUTLINE (IN TWO PARTS)

### PART I: THE SCRATCH OUTLINE

Before even writing the rough draft of your research paper, you need to make a **scratch outline**. A scratch outline is a rough list of numbered points that you intend to cover in your essay. A scratch outline lets you see what ideas you already have, how they connect, what you can do to support them, and what further planning or research you still need to do.

Topic: changing a name

↓

Question: why do people change their names?

↓

Tentative thesis: people change their names because they either have to or want to.

Scratch outline:

1. forced name changes in new country or new school
2. to avoid discrimination and persecution
3. upon marriage
4. in show business
5. voluntary name changes to avoid recognition (writers, criminals)

## PART TWO: THE FORMAL OUTLINE

When you start writing your draft, however, you can change direction and unify some points, develop a more focused thesis. A **formal outline** spells out, in order, what points and supportive details you will use to develop your thesis and arrange them to show the overall form and structure of the essay. You may produce a formal outline before you begin to write or after you wrote your rough draft.

Thesis: A voluntary name change is usually motivated by a desire to avoid or gain recognition.

### Formal Outline:

#### I. Name change to avoid recognition by others

##### A. Criminals

##### B. Writers

##### 1. women writer who adopt men's names

a. George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans)

b. George Sand (Amandine Aurore Lucie Dupin)

##### 2. writers who adopt a pseudonym

a. Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens)

b. Lewis Carroll (Charles Dodgson)

##### C. People wanting to avoid ethnic identification

#### II. Name changes to join a group and gain recognition

##### A. Married women marking membership in a family

1. want to indicate married status

2. want to have same name as children

- B. Entertainers choosing eye-catching names
1. Marilyn Monroe (Norma Jean Baker)
  2. Woody Allen (Allen Stewart Konigsberg)
  3. Puff Daddy (Sean Combs)

## TOPIC SENTENCES AND PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT

When you write an essay, your goal is for your paragraphs to be:

- clearly focused
- well-developed
- organized
- neither too long nor too short

### 1. Focus on a main point = Topic Sentence

A paragraph should be unified around a main point. The point should be clear to the reader, should relate directly to the thesis, and all sentences in the paragraphs should relate to it.

You should state the main point in a topic sentence (TS = one-sentence summary that tells the reader what to expect in the paragraph as he/she reads on). A topic sentence usually comes first in a paragraph. The only exception is if you have a transitional sentence that starts your paragraph.

Sentences that do not support the topic sentence destroy the unity of a paragraph. Such sentences should be deleted or moved to another paragraph in the essay.

### 2. Develop the main point: choose a suitable pattern

Although paragraphs may be patterned in an almost infinite number of ways, certain patterns of organization occur frequently, either alone or in combination. These patterns will be directly linked to the topic sentence and will support the main idea of the paragraph.

Here are some of the most commonly used patterns of organization:

**Example and Illustration** → whenever the reader may be tempted to ask, "for example?" (an illustration is an example in a story form).

**Narration** → tell a story or part of a story to support your topic sentence.

**Description** → sketch the portrait of a person, place, or thing by using concrete and specific details (try to appeal to one's senses: sight, touch, taste, smell, sound).

**Process** → describe how something is made or works, step by step.

**Comparison and Contrast** → to compare is to show both similarities and differences between two or more things. To contrast is to focus specifically on the differences.

**Analogy** → show or draw comparisons between items that appear to have little in common (i.e. the behavior of ants paralleled to the behavior of humans.)

**Cause and Effect** → a paragraph may move from cause to effect or from an effect to its cause.

**Classification and Division** → to classify is to group items into categories according to some consistent principle. To divide, take one item and divide it into parts. Both patterns are used to understand better that particular item.

**Definition** → puts a word/concept into a general class and then provides enough details to distinguish it from other members in the same class.

## COHERENCE BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS

### A. Make Paragraphs Coherent

Sentences and paragraphs need to flow from one to another without bumps, gaps, or shifts.

In order to achieve such fluidity, you should focus on these following points while writing and revising your drafts:

- **Link ideas clearly:** all sentences of one paragraph need to be directly linked to the topic sentence of that paragraph. If not it needs to be moved away or deleted.
- **Repeat Keywords:** they are used to gain coherence. To prevent repetition from becoming dull, use:
  - variation of the keyword (hike, hiker, hiking)
  - pronouns referring to the keyword (hikers... they)
  - synonyms (hike, stroll, walk...)
- **Using Parallel Structures:** they are used within sentences to underscore the similarity of ideas: His experience made him sullen, bitter, and cynical.

Giving brings as much joy as receiving.

“With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.” (Martin Luther King, Jr.)

- **Providing Transitions:** certain words or phrases signal connections between ideas, connections that might otherwise be missed (see Transitions/Transitional Words section).

### B. Adjust Paragraphs' Length

**Reasons for beginning a new paragraph:**

- to mark off the introduction and the conclusion

- to signal a shift to a new idea
- to indicate an important shift in time and place
- to emphasize a point
- to highlight a contrast
- to signal a change of speaker (dialogue)
- to provide readers with a needed pause
- to break up text that looks too dense

**Reasons for combining paragraphs together:**

- to clarify the essay's organization
- to connect closely related ideas
- to bind together text that looks choppy



## TRANSITIONS/TRANSITIONAL WORDS

Transitions help bring coherence to a paragraph by signaling the relationships between and among sentences and paragraphs. It is important to note that transitions can only **clarify** connections between thoughts: they cannot **create** connections. As a writer you must choose transitions that fit your meaning—you should not expect a transition to provide meaning.

Transitions can be in the form of:

- short paragraphs between two paragraphs—mostly in longer essay and research papers,
- full sentences at the end of one paragraph introducing the new idea or at the beginning of a paragraph summarizing the previous idea,
- transitional phrases between paragraphs or sentences within a paragraph(see list below), or
- transitional words between paragraphs or sentences within a paragraph(see list below).

Here is a list of commonly used transitions to signal:

### **Sequence**

again, also, and, and then, besides, finally, first ... second...third, furthermore, last, moreover, next, still, too

### **Time**

after a few days, after a while, afterwards, as long as, as soon as, at last, at that time, before, earlier, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, then, thereafter, until, when

### **Comparison**

again, also, in the same way, likewise, once more, similarly

**Contrast**

although, but, despite, even though, however, in contrast, in spite of, instead, nevertheless, nonetheless, on the contrary, on the one hand ... on the other hand, regardless, still, though, yet

**Examples**

after all, even, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, of course, specifically, such as, the following example, to illustrate

**Cause and Effect**

accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, so, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end

**Place**

above, adjacent to, below, beyond, closer to, elsewhere, far, farther on, here, near, nearby, opposite to, there, to the left, to the right

**Concession**

although it is true that, granted that, I admit that, it may appear that, naturally, of course

**Summary, Repetition, or Conclusion**

as a result, as has been noted, as I have said, as we have seen, as mentioned earlier, in any event, in conclusion, in other words, in short, on the whole, therefore, to summarize

## DIAGRAM OF WHAT YOUR ESSAY SHOULD LOOK LIKE

### INTRODUCTION

It has to be creative, with a hook which attracts the reader's attention and a thesis statement which narrows down your topic and shows the main point of your essay.

### BODY

It has to have several paragraphs.

Each paragraph needs to develop one main point—expressed in the topic sentence which has to support your thesis.

Paragraphs need to be connected to each other with transitions.

### CONCLUSION

It has to strengthen the thesis without repeating it, and it should broaden the topic you just dealt with without introducing new issues or new problems.

## MLA DOCUMENTATION SYSTEM

MLA stands for Modern Language Association; it is a system used to document sources in the humanities.

- In-text Citations

For all MLA in-text citations, identify the author + page number, if available. When you cite an author, make sure you incorporate the author's quote directly and correctly within your own text (avoid "floating quotes" = quotes that are not attached to your text). The first time you mention an author (or authors) in your text, give the full name and, if useful to your readers, a brief statement about credentials. Thereafter, use the author's last name only. At the end of the text sentence, give only the page number.

A.) **Author named in your introductory phrase:**

The sociologist Ruth Sidel's interviews with young women provide examples of what Sidel sees as the "impossible dream" (19).

B.) **Author not named in your text:** if you do not mention the author while introducing the reference, include the author's last name in the parenthesis before the page number, **with no comma**.

Many young women, from all races and classes, have taken on "the idea of the American Dream, however difficult it might be for them to achieve it. Is it really worth it?" (Sidel 19).

C.) **Author who quotes someone else in their text:** use double quotation marks around the text you are quoting and single quotation marks around anything that was quoted within the text.

Focusing on one young woman, Ruth Sidel reports that "she wants, in her own words, to 'do it, make it, have money'" (21).

D.) **Electronic and internet sources:** they have no stable page numbers that apply across systems or when printed. Therefore, simply provide the author's name.

Science writer Stephen Hart describes how researchers Taub and Ebert conclude that for musicians, practicing their instrument "remaps the brain."

If there's no author, just refer to the title of the piece.

In "Improve Filming," you can learn how film editing "can change points of view and turn objectivity into subjectivity."

## 2. MLA List of Works Cited

Usually, list only the works you actually cited in your paper, and:

- Begin the list on a new numbered page after the last page of the paper. Center the heading (Works Cited). Do not underline, italicize, use quotation marks, or periods. Double-space.
- Do not number the entries—use alphabetical order; beginning with author's last names. List works with no stated author by the first main word of each entry.
- Indent all line in each entry (5 spaces) except the first.
- Separate the main part of each entry (author's name, title, publication house, ...) with a period.
- Capitalize all words in titles of books except for **a, an, the, coordinating conjunctions, "to"** in an infinitive, and **prepositions**.

- Underline or italicize title of books, journals, magazines, newspapers, anthologies, encyclopedias, ...
- Put quotation marks around title of poems, chapters, articles, short stories.

Basic form of a book with one author:

### Works Cited

Sidel, Ruth. "Different Women." On Her Own: Growing up in the

Shadows of the American Dream. New York: Penguin,

1990. 5-8.

When citing internet sources, here is the information to include:

- Author's name
- Title of works
- Print publication information
- Title of online site, project, journal or database, underlined
- Online publication information: date of the latest update, volume and issue number of online journal, name of online service, sponsor of site, or discussion list
- Date when you accessed the site
- Electronic address (URL)

## Works Cited

Lowe, Michelle S. "Britain's Regional Shopping Centres: New

Urban Forms?" Urban Studies 37.2 (2000).

Infotrac:Expanded Academic ASAP. City University of New

York Libraries. Article A61862666. 14 Jan. 2001

<http://web5.infotrac.galegroup.com>.

## READINGS

### HOW TO READ ACTIVELY AND CRITICALLY

Reading a text for the first time can be a challenge for any reader. When you encounter a new reading, you open yourself to the writer's words, ideas, insights and prejudices, as well as to kinds of language and forms of writing that may be unfamiliar to you. The newness of these reading experiences—be it stylistic or thematic—can make a text difficult to understand. But every time you pick up something to read you have an opportunity to **read actively**—to develop your own understanding.

To develop your own understanding you have to make the reading your own while responding to it by adding your own words to the material on the page. Adding your voice to the author's creates a fuller conversation between you and the author. Here are some ways of marking a text, of recording your part of the conversation, and of making the reading your own.

Before reading a text, you may want to read some background information about its author, the audience the author was aiming at, and the time period and geographic area where it was written. Although you should be able to comprehend any text you read actively and critically, some knowledge of background information will give you a more acute understanding of the text, its author, and purpose.

While reading a text for the first time, read actively and annotate the text:

- a. Mark any passages that call to mind or help you think about a personal experience. Comment on the connection you see there.
- b. Mark concepts or statements that remind you of other things you've read. Comment on what ways these



- passages confirm, challenge, or relate to ideas and events you've encountered in other texts.
- c. Mark passages that seem especially right or especially wrong to you. Comment on the reason for your strong reaction. Even if you aren't sure, record all your "gut" reactions.
  - d. Mark the writer's keywords as they are used throughout the text, especially when the writer defines the terms.
  - e. Mark any unfamiliar words. Find their meaning in the **context** of the text you are reading.
  - f. Mark any difficult sections that you wish to return to later and clarify—you might try to put this passage in your own words.

While reading the text for a second time, read critically, focusing on the main ideas:

- a. Make a list of questions you'd like to answer (or be answered in class) as you read and take notes about them as you go on.
- b. Note the thesis of the text and the main idea of each paragraph (topic sentence). Separate general and specific points, facts and opinions.
- c. Challenge the writer: be bold in your responses. Examine how the writer draws conclusions and whether the evidence and the methods he/she uses are valid. Evaluate the argument and how it is different or similar from your point of view.
- d. Write a summary of the main ideas of the text (in your own words).

## DOUBLE-ENTRY READING LOG

Another way to read texts actively and critically is to use a double-entry reading after a first reading. As you go along, jot down phrases and sentences from the text and react to them directly. This exercise will help you generate ideas about the text for in-class discussion and further writing.

### QUOTES

Jot down any phrases or sentences from the text which you find interesting for whatever reason (agreement, disagreement, question, discussion, emphasis, ...). Do not forget to write the page and paragraph number where you found that quote for documentation purposes.

Across from each quote, write your reaction to the quote. Basically write down why you decided to record that particular quote. Be very specific in the explanation of your reaction. Write your reaction as soon as you jot down each quote—your reaction needs to be spontaneous.

### YOUR REACTIONS

"I am an invisible man ... I am invisible, understand, simply because people refuse to see me" Ralph Ellison's "Prologue" of *Invisible Man* (p. 3, ¶ 1).

I totally feel what Ellison is saying here. It happens to me often—in the street, in stores, even in school. I wonder what I have to do to make people realize I exist!



### **Editing Exercise: S/V Agreement and Verb Forms**

- 1) The author felt the harmony he had among his own people were broken.
- 2) The stories which encouraged them to work in the farm and believe with perseverance that everything could be obtain was no more.
- 3) In summary, forcing to learn another language has a very bad impact on the life of the people who is expose to it. Furthermore it makes them to be empty in term of identity.
- 4) For instance, the incident on the football field when the Burmese made Orwell tripped, he could have stand firm and tell the Burmese that what happened were not funny instead of walked away and felt insulted.
- 5) It is very hard when people are accustom to one way of life and then has to suit other people's ways of life.
- 6) During the fourteen years of living in Jamaica, the English I did spoke was bad comparing to the American English.

- 7) The people of Kenya was force to speak English instead of their own language which were Gikuyu.

**Editing Exercise: Run-ons and Comma Splices**

- 1) Furthermore, Orwell should never have sent for the gun in the first place if he knew he was not going to shoot the elephant, he knew hoe he felt whenever these Burmese were concerned, he knew he was weak and he would finally give in to them.
- 2) I say this because the Kenyans were forced to learn English, the exams were written in English, they took the English exams but all of them seemed to fail the exam.
- 3) This had destroyed their social environment, before the alienation of their language people used to communicate with their families by telling stories about animals and the children especially used to look forward to hearing these stories.
- 4) The author felt this harmony he had among his own people was broken and it is absolutely true, he lived in a community where he could express his views easily but now he was punished for doing that.
- 5) The people of Kenya perceived themselves differently, they acted differently because of the

change from their own language to another and thus they changed their mentality and their lifestyles.

- 6) France colonized Algeria at the time so there were changes taking place but Daru did not want to be a part of what was happening, furthermore, he was satisfied with his career and his way of living.
- 7) Control is something the British desired to have they did not care how they just knew they had to have control.
- 8) This was not the aim of the British, they knew that the use of the Gikuyu language, with its stories of the weak outwitting the strong, would make it hard to break their spirit.
- 9) In the text "Decolonising the Mind" Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and the other children faced this problem at home they were taught Gikuyu that is their native language they spoke Gikuyu fluently for everything that they did and said was done in Gikuyu, but as he became older and went to school the system changed it was taken over by the British and the British insisted that the children learn to speak English as their most fluent language as you can imagine it was very difficult for Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and the other

children to do because they were used to speaking Gikuyu.

### **Editing Exercise: Fragments**

- 1) When women started writing the men didn't like this. As they thought a woman should be seen and not heard.
- 2) The colonists forced them to study their culture. Making the children feel that their parents and their own history and geography were less important.
- 3) When one visits the castle and sees some places where prisoners were kept. It brings a feeling that no good thing came from colonialism.
- 4) Daru feels exiled, but also when he tries to help the prisoner, he is seen as an outcast because the Algerian people think he turned their brother in. When in truth he gave the prisoner a choice. He is exiled from both sides. One where he feels as if he doesn't belong and the other he was seen as the outsider.
- 5) In this quote "toward women writers, there are feelings of envy, jealousy, resentment and paranoia

- on the part of men." This to my mind was caused by the fact that the men knew times were changing.
- 6) In these two texts, George Orwell's "Shooting An Elephant" and Albert Camus's "The Guest," is exaggerated to portray the effects of colonialism.
  - 7) Also in Camus's "The Guest" towards the end when Daru set the prisoner free without Balducci knowing what was going on.
  - 8) In "Shooting An Elephant," Orwell chose to shoot the elephant because of all the Burmese that were watching him. Which is caused by peer pressure and his own ignorance of letting people get to him.
  - 9) In the story for some reason Daru treated the prisoner as if he didn't deserve to go to jail. When Balducci stopped at the house where he and the prisoner had stayed. when he went behind Balducci's back and release the prisoner. I wonder why he did it.
  - 10) I believe that what Thiongo said in the essay that, "there are good and bad story tellers. The difference really were in the use of words and images." It is about people are more comfortable when communicating in their native language.



- 11) In the sense of doing what your job requires you to do, even though you may not like it or approve it.

**Editing Exercise: Coherence Between Paragraphs**

1.) Political and economic competition plays a big role in prejudice, discrimination as well as stereotyping. Black workers were not allowed to join unions. The jobs were limited to field works and poor working conditions. The discrimination was also between Anglo and Mexican Americans and Arabs against Israelis. Later the Germans migrated, the white men's jobs were threatened. The Chinese immigrants received their share of direct aggression related to economic advantage. When there were jobs available, the Chinese were accepted. Once that was done, they were threatened.

2.) This was the colonizers' way of showing their superiority to the Kenyans, that their expressing their culture in any way shape or form was a sin. When they took away their right to use their native language, they also took away who they were as a people and as individuals.

3.) Only English was taught at school; they only rewarded English speakers; only those who passed the English test could gain an excellent formal education.

4.) Prejudice has been around for years. I think that a lot of people grow up being prejudiced without knowing the reason for it. I also believe that there are a lot of issues that cause someone to be prejudiced.

5.) Aronson broke down prejudice into four causes: economical and political competition, which basically means that "people of low socioeconomic and educational status are prejudiced because the most keenly feel competition from jobs from minority groups". Displaced aggression which deals with the scapegoat theory basically states that people who are not able to unleash their frustration on the main cause of it would unleash it on someone who had nothing to do with the frustration. Personality needs is explained by Aronson through the term "authoritarian personality." These are basically individuals who somewhat highly respect authority. Conformity to existing social norms deals with the fact that individuals only act prejudiced because it is a part of the social norm in their community.