Writing Center Handouts

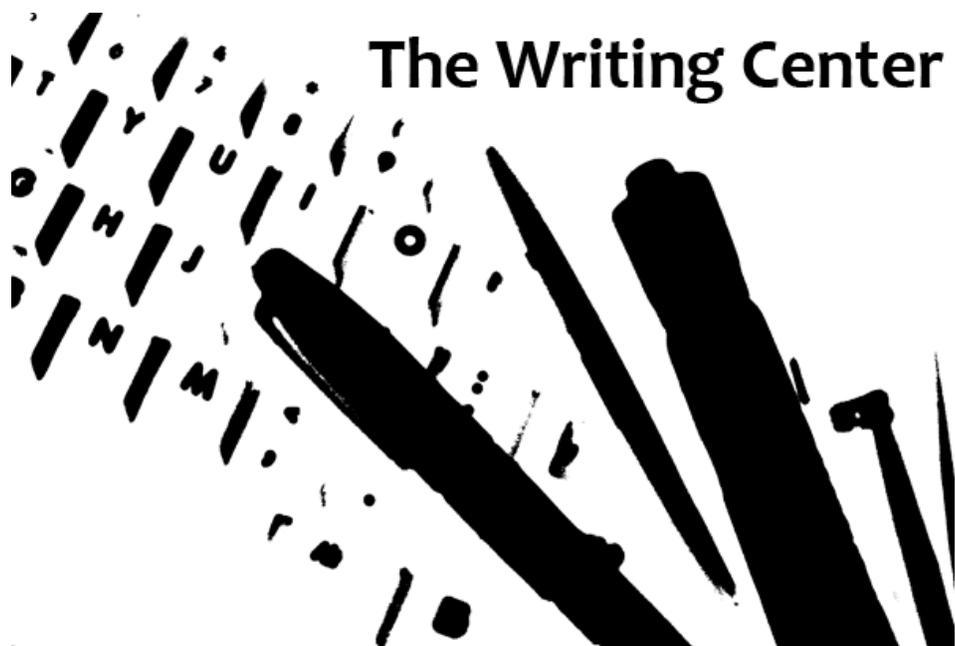The Writing Center

Missouri State University

ABOUT THE WRITING CENTER

Location: Siceluff Hall, Room 210

Hours: 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. M, T, Th

                  9 a.m. to 9 p.m. W

                  9 a.m. to 3 p.m. F

Telephone: 836–6398

On the Web: writingcenter.missouristate.edu

OUR MISSION

"To enable student success through improved
writing skills."

Table of Contents

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Active voice lets the reader know who is responsible for the action. In formal academic writing, students should write in active voice as much as possible.

To determine whether a sentence is active, ask yourself if the subject of the sentence is doing the action.

Example:

> The City Council passed a law against vandalism.

Is the subject (City Council) doing the action? Yes, it is passing a law. Therefore, the sentence is active.

In passive voice, the acting subject is not named or is named at the end of the sentence with a prepositional phrase. Passive voice includes a **be** verb.

Be Verbs
be, am, is, are, was, were, been, being

Writers can use passive voice deliberately when they want to hide who did the action or they do not know who did the action. Passive voice is also used in scientific writing when it is often unimportant who did the action.

Example:

> The research trials were conducted for two years.

Verb tense—past, present, future—does **not** determine whether a sentence is in active or passive voice.

Active Voice	Passive Voice
She reads the paper.	The paper is read by her.
She read the paper.	The paper was read by her.
She will read the paper.	The paper will be read by her.

To Change from Passive to Active

Ask yourself "who or what did the action?" and add this information at the beginning of the sentence.

Passive voice: The cake was baked for forty minutes.

Active voice: Scott baked the cake for forty minutes.

APA DOCUMENTATION

The America Psychological Association (APA) guidelines for setting up a page are fairly simple, and using a computer will make the task even easier. For instance, word processing packages may contain a template set for APA style. This will arrange some items automatically and assist you with certain tasks. It is always a good idea, however, to understand some basics about APA style because computers will not do everything for you, and they are prone to mistakes.

Page Setup

Margins are set at least 1" on every side of the document. The default on Microsoft Word is 1.25" for left and right margins. Use Page Setup under the File menu to change margin settings.

Spacing, according to APA style, is double (2.0 for most word processors) from the beginning of the paper to the end, including headings, quotations, and the References list.

Headers appear at the top right-hand side of every page, including the title page. The header consists of two or three words of the title of the paper, five spaces, and then the page number, like in the example below:

<div align="right">Biology and Personality 12</div>

The title page is double-spaced and centered. It includes the title of your paper (the title of your paper is also included on the first page of actual text), your name, and the name of the university. At the top of the page, include the full running head (an abbreviated version of your title):

Running head: BIOLOGY AND PERSONALITY TYPING IN HUMANS

Levels of Heading

Centered Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Centered, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Heading

Flush Left, Italicized, Uppercase and Lowercase Side Heading

Indented, italicized, lowercase paragraph heading ending with a period.

In-Text Citations

Ideally, no more than 25 percent of your paper should be direct quotations. Attempt to paraphrase as much as you can. You should opt for direct quotations when citing a statistic or an original theory. Direct quotes are also good if you feel that the author's words capture a point exactly.

Any time you borrow ideas or material, whether quoted directly or paraphrased, you need to indicate from where and whom you borrowed the information. This helps you remember where you found the material in case you should need to find it again, and it helps others access your information quickly.

If you directly quote a source, include the author's last name (if more than one author exists, use an "&" symbol), year, and page number in your citation. You can include the author's last name in the text or in parentheses, but the page number always appears in parentheses after the citation. When using a date, always include it directly after the author's name (in-text or in parentheses).

Examples:

"Tolerance is social justice" (Heller and Hawkins Jr., 1999, p. 17).

OR

According to Heller and Hawkins Jr. (1999), "Tolerance is social justice" (p. 17).

Often, however, APA style is used to cite entire works, such as experiment reports, so page numbers may be omitted. (Notice that when you include the authors' names in the text, you use "and.")

Example:

Freud and Jung (1949) define the relationship between the id, ego, and super-ego.

If you are citing a work with three or more authors, include all last names the first time and only the first author's last name and et al. in the other citations.

Example:

Wasserstein et al. (1994) found that chipmunks are louder in the month of April.

The first time you use a source, it is a good idea to introduce the author at the beginning of the sentence (rather than just in parentheses at the end of the sentence) by establishing the person's credentials. Avoid referring to only the name of a work in your text (unless there is no identifiable author). This makes it difficult for the reader to locate the source on your References list. Always try to use primary sources. If the primary source is not available and you must cite something from a secondary source, indicate who said the quote in your text, then indicate where you found the actual quote in parentheses.

Block Quotations

If you quote material of 40 words or more, you should set off the text as a block quotation. To signal a block quote is being used, you should have a sentence introducing the block quote and that sentence should end with a colon. Next, remove the quotation marks and indent every line of text five spaces from the left margin (keep it double-spaced). This is the only time in APA style when punctuation will not follow the final parenthesis, but it will end the quotation instead.

Example:

Tolstoy (1960) argues against the perpetuation of artistic standards because works or

composers were at one point valued:

> But the critics, having no basis for their judgments, never cease to repeat their traditions.
>
> The classical tragedians were once considered good, and therefore criticism stills
>
> considers them to be so still. Dante was esteemed a great poet, Raphael a great painter,
>
> Bach a great musician-and the critics, lacking a standard by which to separate good art
>
> from bad, not only consider these artists great but regard their productions as admirable
>
> and worthy of imitation. (p. 112)

If you are paraphrasing an entire chapter or study, it is permissible to include the citation information in parentheses at the end of the entire paragraph (rather than after each sentence). In this case, it is usually advisable to include the author's name at the beginning of the paragraph so the reader knows where the writer is getting his or her information.

Remember: Every paraphrase should include citation information!

The References List

- Center the phrase "References" at the top of the page.

- Alphabetize all entries (usually by author's last name first). First and middle names are never used; only use first and middle initials.

- Begin all entries flush left. If an entry continues to other lines, indent the extra lines five spaces from the left-hand margin.

- Double-space all entries.

- Make sure all in-text citations have corresponding entries on the References list.

Example:

References

Baron, D. (1989). *Declining grammar and other essays*. Urbana, IL: NCTE.

Flower, L., & Hayes, J. L. (1977). Problem-solving strategies and the writing

process. *College English*, 39, 449-61.

Murray, D. (1990). Write before writing. In T. Newkirk (Ed.), *To compose* (pp. 33-42).

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

The first entry in the example listed above is a typical entry for a book. Notice the order information is listed in, as well as the spacing, punctuation, and capitalization (only the first word of the book is capitalized and the first word after a colon). Publication information can be found on the title page and

the copyright page of a book. The second entry is a typical periodical entry. Notice that it follows a slightly different format from a book. Again, notice the spacing, punctuation (no quotation marks around the title of the article), and capitalization. The third entry shows the way to write an anthology entry.

How to Cite Electronic Sources

A Professional or Personal Web Site:

The MSU Writing Center. (2000). Retrieved September 5, 2004, from http://www.smsu.edu/

>   writingcenter

An E-mail:

Cite as a personal communication in-text only. Do not include on the References list.

(M. Paxton, personal communication, July 8, 2004)

An Online Government Publication:

United States Dept. of Justice. (1995). *Prosecuting gangs: A national assessment.* Retrieved

>   July 19, 2004, from http://www.ncjrs.org/txtfiles/pgang.txt

An Article from an Aggregated Database:

Nelkin, D., & Lindee, M. S. (1995). Elvis' DNA: The gene as cultural icon. *Humanist*, 55

>   (3),10–20. Retrieved February 29, 2002, the EbscoHost MasterFILE Elite database.

Use (n.d.) to indicate the Web site has no published date of creation.

APA'S Web Site

For additional information or the most recent updates, visit APA's Web site at www.apastyle.org.

The Writing Center

APOSTROPHES

Possessives

An apostrophe is used to indicate that a noun (person, place, or thing) owns or possesses something.

Examples:

> Renee's hair
> the girl's bicycle

In other words, an apostrophe provides a shorter way to say this:

> the hair of Renee
> the bicycle of the girl

Most **singular** words take an **-'s**.

Examples:

Wrong: The dogs paw hurt.   **Right:**   The dog's paw is hurt.

Wrong: Someones backpack   **Right:**   Someone's backpack

In cases where punctuation would be awkward by adding **-'s**, it is acceptable to use an apostrophe only.

Example:

Wrong: Lois's shirt is teal.   **Right:**   Lewis' shoes are wet.

Plural nouns that end in **-s** take an apostrophe.

Examples:

> Both students' books got ruined.
> The cats' tails wagged.

Plural nouns that do not end in **-s** take an **-'s**.

Example:

> The children's toys are clean.
> The mice's nest was in the barn.

To show **joint possession**, use **-'s** with the last noun only.

Example:

> Mack and Charlotte's new car

Possessive pronouns, such as his or theirs, do **not** take an apostrophe because ownership is implied. For **compound nouns**, use **-'s** with the last element only.

Example:

> The attorney general's toupee

Contractions

In contractions, the apostrophe takes the place of missing letters. "It's" for example, stands for "it is."

Example:

> Why can't we go back?

Tip: Avoid using contractions in formal papers because they sound too conversational and informal.

Letter and Number Plurals

Use an apostrophe to form the plurals of lowercase letters (and only lowercase letters) and to mark the omission of the first two digits of a year.

Examples of Letters and Numbers with apostrophes:

Wrong: Spaghettios have lots of O's. **Right:**   paghettios have lots of o's.

Wrong: I love 80's music.   **Right:**   I love '80s music.

Proofreading Strategies

There are three common apostrophe problems:

- Using apostrophes when they are not needed.
- Neglecting to use apostrophes when they are needed.
- Adding too many apostrophes.

If you have a tendency to use apostrophes when they are not needed or you use too many, type **-'s** into the FIND function (under the Edit menu) in Microsoft Word. For every case the computer finds, check if the apostrophe indicates possession or not.

Tip: If the word after the apostrophe is a verb (action), take out the apostrophe.

If you have a tendency to leave out apostrophes when you write, look for every word that ends in **-s**. If the word is a noun and it appears right before another noun, it needs an apostrophe.

ARTICLES

A, **an**, and **the** precede nouns (person, place, or thing). The choice between "a," "an," and "the" is determined by the word that follows.

A/An

Use **a** or **an** when there is more than one common noun.

Example:

> Sue rented a car for the trip.

Use the article **an** before a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) or vowel sound in the English

Examples:

- an eggplant
- an office
- an hour

The

Use **the** when the reader knows the specific identity of the noun. This can be clear to the reader for one of several reasons:

The noun has been previously mentioned.

Example:

> A car loaded with dynamite cut in front of our van. When the car skidded a few seconds later, we almost hit it.

The writer is referring to one specific object.

Example:

> Lee asked for the book on the top shelf.

A superlative such as "best" or "most intelligent" identifies a specific noun.

Example:

> She is the best reader in her kindergarten class.

The noun is a unique person, place, or thing.

Examples:

> The Statue of Liberty is located in New York City.
> I'm taking my vacation to the Grand Canyon.

When Not to Use Articles

Do not use **a** or **an** with noncount nouns. Noncount nouns represent mass substances or abstractions that cannot be counted.

Examples:

> **Wrong:** The air is necessary to live.   **Right:** Air is necessary to live.

Some Common Noncount Nouns

Foods and Drinks	Nonfood Substances	Abstract Nouns
bacon	cement	advice
beer	coal	anger
cabbage	dirt	confidence
candy	gold	employment
chocolate	paper	fun
fish	plaster	health
ice cream	plastic	honesty
pasta	rain	intelligence
salt	silver	intelligence
soda	snow	love

Do not use articles in concise writing such as recipes, telegrams, or prescriptions.

Examples:
Wrong: Add a ¾ cup to the mix. **Right:** Add ¾ cup sugar to the mix.

The Writing Center

BRAINSTORMING

Audience Analysis

Who is the audience for your paper? Is it your teacher, peers, or the general public? What can you, as a writer, assume that your audience already knows about your subject? What makes your approach unique? What areas may cause your reader to disagree?

Clustering

Draw a circle in the middle of a piece of paper and write your topic name inside it. Draw smaller circles around the topic and connect them to the main circle. Write whatever words or ideas logically come from or are related to the main topic in these sub-circles. Each sub-circle can have several connected sub-circles of its own. The idea is to build up information.

Double-entry

Draw a line down the middle of a page and list similar ideas and differing ideas. This is helpful for a compare and contrast or pros and cons paper.

Freewriting

Write your topic at the top of a blank sheet of paper. Begin writing. Jot down whatever comes to mind for a set amount of time (five or ten minutes to start). During this time, do not worry about grammar or content; just keep writing until time is up.

Keep a Journal or Diary

Keep a writing utensil and notebook or some blank paper next to your desk or work area. When thoughts come to mind about your chosen topic, make yourself a note. Important thoughts and information will not get lost and can then be used for later reference.

Listing

Compile a list of single words that come to mind when you think about your topic. Think about related words and list them also.

Mapping

Write your central idea and thesis down on the top of a blank page. Choose the three most important points you would like to make regarding your central idea. Branch supporting information off of each point until you have a "map" of supporting ideas.

Topoi

Consider questions based on classical Topoi of authoritative testimony, cause and effect, definition, difference, example, similarity, and statistics.

Authoritative Testimony: Who says it? Why is he or she an authority?

Cause and Effect: What prompted this result? What is the effect?

Definition: How would you define this?

Division: What are the parts and/or divisions of this?

Similarity and Difference: How is this alike? How does it differ?

Statistics: What numbers or data support your claim?

Who/What/When/Where/How

Identify *who* did the action (*what*), *when* they did it, and *where* it occurred. State *how* this made an effect. This method is very effective for narratives.

COLONS

There is only one major rule to remember when using colons: colons must come after complete sentences and come before something you wish to emphasize, such as lists, characteristics, or quotations.

Example:

> I have three favorite things: video games, movies, and books.

If you use a colon after a sequence that cannot stand by itself, you have used a colon incorrectly. The following example is wrong:

> For example: red, white, and blue.

Introducing a List

You can use a colon to introduce a list of items. It is common (but not required), to use a phrase such as "the following" somewhere before the colon.

Example:

> The recipe states that the following items are optional: garlic, chopped onions, and salt.

Colons are not used after the following terms: *such as, including,* or *for example.*

Restating Something

Sometimes you will want to mention something (such as a characteristic, item, event, etc.) in vague terms and then restate it in more solid terms for emphasis or effect.

Example:

> I look for two traits in employees: intelligence and determination.

Introducing a Quote

There are a couple of different ways to introduce a quotation. One of the most common is to use a phrase such as "She said" followed by a comma and then the quoted material. A colon, however, is a more appropriate choice if you use a complete sentence to set up the quotation.

Example:

> I'll never forget my grandmother's advice: "Learn to forgive others and others will learn to forgive you."

COMMAS

Commas may easily be the most confusing piece of punctuation for writers. It seems there are too many rules and too many exceptions for commas to make sense, and the idea of using pauses to determine where commas belong is too inaccurate. The information below, however, shows the most typical uses for the comma. If you can learn these few uses, most of your comma confusion will end.

Connecting Two Complete Sentences

Sometimes it is more effective to combine two sentences, especially if you are trying to express some kind of relationship between them. In order to combine them correctly, however, you need to use a connecting word called a conjunction. A conjunction follows a comma and comes before the start of what was the second sentence. The following sentences should be joined with a comma:

Craig unknowingly lost his wallet. He didn't have money to pay for the meal.

Wrong: Craig unknowingly lost his wallet, he didn't have money to pay for the meal.

Right: Craig unknowingly lost his wallet, so he didn't have money to pay for the meal.

The first example is incorrect because two complete independent sentences cannot be connected with only a comma. This error is called a **comma splice**.

If you join two complete sentences together with a connecting word, a comma must come before it. Connecting words are commonly called **coordinating conjunctions**. When used with a comma, a conjunction helps to connect two independent clauses together to form one sentence.

Seven Conjunctions

and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet

There is another side of this rule. That is, if you do **not** have two complete sentences, one to the left of the conjunction and one to the right, you do not use a comma to connect them.

Following a Statement That Cannot Stand Alone

A common way to begin a sentence is with a statement that cannot stand by itself. This kind of statement is called a **dependent clause** because it relies on a complete sentence to follow in order for it to make sense.

Words Commonly Beginning Dependent Clauses

after	since
although	though
before	unless
because	until
during	when
even	where
if	while

The following statement cannot stand alone as a sentence: When I finish college.

Examples:

Wrong: When I finish college I plan to go to law school.

Right: When I finish college, I plan to go to law school.

The first statement cannot stand by itself. When it appears in this form, it is called a **sentence fragment** because it is only part of a sentence. When you read it, it does not make sense because the thought is not complete.

The first example fixes this problem by completing the thought and the sentence, but it is not correctly punctuated. If the dependent portion comes at the beginning of the sentence, a comma must come between the part that cannot stand alone and the sentence that completes the thought. The second example is correct.

You could also reword the sentence so the dependent part comes at the end, and then it would not require a comma, like so:

I plan to go to law school when I finish college.

Separating Items in a List

If you have a list of items, use commas to separate them. These commas eliminate the need to put "and" between each item.

Examples:

> At the store I bought eggs, milk, bread, ham, macaroni and cheese.
>
> At the store I bought eggs, milk, bread, ham, macaroni, and cheese.

Both of these examples can be considered correct depending on your discipline. Fields that use Associated Press (AP) style, such as journalism, prefer the first example. The second example is still preferred by many, though, because it eliminates confusion.

Notice that if you do not read the first example carefully, you might read "macaroni and cheese" as one food product and not separate items. In the second example, the comma makes it obvious these are separate items. So, unless you are writing for a newspaper, you should always use a comma before the word "and."

Separating Parts of Dates or Addresses

If you write our dates or addresses, you need to use commas to separate the parts from each other and the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

> I graduated from college on Friday, December 17, 2004, at four o'clock. SMSU is
>
> located at 901 S. National, Springfield, Missouri 65804, near the square. I moved
>
> to Springfield in January 2000.

With dates, you **do** not need commas when listing the month and year only or when using the international style (17 Dec 2004). With addresses, you do not use a comma between the state and zip code.

Around Nonessential Information

When you use a phrase to provide additional information that is not necessary for the sentence to make sense, place commas on both sides of the phrase. The commas indicate that the phrase provides nonessential information.

Examples:

Wrong: Freshmen, who score a four on the essay, are exempt from ENG 110.

Right: Jane Smith, director of student services, will prepare the report.

The first sentence is incorrect because if the phrase is deleted, the meaning of the sentence will change (all freshmen are exempt from ENG 100). To correct this sentence, remove both commas. The second sentence is correct because if Jane's title is deleted, the sentence still means the same thing.

ELIMINATING SEXIST LANGUAGE

Sexist language may offend readers, so it should be avoided. Sexist language happens intentionally or unintentionally when you use a gender specific pronoun (like he or she) to refer to people of both genders.

Example:

When **a doctor** prescribes medicine, **he** should consider past medical problems.

Doctors can be either male or female. This sentence assumes that all doctors are male. To avoid sexist language, you can use both pronouns or change the subject from singular to plural.

Examples:

When a doctor prescribes medicine, he or she should consider past medical problems.

When doctors prescribe medicine, they should consider past medical problems.

Be careful to also avoid a pronoun agreement problem. This can happen if you use a plural pronoun (such as they or them) and forget to make the subject plural.

Sexist language can also occur if you use "man" to describe all people in a sentence.

Examples:

Mankind is often destructive to the environment. (The term "humankind" is a better choice because it includes everyone.)

Men are higher on the food chain than slugs. (The terms "people" or "humans" are a better choice because it doesn't exclude women.)

Firemen must always look after their co-workers (The term "firefighters" includes both men and women.)

Tip: It is not sexist language if you use a gender specific pronoun when you know the gender of the person you are writing about.

The Writing Center

FRAGMENTS

One of the most typical ways to proofread is to read your paper out loud to yourself. Although you may find a few grammatical errors using this method, you will probably miss fragments. Fragments are incomplete sentences that cannot stand alone. When you read your paper from start to finish, fragments may not be apparent because you are reading for content. Fragments are obvious when taken out of context.

Look at the following phrases. Ask yourself if each phrase could stand alone (that is, could you say it to someone and be understood):

Wrong: Because the job was in Springfield.

Right: Give me the assignments for tomorrow's class.

The first phrase is a fragment because it cannot stand alone (dependent). Information is missing; it almost seems like an answer to an unspoken question. The last phrase is a complete sentence because it can stand alone (independent).

Proofreading for Fragments

To find fragments, read backwards sentence-by-sentence, and ask yourself if each statement is complete or incomplete. The following example includes fragments:

> I read passages of Spanish literature. While at the university. I translated them into English. And wrote responses to the reading in Spanish.

By reading backwards, two fragments become apparent:

While at the university.
And wrote responses to the reading in Spanish.

Fragments are easy to correct once you identify them. Simply ask yourself if the fragment goes with the sentence before or after it. "While at the university" goes with the sentence before it, so take out the period to combine the two phrases. Likewise, "And wrote responses" goes with the sentence before.

KEY WORDS COMMONLY USED
IN ASSIGNMENTS OR EXAMS

Analyze, Explain, and Discuss

Identify the parts of an idea, argument, or subject, and show the importance of those parts as well as their relationship to one another. Give the significance of the idea in relation to the context of the information you have learned in the portion of the course being examined or assigned.

Cause and Effect

How (cause), **why** (cause), **reasons** (cause), **results** (effect) are all commonly used cause and effect discussion points. Make sure you are clear about which is which. Look for *all* causes and *all* effects (or the most important ones if you are limited to a certain number). Rank them in relative importance and show how they are related.

Tip: If you write that Mary and Ann (for example) are related, the reader does not know if this means that they are sisters, friends, colleagues, etc. You must clearly write *what* the relationship is. Likewise, avoid saying that something "changed." Instead, write about *how* it changed.

Compare and Contrast

Do not compare very similar items, and do not contrast obviously different items. Instead, look for *significant* likenesses and influences. Sometimes the word "compare" is used interchangeably for compare and contrast. Ask for clarification if you are in doubt.

Describe

Give a detailed account of something in a logical sequence. Show what it is, how it works, what it looks like, and/or what it is for. This does not include your opinion; it is an informative process only.

Evaluate

Demonstrate the value of something. This is your opinion, but it must be supported by evidence. For example, is the argument valid? How well does the theory apply to a particular situation? Does the item do what it says it can do? How does what you are evaluating compare to something similar? What do others say about its value? Clearly support every assertion you make.

Illustrate

Give examples and supporting details.

Prove and/or Show

Establish something as true or valid through logical argument or experiment.

Summarize

Give main ideas in a brief but clear format.

The Writing Center

MLA DOCUMENTATION

The Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines for setting up a page are fairly simple, and using a computer will make the task even easier. For instance, word processing packages may contain a template set for MLA style. This will arrange some items automatically and assist you with certain tasks. It is always a good idea, however, to understand some basics about MLA style because computers will not do everything for you, and they are prone to mistakes.

Page Setup

Margins are 1" on every side of the document. The default on Microsoft Word is 1.25" for left and right margins. Use Page Setup under the File menu to change margin settings.

Spacing, according to MLA style, is double (2.0 for most word processors) from the beginning of the paper to the end, including block quotations and the Works Cited page.

Headers take the place of a title page in MLA format, unless an instructor specifically asks for one. On the left-hand side of the first page, provide the following:

- Your name
- Your instructor's name
- The course information
- The date (in scientific format)

Example:

Johnny Depp

Dr. Bob McGhee

Philosophy 105

25 November 2004

On every subsequent page, give your last name followed by the page number 0.5" from the top of every page on the upper right-hand side:

In-Text Citations

Ideally, no more than 25 percent of your paper should be direct quotations. Attempt to paraphrase as much as you can. You should opt for direct quotations if you are citing a statistic or an original theory. Direct quotes are also good if you feel the author's words capture the point exactly.

Any time you borrow ideas of material, whether quoted directly or paraphrased, you need to indicate from where and whom you borrowed the information. This will help you remember where you found the material in case you should need to find it again, and it helps others access your information quickly.

To cite a source, mention the author's last name and the page number(s) from which you borrowed the material in parentheses. If the citation ends the sentence, a period follows the final parenthesis.

Example:

> "The direction art has taken may be compared to placing on a large circle other circles"
>
> (Tolstoy 99).

You may also choose, however, to include the author's last name as a part of the sentence and leave it out of the parentheses.

Example:

> According to Tolstoy, "The direction art has taken may be compared to placing
>
> on a large circle other circles" (99).

The first time you use a source, it is a good idea to introduce the author at the beginning of the sentence (rather than just in parentheses at the end of the sentence) by establishing the person's credentials. Avoid referring to only the name of a work in your text (unless there is no identifiable author). This makes it difficult for the reader to locate the source on your Works Cited page.

Try to always use primary sources. If the primary source is not available and you must cite something from a secondary source, indicate who said the quote in your text and indicate where you found the actual quote in parentheses.

Example:

> Tan stated that "the woman and the swan sailed across an ocean" (qtd. in Danks and
>
> Rabinsky 69).

This indicates that Tan's words are quoted in Danks and Rabinsky's book. Be aware that you are relying on the trustworthiness of the secondary source that this quote is accurate and not taken out of context.

Block Quotations

If you quote material that exceeds four typed lines on your word processor, you should set it off as a block quotation. To signal a block quote is being used, you should have a sentence introducing the block quote and that sentence should end with a colon. Next, remove the quotation marks and indent every line of text ten spaces from the left margin. This is the only time in MLA style when punctuation will not follow the final parenthesis, but it will end the quotation instead.

Example:

Tolstoy (1960) argues against the perpetuation of artistic standards because works or

composers were at one point valued:

> But the critics, having no basis for their judgments, never cease to repeat their
>
> traditions. The classical tragedians were once considered good, and therefore
>
> criticism stills considers them to be so still. Dante was esteemed a great poet,
>
> Raphael a great painter, Bach a great musician-and the critics, lacking a standard by
>
> which to separate good art from bad, not only consider these artists great but regard
>
> their productions as admirable and worthy of imitation. (p. 112)

If you are paraphrasing an entire chapter or study, it is permissible to include the citation information in parentheses at the end of the entire paragraph (rather than after each sentence). In this case, it is usually advisable to include the author's name at the beginning of the paragraph so the reader knows where the writer is getting his or her information.

Remember: Every paraphrase should include citation information!

The Works Cited Page

This page is commonly known as a "bibliography," or a list of all materials you cited in your paper. In MLA style, the Works Cited page must follow this format:

- Center the phrase "Works Cited" at the top of the page.

- Alphabetize all entries (usually by author's last name first).

- Begin all entries at the left-hand margin. If an entry continues to other lines, indent the extra lines five spaces from the left-hand margin.

- Make sure all in-text citations have corresponding entries on the Works Cited page.

Example:

Works Cited

Elbow, Peter, ed. <u>What is English?</u> New York: MLA, 1987.

Flower, Linda, and John L. Hayes. "Problem-Solving Strategies and the Writing Process."

    <u>College English</u> 39 (1977): 449-61.

Murray, Donald. "Write Before Writing." <u>To Compose</u>. Ed. Thomas Newkirk. 2nded. Portsmouth,

    NH: Heinemann, 1990. 33-42.

The first entry is a typical entry for a book (author or editor, title, translator if appropriate, city of publication, publisher, and year of publication).

Use the acronym UP for University Press.

Publication information can be found on the title page or the copyright page of a book. Notice the spacing and punctuation used in the entry.

The second entry in the example is a typical entry for a magazine or periodical. This entry also shows the way to do an entry for two authors. Notice the order in which information is listed (authors, article title, periodical title, volume, date, and page numbers), as well as the spacing and the punctuation. You should place quotation marks around the article title and underline the title of the periodical. Also notice that for a work by two authors, only the first author's name is reversed for alphabetizing; other authors' names are not reversed.

The third entry is for a work in an anthology. Notice the title of the book occurs after the specific work and it is followed by the name of the editor and edition, if applicable. Be sure to include page numbers for specific work.

How to Cite Electronic Sources

A Professional or Personal Web Site:

The SMSU Writing Center. 15 Dec. 2000. Southwest Missouri State University. 22 Sept. 2004

      <http://www.smsu.edu/writingcenter>.

An E-mail:

Paxton, Mark. "RE: Journalism Schedule." E-mail to John Smith. 9 July. 2003.

An Article from an on-line journal:

Flannigan, Roy. "Reflections on Milton and Ariosto." Early Modern Literary Studies 2.3

      (1996):16 pars. 22 Feb. 1997

      <http://unixg.ubc.ca:7001/0/e-sources/emls/02-3/f1anmilt.html>.

An Article from an Aggregated Database:

Wilson, Bee. "Dog's Dinner." New Statesman, 131.4571 (2002), 47. MasterFILE Elite database.

      Ebsco Industries. SMSU Libraries, Springfield, MO. 29 Apr. 2002

Use (n.d.) to indicate the Web site has no published date of creation.

MLA'S Web Site

For additional information or the most recent updates, visit MLA's Web site at www.mla.

PAPER ORGANIZATION

The key to organizing your ideas is to look for relationships. This handout includes some organizational patterns to consider.

Analysis: State what ideas and/or parts are involved and their effects.

Argument or Debate: Use ethical, logical, or emotional appeals.

Chronological: Arrange events in the order they occurred.

Classification: Mention what types of ideas and/or items are used.

Compare and Contrast: State similar ideas and differing ideas.

Definition: Give the meaning of an idea or subject.

Evaluation: Determine what the value of an idea or subject is.

Five-Paragraph Format: Include an introduction, three main points, and a conclusion.

Problem and Solution: Identify problems and their possible answers.

Themes: Use ideas commonly presented within a text.

PARALLEL STRUCTURE

Parallel structure is another way of saying "keep everything in the same grammatical form." You will often encounter the need for parallel structure when using a list of items or actions or when using headings. This is not as difficult as it may sound because you can use your own writing to determine how to make a passage parallel. Consider the following sentence lacking parallel structure:

> Running, swimming, and to dance are all good forms of aerobic exercise.

The previous sentence is not parallel because the first two items in the list end in -ing, and the third is missing that ending. Since these are all related items, they should all have an -ing ending:

> Running, swimming, and dancing are all good forms of aerobic exercise.

Sometimes a problem with parallel structure might be more difficult to detect:

> He left the store, stomped out to his car, and away he drove.

This sentence may sound fine, but it does not have parallel structure. This sentence is set up so that everything set off by a comma refers back to the word "he." The phrase "he left the store" makes perfect sense, as does "he stomped out to his car." The third part of the sentence, however, does not make sense when it follows this same pattern: "and away he drove."

Often when a list lacks in parallel structure, the problem occurs with the portion after the word "and." The third part, then, should be changed so it will be parallel with the rest of the sentence:

> He left the store, stomped out to his car, and drove away.

PLAGIARISM AND PARAPHRASING

If you use someone else's ideas or words in your academic writing, you must give credit to, or cite, your source. Failure to acknowledge the person (or people) from whom you borrowed information is considered a form of stealing, called **plagiarism**, and it is a serious offense. Even if you did not intend to plagiarize, if your teacher suspects or can prove you plagiarized, you could face serious consequences.

Many actions may be viewed a plagiarism: closely paraphrasing an author's work, buying or borrowing another's paper, paying someone to write your paper, downloading a paper off the Internet, or turning in a paper you wrote for another class.

Avoiding Plagiarism

You may wonder what you need to cite and what you do not. Understanding what citation accomplishes will help provide the answer. When you acknowledge source material, you give credit to the people from whom you borrowed the information. You would probably not want people to use your original idea without giving you credit, so you should give your sources the same courtesy. Also, researching and crediting authoritative sources makes you more credible. It shows that you are not simply writing your opinion or making up facts. Finally, citation helps those interested in your topic to locate your source material so they can perform research for themselves.

Considering these reasons, you would not need to cite something that is common knowledge. Most of us know the chemical equation for water is H_2O and the Bill of Rights contains ten amendments. You would, however, need to cite any ideas or words you borrowed either directly or in paraphrase. Consider the following example sentence:

> With money from the state lottery, Georgia guarantees preschool classes for every fouryear-old child.

If you want to use this quote exactly as it appears in the February 3, 1997, Newsweek article "Some Hope for College" by Daniel Pedersen and Pat Wingert, you must place quotes around the sentence and add some accepted form of documentation.

The following example uses MLA documentation style:

> According to Pedersen and Wingert, Georgia state legislators, "With money from the state lottery, Georgia guarantees preschool classes for every four-year-old" (44).

The first time you use a source, it is a good idea to introduce the author at the beginning of the sentence (rather than just in parenthesis at the end of the sentence) by establishing the person's credentials.

You do not have to use the writer's exact words; you can paraphrase the important idea of the passage. You would cite a paraphrase in a similar way.

Example:

> Georgia plans to use its lottery revenues so that all children can attend preschool (Pedersen and Wingert 44).

A paraphrase that uses the author's words or the same pattern of words is considered plagiarism also.

The following examples are **not** acceptable paraphrases, even if you give the author credit:

> With funds from its own lottery, Georgia promises preschool courses for all youngsters (Pedersen and Wingert 44).
>
> Georgia guarantees classes for each preschool with money from its state lottery (Pedersen and Wingert 44).

Although the first sentence uses different words, it uses the same pattern of words as the original and is, therefore, a form of plagiarism. Likewise, the second sentence changes the sentence structure but relies on the same words as the original.

PRONOUN AGREEMENT AND INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Pronouns are helpful because they eliminate repetition. Sometimes, however, pronouns can create difficulties in reading or can even offend some readers if not used carefully.

Making Pronouns Agree in Number and Gender

We use pronouns to take the place of a word or words in order to eliminate repetition. When using pronouns, though, it is important to make the pronouns agree in number and gender with the original word or words.

Example:

> A student who turns in their paper on time should receive a good grade.

In this example, the plural pronoun "their" does not match the singular subject "a student." To correct the sentence, you can either change the pronoun to "his or her" or change the subject to "students." An easy way to check for this particular pronoun agreement is to place the word "their" in your computer's FIND function (in Microsoft Word, it's under the Edit menu) and verify each time you use the word "their," it refers to a plural subject. Also, check for the words "they" and "them."

Avoiding Vague References

Make sure the pronouns you use do not create confusion.

Examples:

Wrong: When Sheila saw Betty, she smiled.

Right: Sheila smiled when she saw Betty.

Wrong: They say one shouldn't sleep for an hour after a head injury.

Right: According to superstition, one shouldn't sleep for an hour after a head injury.

The first example is not the best way to word the sentence because "she" could refer to either Sheila or Betty.

The second example shows a more concrete way to word the sentence and avoid any possible confusion.

The third example, though a fairly common way of referring to an unknown person or group, is incorrect because it does not refer to anyone in particular. This belies the purpose of pronouns.

The fourth example is reworded to eliminate the vague pronoun "they" and better express the origin of the statement.

Words That Take Singular Pronouns

We often mistakenly use plural pronouns with singular subjects.

Examples:

Wrong: Why does everyone take themselves so seriously?

Wrong: Why does everyone take him/herself so seriously?

Right: Why do people take themselves so seriously?

The first example is incorrect because of a disagreement in number. The pronoun "themselves" is being used to take the place of another pronoun, "everyone." These two, however, do not agree in number because "everyone" is singular and "themselves" is plural.

The second example is correct in number, but some feel that the slash creates confusion in the reading or is awkward at best.

The final example is the best solution. The entire sentence is changed to plural, thus eliminating all errors and possible confusion.

If pronouns are intended to be specific in gender or number, use the proper pronoun gender or number.

Example:

The woman who was standing next to me left her coat.

The following words are considered singular subjects and they always take singular pronouns and verbs:

Commonly Confused Subjects

- anybody
- group
- audience
- jury
- crowd
- no one
- each
- nobody
- every person
- none
- everybody
- somebody
- everyone
- some person
- family
- team

The Writing Center

RUN-ON SENTENCES

Long sentences are a common problem for writers. A frequent stumbling block is the run-on sentence.

Common Causes

There are many common causes of run-on sentences:

- A coordinating conjunction is missing.

- A necessary punctuation mark is missing.

- A sentence has a comma splice. This occurs when a comma is used to join two independent clauses (two complete sentences).

Examples of Run-On Sentences

Wrong:

Wrong: Tickets are $30, you have to buy them early.

Wrong: The car is unreliable, however, we still drive it.

Wrong: John went to the dentist then he went to work.

Solutions: Four Ways to Fix Run-On Sentences

Change the independent clauses into separate sentences.

Example:

The car is unreliable. However, we still drive it.

Restructure the sentence, perhaps by subordinating one of the clauses.

Examples:

> Since he gets better with time, Damion is like fine wine.
>
> Like fine wine, Damion gets better with time. After John
>
> went to the dentist, he went to work. John went to work
>
> after he went to the dentist.

Add a coordinating conjunction and use a comma to join independent clauses.

Examples:

> Tickets are $30, but you have to buy them early.
>
> John went to the dentist, and he went to work.

<div align="center">

Seven Conjunctions

and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet

</div>

Insert necessary punctuation (usually a semicolon) after a transition.

Examples:

> That car is unreliable; however, we still drive it.
>
> John went to the dentist; then, he went to work.

The Writing Center

SEMICOLONS

Semicolons are not nearly as cryptic or difficult to use as you might believe. In fact, they are only used in a few different ways.

Joining Two Complete Sentences Together

Semicolons are particularly handy with sentences that contain a **comma splice**. One example of a comma splice is when a comma has been incorrectly placed between two complete sentences. This construction is considered incorrect in the English language.

Often writers will use commas to "splice" two sentences that seem to flow together so well that they seem like one sentence. Even though a comma splice can be easily fixed by placing a period between the two sentences, doing so may cause the related ideas to become too choppy, weak, and separated, thus ruining the desired flow.

The following sentences could be connected with a semicolon:

I never saw it coming. It all happened so quickly.

Examples:

Wrong: I never saw it coming, it all happened so quickly.

Right: I never saw it coming; it all happened so quickly.

The first example is incorrect because it contains a comma splice.

The second example keeps the related sentences together but combines them in a way that is grammatically acceptable in the English language.

Replacing Confusing Commas in Lists

Sometimes, when listing a series of items or people, a writer needs to provide additional information to the primary list. This can cause the commas to become confusing because the reader will not be able to determine whether something between commas is part of the list or is description.

Using semicolons instead of commas between the items in the list and reserving commas for the additional information will help clarify this for the reader.

Examples:

Wrong:
I received references from Dr. Black, associate professor of history, Dr. Stephens, professor of political science, and Dr. Williams, vice-president of academic affairs.

Right:
I received references from Dr. Black, associate professor of history; Dr. Stephens, professor of political science; and Dr. Williams, vice-president of academic affairs.

In the first example, the reader might become confused and think references were given by six different people.

The semicolons in the second example make the number of references (three) more easily understood.

SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Singular subjects take singular verbs; plural subjects take plural verbs. Singular verbs usually end in –**s**, like plural nouns.

Examples:

Wrong: That girl work hard.

Right: That girl works hard.

Wrong: Two girls works hard.

Right: Two girls work hard.

Words Between the Subject and Verb

Make the verb agree with its subject and not with phrases between the subject and the verb. These phrases will usually start with words such as "at," "in," "of," or "on."

Examples:

Wrong: The tulips in the pot on the balcony needs watering.

Right: The tulips [in the pot on the balcony] need watering.
              (The verb refers to "tulips," not "pot" or "balcony.")

Wrong: High levels of air pollution causes damage to the body.

Right: High levels [of air pollution] cause damage to the body.
              (The verb refers to "levels," not "pollution.")

Wrong: A good set of golf clubs cost about $800.

Right: A good set [of golf clubs] costs about $800.
              (The verb refers to "set," not "clubs.")

Singular Pronoun Uses

The following all take singular verbs:

- anyone
- everyone
- each
- neither
- every
- one
- everybody

Examples:

Wrong: Each of the boys are responsible for his equipment.

Right: Each [of the boys] is responsible for his equipment.
(The verb refers to "each," not "boys.")

Wrong: Every bird in the trees are singing.

Right: Every bird [in the trees] is singing. (The
verb refers to "every," not "trees.")

Wrong: Neither set of wheels are rusted.

Right: Neither set [of wheels] is rusted. (The verb
refers to "neither," not "wheels.")

Compound Subjects

Treat most compound subjects connected by "and" as plural. When subjects are joined by the word "or," the verb agrees with the subject closest to it.

Examples:

Wrong: Either the president or the lawyers has called me.

Right: Either the president or the lawyers have called me.

Wrong: The cat and dog often fights.

Right: The cat and dog often fight.

The Writing Center

TRANSITIONS

To Show Time Relationship

- After
- Afterwards
- At that moment
- Before
- During
- Earlier
- Eventually
- Finally
- First

- Last
- Later
- Meanwhile
- Next
- Now
- Second
- Soon
- Then
- Third

To Show Time Relationship

- However
- In contrast
- Instead
- Likewise
- Nevertheless
- On the contrary

- On the other hand
- Similarly
- Unlike
- Yet

To Show Spatial Relationship

- Above
- Ahead
- Before
- Behind
- Beneath
- Beyond

- Here
- Inside
- Near
- Outside
- Overhead
- There

To Show Cause and Effect

- As a result
- Because of
- Consequently
- On account of

- So
- Then
- Therefore
- Thus

To Show Addition of Ideas

- Also
- As well
- Besides
- First
- Furthermore

- In addition
- Moreover
- Secondly
- Too

To Show Emphasis

- Especially
- Even
- In fact

- In other words
- Indeed

To Show Examples

- Also
- For example
- For instance
- In particular

- Namely
- That is
- To illustrate

VERB TENSE

Verb tense refers to the time when an action takes place.

Consistent Verb Tense

When you begin to describe an event in one tense, stay in that tense until you are no longer dealing with that topic. Sometimes you will deal with a topic for only a paragraph and sometimes for an entire paper.

Examples:

Wrong: A bad accident occurred on Glenstone when a green station wagon pulls up next to a truck and changes lanes.

Right: A bad accident occurred on Glenstone when a green station wagon pulled up next to a truck and changed lanes.

Present Tense

Present tense is used for statements of universal or unchangeable truth and for habitual actions.

Examples:

A human needs oxygen, food, and water to live.

The county fair begins the last week of August.

Present tense is also used when referring to an author and his or her ideas, regardless of whether the author is still alive.

Examples:

Darwin tells us that only the strongest of a species will survive. Kilgore Trout receives

the Nobel Prize in Vonnegut's classic Breakfast of Champions.

Past Tense

Past tense is used to report experimental results and refer to past events.

Examples:

> The bake sale was very successful. The Creighton experiments were
>
> inconclusive about the origin of cancer.

Verb Tenses

There are six verb tenses in the English language:

Tense	Example	Action
• Past	I called.	Action has been completed.
• Present	I call.	Action takes place now.
• Future	I will call.	Action will take place later.
• Past Perfect	I had called.	Earlier of two finished actions.
• Present Perfect	I have called.	Recently completed action.
• Future Perfect	I will have called.	Action will be completed before a future time.

Index

Index