

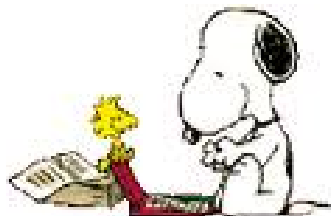
GRAND AVENUE MIDDLE SCHOOL'S GUIDE TO GRAMMAR AND WRITING MECHANICS



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CAPITALIZATION

1. Capitalize the first word of every sentence.

*The White Sox won the World Series in 2005 for the first time since 1917.
Monkeys are funny.*

2. Capitalize **most words** in titles and subtitles of works.

The exceptions are as follows: articles (a, an, the), and connecting words (prepositions and conjunctions) of fewer than five letters (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so, as, at, by, in, into, of, on, onto, up, with, etc.). **Capitalize even these short words when they are the first or last word in a title or when they fall after a colon or semicolon.**

If writing a title, when in doubt, capitalize.

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back

3. Always capitalize the pronoun "I."

I hate it when I forget my lunch at home.

This includes contractions which include the word "I" - I'm, I'll, I've, etc.

4. Capitalize brand names.

Abercrombie & Fitch; King Kullen; McDonalds; Toyota; Post-it Notes; Taco Bell

5. Capitalize most titles of persons only when they come before names.

*For English, I have Professor John Jacobs.
John Jacobs is a professor of English.*

*I love President Lincoln.
Abe Lincoln was the president.*

6. Capitalize **mom, dad, aunt, uncle, etc.** when these words are used as names.

*What's for dinner, Mom?
My mom makes the best chocolate chip cookies.*

7. Capitalize proper nouns and proper adjectives.

Proper nouns name specific persons, places, and things: *America, New York, England.*

Proper adjectives are formed from proper nouns: *American, New Yorker, English.*



CAPITALIZATION

Proper Nouns and Adjectives to Be Capitalized

Specific persons and things

J.K. Rowling; Barack Obama; the Leaning Tower of Pisa; the Empire State Building

Specific places and geographical regions

*New York City; America; Lake Michigan; the Hudson River; the South, the Northeast (but not when giving directions; e.g. Go **n**orth on Main St.)*

Days of the week, months, holidays (but NOT seasons)

Monday; January; Thanksgiving; Columbus Day; Christmas; Rosh Hashanah

Historical events, documents, periods, movements

World War II; the Boston Tea Party; the Bill of Rights; the Constitution; the Middle Ages; the Great Depression; the Age of Reason

Government offices or departments and institutions

House of Representatives; Department of Defense; Marist College; Grand Avenue Middle School ; Mepham High School; Nassau County Sanitation Department

Political, social, athletic, and other organizations and associations and their members

Republican Party, Republicans; Girl Scouts of America (Scout); New York Mets; Parent Teacher Association (PTA); Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Races, nationalities, and their languages

Native American; African American; Caucasian; Italians; British (except: whites, blacks)

Religions

Christianity, Christians; Hinduism, Hindus; Islam, Muslims; Judaism, Orthodox Jews; Catholicism, Catholics; Protestantism, Protestants

Religious terms for the sacred

God; Allah; Christ; Buddha; the Bible; the Koran

***Capitalize common nouns used as essential parts of proper nouns.**

Common nouns name general classes of persons, places, or things, and they generally are not capitalized. However, capitalize the common nouns *street, avenue, park, river, ocean, lake, company, college, and memorial* when they are part of proper nouns naming specific places or institutions:

Main Street; Central Park; Lake Superior; Ford Motor Company; Mississippi River; Atlantic Ocean; George Washington Memorial; Hofstra University; Eileen Court

END PUNCTUATION

I - The Period

a) Use a period to end a statement, mild command, or indirect question.

Statements

The Mets need a new closer.

School starts too early.

Mild commands

Please don't smoke.

Close the door.

Indirect Questions

An indirect question reports what someone has asked but not in the form or exact words of the original.

I'd be interested to hear about your experiences.

I often ask myself why children smell so bad.

b) Use periods with abbreviations that consist of or end in lowercase letters. Otherwise, omit periods from abbreviations.

Dr. Mr. Ms. ft. a.m. p.m. St. Ave. i.e. Jan.

BUT NOT: *PhD BC USA JFK USMA*

NOTE: When a sentence ends in an abbreviation with a period, don't add a second period.

The school day ends at 2:41 p.m.

II - The Question Mark

Use a question mark after a direct question.

Who is the greatest baseball player of all time?

Where are my keys?

Questions in a series are each followed by a question mark:

The student wondered how many times he had received detention this year. Five times? Ten times? More than that?

III - The Exclamation Point

Use an exclamation point to show strong emotion or emphasis.

Come here immediately!

Use **exclamation points sparingly**. Overusing the exclamation point makes it lose its power. Frequent exclamation points can also make writing sound overemotional. **Also, there is no need for more than one exclamation point.** We get it, you're excited – that's what the exclamation point tells the reader. You don't need more than one.

BAD: *Dogs are great pets!*

Spaghetti is my favorite food!!!!



THE COMMA

I - Add a comma between *main clauses* joined by a *FANBOYS* word (*compound sentences*).

I liked Thor, but I thought that The Avengers was a better movie.

The Chicago Bulls won six championships in the 1990s, and Michael Jordan won the MVP award four times.

II - Place a comma after an introductory word, phrase, or clause.

Sentences often begin with words, phrases, or clauses that precede the main clause and modify an element within it.

After we left the theater, we took a cab to the diner.

Unfortunately, gas prices rose as soon as I bought an SUV.

Forgetting my mission for a moment, I took time to look around.

III - Use a comma to separate three or more items in a series, placing the final comma before the conjunction.

My favorite movies are The Godfather, Goodfellas, and Star Wars.

My friend always tells me about the loyalty, honor, and pride he feels as a Marine.

NOTE: The "Oxford comma" is an optional comma before the word "and" at the end of a list:

*Joey likes reading, surfing and baseball. **OR** Joey likes reading, surfing, and baseball.*

Sometimes it can be necessary for clarity when the items in the list are not single words:

The dresses are available in black and white, red and yellow, and blue and green.

Some people do not realize that the Oxford comma is acceptable, possibly because they were brought up with the supposed rule about putting punctuation marks before "and."

IV - Use commas around words, phrases, and clauses in the middle of a sentence when they aren't essential to the meaning of the sentence.

Numerous studies, however, have shown that AIM is destroying kids' writing.

Mike Piazza, an important player in Mets' history, has more home runs than any other catcher.

THE COMMA

V - Use commas between adjectives in a series.

*The frigid, snowy, windy day was typical of New York in February.
We were afraid to walk into the big, dark, spooky mansion.*

A comma should not be used if you can't use the word "and" between the adjectives.
The weird old lady handed out applesauce for Halloween.

VI - Use commas before and after a quotation within a sentence.

*Uncle Larry said, "I'm so hungry."
"I can't wait for summer," Julia said.*

NOTE: In America, commas and periods ALWAYS go inside closing quotation marks.

VII - Use commas to set off geographical names, items in date, and professional titles.

*The new principal is from Albany, New York.
I was born on January 24, 1977, at Mercy Hospital.
Joan Harris, PhD, will be the main speaker at the banquet.*

NOTES:



THE APOSTROPHE

The apostrophe appears as a part of a word to indicate **possession** or the omission of one or more letters in a **contraction**.

I - Use an apostrophe to mark the possessive form of a noun.

- ◆ Add –'s to a singular noun to show possession.

Victoria's apartment is beautiful.

My aunt's BMW is awesome.

- ◆ Show shared possession by adding –'s to the final noun in a list.

My mom and dad's bedroom is right next to the bathroom.

Mary and John's house is being remodeled.

NOTE: Even if a singular noun ends in “s,” add an apostrophe and “s.” If the second “s” makes the word hard to pronounce, it is acceptable to add only an apostrophe, **but it is never wrong to add -'s to a singular noun that ends in “s” when showing possession.**

Ray Lewis's career has been incredible.

Los Angeles's weather is mostly nice.

John Williams' (or Williams's) soundtrack for Star Wars is one of the best ever.

The Cowboys' (or Cowboys's) new stadium is enormous.

II - To show possession, add only an apostrophe to a plural noun that ends in “s.”

My neighbors' homes are all bigger than mine.

The students' essays were much better in the second marking period.

- ◆ Add –'s if the plural noun doesn't end in “s” (men, women, children, people, etc).

The children's faces were covered in chocolate after the food fight.

The women's lacrosse team won the big game.

NOTE: Do **not** add an apostrophe if you are just pluralizing a word.

*The **Arrestos** won the three-legged race at the picnic.*

*The **cars** raced around the track at Daytona.*

III – Add an apostrophe to show where letters or figures are omitted (left out) from a contraction. Due to texting, many students are now misusing contractions constantly.

I am = I'm (im doesn't exist on our planet!)

Can not = can't

We will = we'll

Does not = doesn't

We are = we're

Should have = should've (It's NEVER “should of”)

Could not = couldn't

Class of 2017 = Class of '17



QUOTATION MARKS

I – Use quotation marks around direct quotations (the exact words that someone says or writes).

➤ Use a *capital letter* with the first word of a direct quotation of a whole sentence.

Direct Quote: In the book *Boys Will Be Boys*, Jeff Pearlman writes, “**B**ut for a team that was so dominant on Sundays, the Cowboys were often a dysfunctional circus the rest of the week.”

or for dialogue...

Susie said, “**H**am sandwiches are delicious.”

➤ Do not use a capital letter with the first word of a direct quotation of part of a sentence.

Jeff Pearlman writes, “...the Cowboys were often a dysfunctional circus.”

II - Use ellipsis marks (...) if you are omitting a portion of a direct quote.

Pearlman writes, “But for a team that was so dominant...the Cowboys were often a dysfunctional circus.”

III - Use brackets [] around words that you add or change to a direct quote.

Pearlman writes, “the Cowboys were often a [total mess].”

IV – If the tag is in the middle of the sentence, do not capitalize the second part of the quotation (this is known as a split quote).

“But for a team that was so dominant on Sundays,” Pearlman writes, “the Cowboys were often a dysfunctional circus the rest of the week.”

V - Use single quotation marks for a quotation enclosed inside another quotation.

Mr. Roberts told the class, “Finish reading the poem ‘**J**abberwocky’ for homework.”

My father once said, “Son, when I was your age my dad told me, ‘**D**on’t eat yellow snow.’ It was the best advice he ever gave me.”

VI - Use quotation marks around the titles of shorter works like *short stories*, *songs*, *articles* from a newspaper or magazine, *short poems*, *chapters* from a novel, or *episodes* of a TV show.

Short Story: “A Sound of Thunder”

Song: “Welcome to the Jungle”

Article: “Give the Kids a Break”

Poem: “The Road Not Taken”

VII – Open quotation marks when a person starts speaking and don’t close them until he/she is done speaking; it doesn’t matter how many sentences that person says.

“It’s way too hot in here. I’m sweating like crazy. I’m going to open a window to cool it down a little,” Luke said.

QUOTATION MARKS

PUNCTUATION WITH QUOTATION MARKS

VIII – In America commas and periods always go inside closing quotation marks.

John said, “I hate it when it rains.”

“Basket Case,” “Longview,” and “Boulevard of Broken Dreams” are my favorite Green Day songs.

I loved the short story “The Veldt.”

IX - Put colons and semicolons outside closing quotation marks.

I learned three lessons from “A Sound of Thunder”: never travel back in time, never change the past, and never upset Mr. Travis.

The reporter said, “The Knicks will not be a championship team for a very long time”; I agree with him.

X – Question marks and exclamation points go inside or outside closing quotation marks depending on the sentence. If the sentence inside the quotations marks is a question, then a question mark goes inside the closing quote.

Melissa asked, “What’s for dinner?” or “What’s for dinner?” Melissa asked.

If the words inside the quotation marks are an exclamation, then an exclamation mark goes inside the closing quote.

After the championship game, John screamed, “We won!” or “We won!” John screamed.

Put a question mark or exclamation point outside when it applies to the whole sentence rather than what is in the quotation marks.

When was the last time you read “The Three Little Pigs”?

I can’t believe that you didn’t like “The Tell-Tale Heart”!

XI - Use a comma to introduce a quotation after a normal dialogue tag (*he said,*), a brief introductory phrase (*According to Jeff Pearlman,*), or a subordinate clause (*As Pearlman wrote,*).

He said, “The school is really big.” or “The school is really big,” he said.

Use a colon to introduce a quotation after a main clause (full sentence).

Jeff Pearlman sums up the Cowboys dynasty perfectly in his book *Boys Will Be Boys*: “But for a team that was so dominant on Sundays, the Cowboys were often a dysfunctional circus the rest of the week.”

UNDERLINE, *ITALICS* OR “QUOTATION MARKS”?

When writing titles it is important to understand that different types of titles require different typographical features. By following these two simple rules, you'll never forget which type of punctuation goes with each type of title.

- 1) **Short works** and parts of longer works are placed in “quotation marks.”
- 2) **Longer works** and collections of shorter works are placed in *italics* when typed or underlined when handwritten).

Titles to be *italicized* or underlined

Books

The Chocolate War
Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone

Plays

Romeo and Juliet
Twelve Angry Men

Television programs

Friends
Seinfeld

Epic Poems (Book Length)

The Odyssey
The Iliad

Album Titles

Meteora
The Eminem Show

Periodicals (newspapers/magazines)

Sports Illustrated
Newsday

Movies

Ghostbusters
Star Wars

Works of Art

Michelangelo's *David*
DaVinci's *Mona Lisa*

Titles to be enclosed in “quotation marks”

Chapters of a book

“Discovery” (*Eragon*)

Short Stories

“A Sound of Thunder”
“The Black Cat”

Episodes of a TV show

“No Time Like the Past” (*The Twilight Zone*)
“The Marine Biologist” (*Seinfeld*)

Poems

“The Road Not Taken”
“Jabberwocky”

Articles in Periodicals (newspapers/magazines)

“From Couch to Clutch”
“Mets Win Third Straight”

Songs

“Party Rock Anthem”
“Lose Yourself”

Essays

“Letters from a Birmingham Jail”

NOTE: Every time that you put a title in quotation marks **and** underline it, **you're wrong**. There are no titles which receive both.

Remember, if handwritten, these titles would be underlined.

THE SEMICOLON

I – Use a semicolon to combine two main clauses (simple sentences) to create a compound sentence.

Brayden did very well on the math test; Cooper didn't do so well.

I went to Roosevelt Field Mall on Black Friday; it was a madhouse.

**REMEMBER: NEVER USE A COMMA TO JOIN TWO FULL SENTENCES!
THIS CREATES A COMMA SPLICE, WHICH IS AN ERROR.**

II – Use a semicolon between main clauses combined by transition words that aren't conjunctions (e.g., *however, consequently, thus, accordingly, also, therefore, nonetheless, even so, for example, of course, meanwhile, in other words, hence, etc*).

*Brayden did very well on the math test; **however**, Cooper failed miserably.*

*I went to the mall on Black Friday; **unfortunately**, it was jam packed.*

*Sam plays a lot of sports; **for example**, he enjoys football, wrestling, and lacrosse.*

NOTE: YOU MUST PUT A COMMA AFTER THE TRANSITION WORD.

III – Use semicolons to separate items in a series (list) if they are long or already contain commas.

My favorite teams are the Mets, who haven't won a World Series since 1986; the Rangers, who last won the Stanley Cup in 1994; and the Dolphins, who have never won a Super Bowl in my lifetime.

After graduation Sammi debated whether to settle down in Poughkeepsie, New York; Anchorage, Alaska; or Birmingham, Alabama.

General Tips

- Don't overuse the semicolon; avoid using more than one semicolon per sentence.
- Don't put a conjunction after a semicolon; the semicolon replaces the conjunction.



THE COLON

I – Use a colon to **introduce** a list, a quotation, a question, a statement, or an *appositive* (a word or word group that identifies or gives more information about a noun or pronoun that precedes it). The colon will follow a full sentence that makes a general statement; after the colon, the rest of the sentence will supply the specifics.

List *Most professional athletes make it to the big leagues because of three factors: hard work, determination, and natural talent.*

Quote *Professor Andrews has a solution to the cheating problem: “If all of my students take different exams, then I don’t have to worry about cheaters. If they copy off their neighbors then they’ll look foolish.”*

Statement *I guess the saying is true: absence does make the heart grow fonder.*

Quest. *I sat at my desk and wondered what would be on the test: Who signed the Declaration of Independence first? What year was the War of 1812? What color was George Washington’s white horse?*

Appos. *Fast food has one main disadvantage: fat.*

NOTES:

- In these examples, the colon is interchangeable with the dash (-), though the dash is more informal.
- Colons should not be used if an introductory phrase is used, such as *for example, namely, for instance, and such as* (like in this sentence).
- Do not use a colon directly after a verb or preposition.

The state of being verb (to be) is conjugated as follows:

Present tense - I **am**; you **are**; he/she **is**

Past tense – I **was**; you **were**; he/she **was**

Do not put a colon after the words *am, are, is, was, or were*.

Incorrect: My favorite classes **are:** math, gym, and art.

Correct: My favorite classes are math, gym, and art.

Correct: I have three favorite classes: math, gym, and art.

II - Besides introducing specific sentence elements, colons conventionally appear in bibliography (works cited) entries, introduce subtitles, express ratios and times, and follow the salutations in business or other formal letters.

Superman IV: The Quest for Peace

5:30 PM

Dear Ms. Jones:



NOTES:

- Don’t use a colon more than once in a sentence; the sentence should end with the element introduced by the colon.
- The colon differs from the semicolon because the *colon* is a mark of introduction that separates elements of *unequal* importance; whereas, the *semicolon* separates elements of *equal* importance.

SENTENCES, CLAUSES, AND FRAGMENTS

Sentence - A sentence must have a *subject (noun)* and *predicate (verb)*, and it must express a complete thought.

Clause – A clause is a group of words with a subject and predicate. There are two types of clauses.

Main Clause (a.k.a. an independent clause)

A main clause can stand alone as a sentence. It has a subject and predicate, and it expresses a complete thought.

Subordinate Clause (a.k.a. a dependent clause)

A subordinate clause has a subject and predicate, but it **does not** express a complete thought. A subordinate clause always begins with either a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun.

Common Subordinating Conjunctions <i>(create adverbial clauses)</i>
<i>After, Although, As, As long as, As soon as, Because, Before, By the time, Even though, Every time, If, In case, In order to, Now that, Once, Since, So that, Though, Unless, Until, When, Whenever, Where, Wherever, While</i>

Relative Pronouns <i>(create adjective clauses)</i>
<i>Who Whom Whose Which That</i>

REMEMBER! GOOD WRITERS USE BOTH MAIN AND SUBORDINATE CLAUSES IN DIFFERENT COMBINATIONS TO FORM DIFFERENT TYPES OF SENTENCES.

Fragment - A **fragment** is a chunk of a sentence. It is missing either the subject (noun), predicate (verb), or it has both, but doesn't express a complete thought. A subordinate clause on its own is a fragment.

Examples of fragments:

- a) *Went to college in Florida.*
- b) *The school's brand new computer lab.*
- c) *Whenever I run more than three miles.*
- d) *Mr. Fox's class.*
- e) *Running around the track.*



SENTENCE TYPES

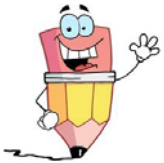
Simple Sentence (S) - A sentence with only *one main clause*; it may have either a simple subject or a compound subject. It may also have either a simple predicate or a compound predicate.

- Ex. a) *Nicole ran to the gym.*
 b) *The steak and potatoes were cold.*
 c) *The Jets and Giants play football and win games.*



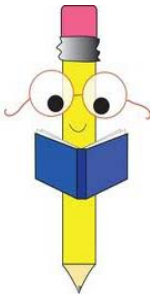
Compound Sentence (CD) - A sentence made up of *two or more main clauses* that are joined by a comma and a coordinating conjunction (FANBOYS) or a semicolon.

- a) *The Cardinals - Rangers World Series in 2011 was amazing, and we may never see anything like it again.*
b) *I stayed up late every night to watch the playoffs this year; I was exhausted.*



Tip: In order for it to be considered a compound sentence, there must be two full sentences combined by a comma and the FANBOYS word (for / and / nor / but / or / yet / so) OR two full sentences connected with a semicolon (;).

Complex Sentence (CX) - A sentence that contains *one main clause* and *one or more subordinate clauses*. Complex sentences require a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun. (See page 12.)



- a) *Whenever I sleep more than ten hours, I feel overtired.*
b) *Grand Avenue Middle School is much bigger than my elementary school because there are more students here.*
c) *Unfortunately, I often skip breakfast, which is the most important meal of the day, because I'm rushing to get to school on time.*

Compound-Complex Sentence (CC) - A sentence that contains *two or more main clauses* and *one or more subordinate clauses*. They require a FANBOYS word or a semicolon and a subordinating conjunction or a relative pronoun.

- a) *I played baseball in sixth grade, but I quit and started playing lacrosse because I was no good at baseball.*
b) *September is always so hot, which I can't stand, so I like to go to the library; it's always nice and cool there.*

RUN – ON SENTENCES AND COMMA SPLICES

Two of the most common errors that middle school writers make are run-on sentences and comma splices. These errors need to be eliminated from your writing by the time you get to high school.

Run – On Sentences (RO)

Contrary to popular belief, run-ons *have nothing to do with length*. A run – on sentence occurs when a writer glues two or more sentences together without a conjunction or proper punctuation.

- Ex. *I ran I'm tired.*
It's nice out John is going to go to the beach.
I will be in eighth grade next year I'm very excited.



Comma Splices (CS)

A comma splice occurs when a writer attempts to combine two or more sentences with only a comma. This is wrong. A FANBOYS word must follow the comma when combining sentences.

- Ex. *I ran, I'm tired.*
It's nice out, John is going to go to the beach.
I will be in eighth grade next year, I'm very excited.

For
And
Nor
But
Or
Yet
So

Ways to Correct These Errors

It is very simple for a writer to correct both run-on sentences and comma splices. In either case, a conjunction may be used where the two sentences are being joined. If it is a FANBOYS word, there *must be a comma before it*.

Ex. *I ran, so I'm tired.*

If it is a subordinating conjunction, a comma may be needed. If used in the middle of the sentence, a comma isn't required before these conjunctions. If used to start a sentence, then a comma is needed at the end of the subordinate clause.

Ex. *Because I ran, I'm tired.*
I'm tired because I ran.

A writer may also use a semicolon (;) where the two sentences are linked. Combining two sentences with a similar topic is the main function of a semicolon.

Ex. *I ran; I'm tired.*

A third option is to just make the run-on or comma splice two separate sentences, but *one of our main goals is to combine sentences, not separate them*.



THE STANDARD PARAGRAPH

USED FOR SHORT RESPONSES AND BODY PARAGRAPHS

Topic Sentence + Two or More Chunks + Closing Sentence = A Quality Paragraph

Topic Sentence (TS) – A sentence which provides the main idea of the paragraph. The easiest (but not best) way to create a TS is to echo the question:

Q – Why is Grand Avenue so awesome?

A – Grand Avenue is so awesome because...

DO NOT begin your response with the word “because.”

Chunks (CH) – A chunk is made up of one concrete detail and two pieces of commentary related to that detail.

Concrete Details (CD) – Concrete details from the text that form the core of your paragraphs and specifically answer the question. These details support the claim you made in your topic sentence. **Concrete details include facts, examples, support, proof, evidence, quotations, paraphrasing, and plot references.**

Commentary (CY) – One or two sentences which provide information from your own brain - this info *will not be found in the reading*. These are the conclusions that you draw based on the given information. **Every CD must have at least one CY.** See “Commentary Helpers” sheet in the appendix. **Examples of commentary include prediction, opinion, insight, analysis, interpretation, inference, personal response, feelings, evaluation, explication, personal experience, and reflection.**

AVOID the phrases “I think,” “I believe,” “In my opinion,” “To me,” and “I feel.” They are empty statements that are unnecessary and make your writing seem wishy-washy and unsophisticated.

Concluding (closing) Sentence (CS) – One or two sentences which wrap up the paragraph. Commentary is a good way to end a paragraph. In an essay, the CS provides a transition from one body paragraph to the next.

NOTE: Don't just echo the question again or write “These are reasons why...”

COMMENTARY HELPERS

Examples of commentary include *prediction, opinion, insight, analysis, interpretation, inference, personal response, feelings, evaluation, explication, personal experience, and reflection.*

Analysis

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This reveals... • This is important because... • This shows... • This demonstrates... • This is interesting, disturbing, etc. because... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This means... or The words/phrase “ _____ ” in the passage mean... • This illustrates, highlights, exemplifies... • One can see from this... • If _____ , then _____ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to notice that... • At this point in the story... • Perhaps • Maybe • ____ might mean that...
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Author

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author reveals/shows/presents/emphasizes/suggests... • The author wants the reader to understand... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author’s use of _____ is revealing because... • The author’s purpose of _____ is achieved in this quote when... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author’s point/idea is... • The author’s argument is... • The author includes this in the story to show...
--	--	--

Language

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The language of the passage reveals... • This quote/passage adds to the reader’s appreciation of the story/poem because... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reader is meant to understand that... • The point of this conversation is... • The use of the word _____ shows/is significant... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This passage/quote is effective because... • This event in the novel shows/proves/explains... • The _____ symbolizes.... • The repetition of “ _____ ” shows...
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COMMENTARY HELPERS

Character/Conflict (Use the character’s name instead of “the character” each time.)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character makes this decision/says this because...This is important because... • Because of this, the character must... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At this point in the story, the character realizes... • When the character makes this choice, we see that... • In making this choice, the story changes... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The character has a choice between ____ and ____; the choice he/she makes reveals... • The character’s choice has the following consequences...
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Conclusion

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the character began the story believing ____, by the end he/she has come to believe ____. It took ____ to bring about this change of thought, but ultimately... • As a reader, we are meant to understand.... • At the end of the story, the character has come to realize/understand... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The author wants the reader to understand... • When we come to the last paragraph of the story, the reader is meant to understand that the character’s decision to ____ was based upon ____. This is important because... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the character initially felt ____, the events of the story caused him/her to have a change of heart/mind/attitude. Now, the character is ____ and this would not have been possible without ____. • The author uses the character _____ to show...
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You may use the phrases the way that they are listed here, or you may change them to suit your needs in your writing. **These are not the only commentary helpers; they are just some suggestions.** Many of the commentary helpers below are meant for literary response, but the rest can be used for any type of writing.

TIPS FOR FORMAL WRITING ESSAYS, ARTICLES, & RESEARCH PAPERS

1. INTRODUCTION PARAGRAPH

A good introduction will do two things: 1) grab the reader's attention (**hook**), and 2) explain the **main idea** of the writing in a clear and concise *thesis statement*.

Thesis Statement – One or two sentences which present the main idea or purpose of an essay. A thesis is not just a statement of fact; it is the presentation of a claim that the essay will prove. It is located near the end of the intro paragraph (typically the last sentence). It consists of a subject and an opinion.

Introduction paragraphs should also include the following:

- Preview of the main points of the body paragraphs
- Titles and authors (if a literary response)
- Background information relevant to the topic

2. BODY PARAGRAPHS

- Use the Standard Paragraph for each body paragraph
- One main idea per body paragraph
- Use transitions to move from idea to idea

3. CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH

- Restate your thesis in a totally new way
- **Don't add any new information**
- A summary of the main points of the essay
- Wrap it up: a closing statement that gives the work a sense of finality

A ONE-SENTENCE INTRODUCTION OR CONCLUSION PARAGRAPH IS NEVER ACCEPTABLE.

TRANSITIONAL WORDS AND PHRASES

Use the following transitional words/phrases to connect your ideas.
Transitions can help to make your writing flow smoothly and sound more sophisticated.

Add	Also In addition Additionally	Besides Likewise Futhermore	Another Along with Similarly
Time / Order	First Next When After Before	Soon Eventually At the same time As soon as	The following Finally As Then Meanwhile
Importance	Most of all Least of all	Better Most importantly	First Last
Cause / Effect	Therefore For that reason Because	Due to As a result Consequently	So Since Then
Compare / Contrast	Although As if But Conversely Even if However	In spite of Instead Rather Nevertheless On the other hand Otherwise	Provided that Still Yet Due to Consequently On the contrary
Examples	That is Such as For example	In other words Along with As follows	For instance As Namely

Transitions to Avoid

As you can see...
In this essay, I will tell you about...
In conclusion...
To sum up...
As I wrote before...
This essay described...



Transitioning Tips

1. Be sure to use proper punctuation with your transitions. Depending on the transition used, a comma might be needed immediately following the transition or after the transitional phrase. Some of these transitions are subordinating conjunctions and using them will create complex sentences.
2. Be sure to use a transition that is appropriate for what you are writing about.
3. Read your sentences aloud. Make sure the transitions sound right!

COMMON WRITING ERRORS

1. **ERROR:** *Yesterday our team versed Merrick.*
ERROR: *Who are we versing today?*

CORRECT: *Next week the Giants play versus the Cowboys.*
CORRECT: *Who is our game versus today?*

A “verse” is a line or lines from a song or poem. It’s a noun (which is not an action). A team or a player cannot “verse” another team.

The word many of you are searching for is **versus**, and it’s not a verb; it’s a preposition that means **against**. One can’t *versus* someone or something. One might say, “Yesterday Grand played **versus** Merrick.” That is correct.

2. **Text Language and Abbreviations:** **cause, cuz, cos, bc / u / 2 / & / idk / til**

The abbreviations above are only some of the ways in which students use “text language” in their academic writing. If you are writing for school, you must write these words out.

3. **ERROR:** **Should of / could of / would of / might of**

CORRECT: **Should have / could have / would have / might have**

The past tense is often formed with the verb “to have”: I brought, I *have* brought. We do not say, “I **of** brought in Boxtops for Mr. Arresto.” We say, “I **have** brought in Boxtops for Mr. Arresto.”

It is just as incorrect to say, “I **should of** brought in Boxtops for Mr. Arresto” when it is in fact, “I **should have** brought in Boxtops for Mr. Arresto.”

It’s “could *have*,” “would *have*,” “should *have*,” **OR** “could’ve,” “would’ve,” and “should’ve.”

4. **ERROR:** **How much....? How much points is this question worth?**

CORRECT: **How many....? How many points is this question worth?**

Much - used with singular nouns *How much time do you need?*

Many - used with plural nouns *How many times do I need to tell you?*



COMMON WRITING ERRORS

5. ERROR: Using “YOU” in a short response or essay

When you do this (as I am right now), you are talking to the reader (which is what I’m *intentionally* doing in this sentence). What is written doesn’t always apply to the reader. Only use **you** when speaking directly to the reader.

Example: *When Prohibition ended in 1933, you were allowed to buy alcohol again.*

The chances that the person reading your work was around to do anything in 1933 are pretty slim.

Correct: *When Prohibition ended in 1933, people were allowed to buy alcohol again.*

Correct: *When Prohibition ended in 1933, it was legal to purchase alcohol again.*

6. ERROR: Writing in the first person in short responses and essays (Using *I, me, my*, etc.)

Example: *I think that Ponyboy is the most well-developed character in The Outsiders.*

Correct: *Ponyboy is the most well-developed character in The Outsiders.*

Only use *first person narration* when writing about your own personal experiences.

My friend Joe reminds me of Ponyboy because Joe enjoys wearing jeans.

7. ERROR: Subjects and verbs that don’t agree in number.

*A **student** is allowed to go to **their** locker during lunch periods.*

CORRECT: *A **student** is allowed to go to **his or her** locker during lunch periods.*

CORRECT: ***Students** are allowed to go to **their** lockers during lunch periods.*

8. ERROR: Writing that is not parallel.

Martha loves to walk her dog, paint rocks, and skiing.

CORRECT: *Martha loves to walk her dog, paint rocks, and ski.*

CORRECT: *Martha loves walking her dog, painting rocks, and skiing.*

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

Most of these mistakes occur when writers do not carefully proofread and/or depend on Spell Check. Take responsibility for your work, and do not make these unacceptable errors.

Word	Definition	Example
Accept	To receive	Please accept my apology.
Except	To leave out / exclude – Everything but	I like every day except Tuesday.
Affect	To change or influence *affect is a verb – A = action)	How will this affect my grade?
Effect	Result	The spell had no effect on me.
All right	Satisfactory	He was all right after he fell.
Alright	Nonstandard spelling – not to be used in formal writing	
Aloud	Can be heard	Please read aloud.
Allowed	Permitted	I am allowed to go out tonight.
Breath	Noun The air you take in	I held my breath under water.
Breathe	Verb What happens when you inhale and exhale.	I can't breathe under water.
Choose	To pick	I choose my own outfits!
Chose	Past tense of <i>choose</i>	I chose my own outfit yesterday!
Everyday	An adjective meaning common or to be used daily.	Those are my everyday shoes.
Every day	Each day	I eat lunch every day.
Everyone	Refers to all the people in a group	I invited everyone from class.
Every one	Each individual	Every one of you needs to learn good manners.
It's	It is or It has	It's a great day. (it is) It's been a great day. (it has)
Its	Possessive – belongs to "it"	A leopard can't change its spots.
Know	To have knowledge	I know who you are.
No	Negative response	No, you may not call me.
Knew	Past tense of "know"	I knew you in high school.
New	Appearing or existing for the first time	My mom got a new car!
Lead	A heavy metal To guide others (show the way) Ahead of others (in the...)	I was so tired; my eyelids seemed to be made of lead. I will lead you to safety. I am in the lead!
Led	Past tense of lead (guide others)	I led you to the main office.
Lose	To misplace or not win (you misplaced or lost an "O")	I don't want to lose this game.
Loose	The opposite of tight	Your pants will fall down if they're too loose.

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

Passed	Past tense of to pass	I passed you in the hall yesterday. I passed the test! He passed the ball.
Past	Of an earlier time	In the past, I enjoyed turtles.
Quiet	Adjective – not loud Noun – lack of noise	Be quiet! I need peace and quiet.
Quite	Adverb – very	You are quite intelligent.
Right	Opposite of left Correct	Raise your right hand and tell me that this answer is right.
Write	To use a pen/pencil/etc. to communicate with words.	I will write you a letter when I arrive in Idaho.
Sight	Something to see The ability to see	We'll go to Paris and see the sights.
Site	Location / place	The site for the new deli is down the block.
Cite	To quote or to use as support	I can cite many examples of your good behavior.
Than	Used in comparisons	I am taller than you are.
Then	Shows time	I will sing, and then I will dance.
They're	They are	They're not home.
There	Location (the word "here" is in it)	I will sit there.
Their	Possessive (the word "heir" is in it)	That is their right.
Through	Moving in one side and out of the other side	I stepped through the doorway.
Threw	Past tense of "to throw" - To project a missile from one's hand	She threw cheese fries at the boy.
To	Preposition – refers to place/position/direction	I went to the store.
Too	Also, excessive	You are too worried! I like cake, too.
Two	2	I have two eyeballs.
Weather	What it's like outside	I love rainy weather.
Whether	Introduces alternatives	Whether or not I go skiing will depend on how much money I have.
We're	We are	We're going to the party.
Where	Location (the word "here" is in it)	I know where you are.
Were	Past tense form of "to be"	You were my buddy.
Wear	To use up / to tire To be clothed	Chasing these kids can wear me down! I'm glad I chose to wear my sneakers.
Who's	Who is / Who has	Who's going tonight? (who is) Who's been there before? (who has)
Whose	Shows possession	Do you know whose goat this is?
Your	Possessive	That is your bucket!
You're	You are	You're the greatest wizard ever!

COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

