



FREDERICA ACADEMY

MIDDLE SCHOOL WRITING STYLE GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

This style guide is a handbook that students can use in almost all classes. For instance, the handbook describes how your teachers expect a presentable paper to look. Once you have turned in a few papers that follow these guidelines, you probably will not have to keep checking the handbook. Another purpose of this handbook is to ensure uniformity and avoid confusion. This should prevent valuable class time from being wasted on review of very basic mechanics.

Finally, you should realize that styles and formats other than the MLA format presented here are equally acceptable. While a great many, but not all, colleges use the MLA format, eventually you may find yourself being asked to follow other styles and formats. Even some Frederica Academy teachers may ask you to use a modification of some of these guidelines. However, the discipline of learning one style well is a skill that you will find useful. Using this handbook conscientiously will help you develop consistency and accuracy in following one style.

A WARNING ON PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is defined as “passing off as one’s own ideas or words of another.” Simply put, plagiarism is using someone’s work without giving proper credit to the original author. Students are strongly encouraged to ask their teachers about any questions concerning what constitutes plagiarism. For more details, please see the student handbook.

Sources used in this guide:

http://www.lphs.org/export/sites/lphs/academics/departments/english/resources/lp_style_manual.pdf
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

I. MLA Format

The first page of the paper should be formatted like this:

Your first and last name

Last name and page number

Teacher name (Mr. , Ms., Mrs., Dr., etc. and last name)

Class name (your period)

Day month year (ex. 8 August 2014)

Meaning that
all important
words are
capitalized.

Title in Title Case

First paragraph should be indented. The tab key should be

used to indent, not the space bar. Your spacing should look like this.

Make sure that there is no more space than this in between paragraphs.

Set a running header so the pages are numbered consecutively.

Check that
margins are
normal

Make sure
the font is
Times New
Roman or
something
readable.

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use a legible font (e.g. Times New Roman). Whatever font you choose, MLA recommends that the regular and italics type styles contrast enough that they are recognizable one from another. The font size should be 12 pt.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks (unless otherwise instructed by your instructor).
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides.
- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. MLA recommends that you use the Tab key as opposed to pushing the Space Bar five times.
- Create a header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. (Note: Your instructor may ask that you omit the number on your first page. Always follow your instructor's guidelines.)
- Use italics throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis.

II. Style/Formatting

- Use present-tense verbs.
- Use past-tense verbs only when discussing historical events.
- Italicize titles of novels, plays and epic poems.
- Use quotation marks for titles of short stories and poems.
- Do not use first or second person pronouns (I, me, my, we, you, your, etc.)
- Do not use “in my opinion” or “I think.” You are the writer—it is understood.
- Refer to authors by their full names (Harper Lee) in your first reference to them and by their last names (Lee) in subsequent references. Never refer to authors by their first name and never use titles that indicate marital status (Ms. Lee). Likewise, avoid nicknames (ex. Honest Abe, for Abraham Lincoln).

III. Good Writing Practices

- Do not begin two consecutive sentences with the same word.
- Use proper transitions.
- Vary vocabulary use.
- Vary the length of sentences.
- Vary sentence structure.
- Do not abbreviate.
- Write out numbers under 10.
- Do not use contractions in formal writing.
- Do not use symbols for words.
- Divide words at the end of a line only when necessary.
- Use action verbs and avoid linking verbs.
- Know that “which” is a pronoun, not a conjunction.
- Use active voice and avoid passive voice.
- Do not use “things” or “stuff.”

IV. Quotations

Any words that you take word-for-word from another source MUST be placed inside quotation marks in your paper. A sentence does not have to be in quotes in the book for you to use it in your paper.	<p>Example: "It sounded rather sad to Winnie, never to belong anywhere" (54).</p> <p>Example: "Out, out, brief candle!" (5), says Macbeth, upon learning his wife has died.</p>
You must ALWAYS include the page number with the quote. Just put the numbers; do not put pg. or p. or anything else.	Example: "Life's got to be lived, no matter how long or short" (54).
Place periods, commas, question marks, and exclamation points <i>inside</i> quotation marks.	<p>Wrong: I said, "Well". I said, "Well"? I said, "Well"!</p> <p>Right: I said, "Well." I said, "Well?" I said, "Well!"</p>
Semicolons, colons and dashes go <i>outside</i> quotation marks.	Example: I meant "No"; I did not mean "Yes." I meant "No"--not "Yes," but "No."
Use an ellipsis to mark an omission from a quote. Put brackets around the ellipsis to indicate that it's not part of the original text.	Example: Like the shipwrecked Lycidas, his hopes lie "Sunk [. . .] beneath the watery floor" (167).
Use ellipses only to omit the middle of a sentence, not the beginning or end.	Example: Mocking the romantic exaggerations of lovers, Rosalind scoffs, "Men have died from time to time, [. . .] but not for love" (4).
One space goes before and after each period.	<p>Example:</p> <p>WRONG: "Time's [...] chariot." WRONG: "Time's. . .chariot." RIGHT: "Time's [. . .] chariot."</p>
If you decide that a quotation will be unclear or confusing to your reader unless you provide supplementary information, you may insert material, distinguishing them from the original by placing the added material in square brackets within the quotation.	<p>Example:</p> <p>The doctors announce that "[Mrs. Mallard] had died from a joy that kills" (1).</p>
You can also use the brackets to change your verb tense.	<p>Example:</p> <p>Mrs. Mallard can only recognize how she feels about her husband's death when she is able to "[abandon] herself" and allow "a little whispered word [to escape] her slightly parted lips" (1).</p>

V. Using Quotations

I. Choose only quotations that are important to your paper.

II. Introduce and integrate your quotation. Never use a quotation all by itself. Do not begin or end a paragraph with a quotation.

a. Use a complete sentence:

Clyde Jones, a contemporary O'Neill critic, argues that the playwright uses lighting to demonstrate "the intensity of the characters' frustrations by surrounding them in darkness, lighting their lives with bare light bulbs, harsh neon signs, and lightning."

b. Use an introductory phrase or clause:

According to Robert Thompson, "Robert Frost revives the themes of the early nineteenth century romantics."

c. Use an indirect statement with the subordinating conjunction THAT:

Margaret Mead maintains that "the use of marriage contracts may reduce the divorce rate."

d. Use a lead-in blended with the quotation:

Knight regards the symbolism in Jones' play as a "creation and destruction pattern."

e. Split up the quotation:

"'Tis" said the Black Knight, "'but a scratch.'"

f. Sprinkle your analysis with key phrases and terms from the quotation/text:

In the "illiberal age" of Puritan restriction, she was a "burden too grievous" for toleration.

g. Use some introductory words: adds, attacks, argues, brings out, for example, calls attention to, cites, comments on, concedes that, points out that, concludes, continues, declares, emphasizes, occurs in.

III. Avoid lengthy quotations.

IV. Block quotations:

Prose: If quoting more than 4 lines of printed text, set off the text by beginning a new line, indenting one inch from the left margin of the body of your essay, and typing it double-spaced, without adding quotation marks.

V. Your quotation must combine with your own words to make a readable, smooth, clear, and graceful sentence. Subjects must agree with their verbs, verbs must remain consistent in tense, and pronouns must keep their normal relation with their antecedents.

VI. Sentences: Common Errors

Effective writing requires using complete sentences. Avoid these common sentence errors when constructing sentences.

Fragment

A fragment, a group of words punctuated as a sentence, does not express a complete idea.

Fragment: To get ahead of the rush-hour traffic that would clog the road by nine o'clock.

Remedy: To get ahead of the rush-hour traffic that would clog the road by nine o'clock, Mrs. Tobey left home at 6:30.

Comma Splice

The term "comma splice" means two sentences are incorrectly joined by a comma only.

Error: The students were proud of their school, they believed that both its academic and extracurricular programs were excellent.

Remedies:

1. Replace the comma with a semicolon.

The students were proud of their school; they believed that both its academic and extracurricular programs were excellent.

2. Add a conjunction after the comma.

The students were proud of their school, and they believed that both its academic and extracurricular programs were excellent.

3. Change the statement into two sentences.

The students were proud of their school. They believed that both its academic and extracurricular programs were excellent.

4. Best solution: Subordinate one idea to show a cause-and-effect relationship.

The students were proud of their school because they believed that both its academic and extracurricular programs were excellent.

Run-on

The run-on is a sentence error that puts two sentences together with no mark between them.

Error: They decided to drive to Milwaukee on Friday afternoon they intended to return on Monday.

Remedies:

1. They decided to drive to Milwaukee on Friday afternoon; they intended to return on Monday.

2. They decided to drive to Milwaukee on Friday afternoon, and they intended to return on Monday.

3. They decided to drive to Milwaukee on Friday afternoon. They intended to return on Monday.

4. They decided to drive to Milwaukee on Friday afternoon and to return on Monday.

Style

Generally speaking, the best writing says the most in the fewest words.

Forms of the verb *to be* are weak if they are used as main verbs.

Weak: The cold was intense, and we were afraid of frostbite.

Stronger: Because of the intense cold, we feared frostbite.

Avoid the words *there* and *it* when they do not add meaning to the sentence.

Weak: It is essential that you know the rules.

Stronger: You must know the rules.

Weak: There were only four players who made the first team.

Stronger: Only four players made the first team.

Point of View

In deciding which point of view to use, consider the intended audience and purpose of the writing.

First person (“I,” “we”) is used in personal writing.

Second person (“you”) should be avoided in formal writing.

Third person (“he,” “she,” “one”) is used in formal writing.

Active/Passive Voice

In a sentence containing active voice, the subject is acting.

Example: Mr. Corso drove the Ferrari to work every Friday.

In a sentence containing passive voice, the subject is acted upon, weakening the sentence.

Example: The Ferrari was driven to work every Friday by Mr. Corso.

Always rely on active voice and forceful verbs to add strength and emphasis to writing.

Parallelism

Use the same structure for balancing two or more ideas.

Example (Incorrect Usage): I like fishing, swimming, and to sail.

Example (Correct Usage): I like fishing, swimming, and sailing.

Example (Incorrect Usage): Ed was influenced by his mother and what his teacher said.

Example (Correct Usage): Ed was influenced by his mother and his teacher.

Example (Incorrect Usage): Ken said we cannot leave today but to plan to go on Friday.

Example (Correct Usage): Ken said we cannot leave today but that we can go on Friday.

Example (Incorrect Usage): Aunt Mabel is in good health and active.

Example (Correct Usage): Aunt Mabel is healthy and active.

Pronoun Agreement

Pronouns must agree in number and person with the nouns to which they refer. These words are singular: anyone, each, either, one, neither, none.

Example: Everyone must be sure to have his assignment finished by then.

Example: Kent and Ted never know where their books are.

Example: Neither Kent nor Ted knows where his homework is.

Example: The student who has a job outside school has to plan his or her work schedule carefully.

Sentences such as the one above pose a problem in pronoun reference. To avoid the use of his or her, rewrite the sentence.

Example (Original Sentence): Any student who has a job outside school has to plan his or her work schedule carefully.

Example (Rewritten Sentence): Any students who have jobs outside school have to plan their work schedules carefully.

Subject/Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree in number.

Example: The color of Patti's eyes is blue.

Example: One of my aunts lives in Wisconsin

Compound subjects connected by "and" are plural.

Example: The badminton team and the football team were undefeated this year.

For compound subjects connected by "or" or "nor," the noun closer to the verb determines whether the verb is singular or plural.

Example: Either Steve or his grandparents are going to visit the Art Institute.

Example: Neither the basketball teams nor the golf team has a .500 record this year.

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Put the modifier close to the word it modifies. Be sure that the modifier has a word to modify.

Example (Incorrect Usage): Careening around the corner at sixty miles an hour, I watched the car with amazement.

Example (Correct Usage): Amazed, I watched the car careening around the corner at sixty miles an hour.

VII. Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings. The following table lists words that people commonly confuse.

Word	Example Sentences
accept except	My insurance will <u>accept</u> the charges for the accident. I like all vegetables, <u>except</u> for asparagus.
affect effect	Changing the way you eat will <u>affect</u> your health. I can't see what <u>effect</u> these new laws will have on me.
board bored	We put a <u>board</u> on the roof to fix the leak. I am so <u>bored</u> because there's nothing to do!
brake break	Always keep your foot above the <u>brake</u> ! My dad is worried my mom will <u>break</u> our new television.
close clothes	When you leave the room, always <u>close</u> the door. I want to go shopping to buy new <u>clothes</u> .
desert dessert	I thought you guys were going to <u>desert</u> me! The cherry pie looks so good for <u>dessert</u> !
ensure insure	John wants to <u>ensure</u> he will graduate next semester. Mary will <u>insure</u> her new car.
fare fair	I didn't have money for the bus <u>fare</u> this morning. It was only <u>fair</u> that the bus driver kicked me off the bus.

forth fourth	I'm not sure I can go <u>forth</u> with the plan. Allen was so proud to come in <u>fourth</u> in the pie-eating contest!
grate great	We need to <u>grate</u> some cheese to put on the pizza. If it has enough cheese, it will be a <u>great</u> pizza!
hear here	The volume was turned down so low I couldn't <u>hear</u> it. Could you please bring the beef jerky over <u>here</u> ?
hole whole	If I eat one more doughnut <u>hole</u> , I will be stuffed. I looked through the <u>whole</u> house, but I couldn't find my umbrella.
know no	I really have to <u>know</u> a lot to do well on my history test. I am going to study until I have <u>no</u> time left.
led lead	The dog <u>led</u> the police to the drug stash. Pens are okay, but I prefer old-fashioned <u>lead</u> pencils.
lessen lesson	The doctor gave me some stretches to do to <u>lessen</u> the pain. I'm not sure if he's learned his <u>lesson</u> yet.
lose loose	I'm trying hard to not lose patience with her. The knot might not hold, since it's sort of loose.
male mail	The kennel had both <u>male</u> and female puppies for sale. I'm going to the post office to send my <u>mail</u> .
passed past	I kept getting <u>passed</u> on the interstate today. In the <u>past</u> , I drove a lot faster.
peace piece	We all wish for world <u>peace</u> . A <u>piece</u> of pie would be great right now.
principal principle	My high school <u>principal</u> gave pretty good advice. I don't want to compromise my <u>principles</u> .
than then	I am tanner <u>than</u> she. We were both on the beach, but <u>then</u> she went inside.
there their they're	You can put your shoes over <u>there</u> . <u>Their</u> shoes were dirty, so they left them outside. <u>They're</u> just walking around barefoot right now.
to too two	I am going <u>to</u> the mall. Jesse said she wants to go <u>too</u> . We are each looking for <u>two</u> new outfits.
weather whether	The <u>weather</u> tomorrow is supposed to be beautiful. I don't know <u>whether</u> to go for a hike or a swim.
whose who's	<u>Whose</u> scarf is this? <u>Who's</u> going to the movie with us?
your you're	<u>Your</u> dog is bigger than my dog. <u>You're</u> going to have to keep him on a leash.

VIII. Writing the Essay

1. Support all points with specific, concrete examples from the work you are discussing, briefly summarizing key events, quoting dialogue or description, describing characters or setting, or paraphrasing ideas.
2. Avoid unnecessary plot summary. Your goal is to draw a conclusion about one or more works/ideas and to support that conclusion with pertinent details. If a plot detail supports a point you wish to make, a brief summary is acceptable. But plot summary is NO SUBSTITUTE for analysis.
3. Use literary terms accurately. For example, be careful not to confuse a fictional narrator or speaker with the author; feelings or opinions expressed by a narrator or character do not necessarily represent those of the author. You should not say, "In the story's final passage, Godwin expresses her own insecurities as a wife and mother by committing suicide," when you mean that the story's protagonist is the one with the problem.
4. Do not rely on adjectives instead of description. Avoid using "very" and "interesting."
5. Do not judge the author's work.

IX. Works Cited

All research that is used within the body of a paper should be cited in a Works Cited page at the end of the paper. For a comprehensive list of citations, see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>.

X. Parenthetical References

The MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers suggests giving credit in the body of your paper rather than in footnotes or endnotes. To give credit, simply insert the appropriate information (usually author and page number) in parentheses after the words or ideas borrowed from another source. Place the parentheses where a pause would naturally occur to avoid disrupting the flow of your writing (usually at the end of a sentence).

For further examples, see <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>