

PORTER KEY

A STUDENT'S GUIDE TO WRITING

PREFACE

This student guide to writing has been created to be a ready aid for students and teachers at Lockport Township High School. Teachers may change or add items to the text so that this guide is applicable to their classes.

Lockport students are expected to follow the principles of good writing in all classes. Since communication skills are fundamental to any subject matter, it is important that these skills be developed to the fullest.

The Lockport Township High School English Department encourages the use of the Modern Language Association's (MLA) guidelines for all documented papers.

NOTICE:

Not every assignment will include all the expectations listed on the next two pages. This will be determined by teachers based on the type of assignment and goals of the course.

EXPECTATIONS

I. Content Development

- A. Clarity and maintenance of purpose/focus/thesis statement throughout paper.
- B. Unity and coherence of ideas.
- C. Logical and appropriate arrangement of ideas.
- D. Documentation of sources.
- E. Support and elaboration with appropriate and concrete reasons, evidence examples, details, facts, and quotations.
- F. Clarity and maintenance of point of view/position.

II. Organization

- A. Introductory paragraphs, which includes clear purpose/focus, thesis statement.
- B. Proper body paragraphing for each new phase or subtopic of the essay.
- C. Clearly stated topic sentence for each body paragraph.
- D. Effective transitions which provide links between the paragraphs.
- E. All points connected, coherent, and cohesive.
- F. Effective conclusion which reminds reader of the paper's purpose/focus/thesis.

III. Conventions of Standard English

- A. Sentence structure which avoids awkward sentences, sentence fragments, and run-on sentences.
- B. Correct or precise word choice.
- C. Correct spelling.
- D. Correct punctuation.
- E. Correct capitalization.
- F. Verb tenses, which avoids wrong tense or tense shifts.
- G. Correct grammar usage.

IV. Total Effect

- A. Style, which employs sentences, varied in structure and well developed in detail.
- B. All essentials evident and equally well developed.
- C. Correct documentation.
- D. Neatness including carefully handwritten-in-ink or typed papers.

THE THESIS STATEMENT

The thesis statement is "your opinion boiled down to one arguable statement. It is the central focus of your paper" (Payne, Lucille Vaughan. *The Lively Art of Writing*. 3rd ed. Chicago: Follet, 1975).

To convert descriptive topics to argumentative topics, you need to ask questions whose answers will be statements of opinions. For example, if you choose to write about one aspect of nuclear power, ask yourself these types of questions:

"Is nuclear power beneficial?"

"What are the benefits?"

"What are some of the problems that accompany the use of nuclear power?"

"Can nuclear power plants create environmental hazards to people living in the vicinity of these plants?"

The answers to these questions are your thesis.

Samples of Thesis Statement:

Professor X is an incompetent teacher.

The Olympic games are hypocritical nonsense.

Hostility to interracial marriages is the prejudice least likely to die.

Not voting may sometimes be a responsible decision.

THE INTRODUCTION

As a general guideline, the introduction presents the thesis in an interesting way. The introduction should not ordinarily be a one-sentence paragraph consisting solely of the unadorned thesis statement. It should arouse curiosity or stress the importance of the subject. Often the best place for the thesis statement is the last sentence of the introductory paragraph.

THE BODY

The function of the subsequent paragraphs — paragraphs generally referred to as the body — is to support the thesis. You should use one paragraph for each supporting idea. These paragraphs usually should begin with a topic sentence, which uses an effective transition. The following illustrates body paragraphing for a persuasive essay:

¶1. Presentation of thesis:

Dieting can be dangerous.

Start of ¶2 Some diets can raise cholesterol levels alarmingly...

Start of ¶3 in other cases, over an extended period, some diets can lead to serious vitamin deficiencies....

Start of ¶4 One further danger is that already existing medical problems such as high blood pressure can be drastically aggravated...

It should also be noted that argumentative psychology finds that the use of the strongest point in the final body paragraph is the most effective.

THE CONCLUSION

The reader is likely to forget about or neglect your main point without a concluding paragraph. Your conclusion must be related to, must grow out of, what has come before. It is your last chance to remind your reader of the main idea and to drive home its importance. It is not the place to introduce new topics. With the exception of the rule to use a rephrased thesis statement, no other formal standards govern the writing of conclusions. Some popular types of conclusions include the summary, a call for action, a prediction, a question, and a quotation.

GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTING A PAPER

Paper

Use standard typing or composition paper.

Margins

Except for page numbers, leave one-inch margins at the top and bottom and on both sides of the text. Indent the first word of paragraph five spaces from the left margin. Indent long quotations ten spaces from the left margin. Many Microsoft Word programs have the margin default set at 1.25 inch. **You will need to go to "File", then "Page Setup" to change the margins to 1 inch.**

Spacing

Papers should be double-spaced throughout, including the heading, the title, indented quotations, and the Works Cited page.

First Page Without a Title Page

A paper does not need a title page. Instead, beginning one inch from the top of the first page and flush with the left margin, type your name, instructor's name, the course number or title, and the date on separate lines. Double-space again and center the title. Double-space also between lines of the title (if it has more than one line) and double-space between the title and the first line of the text.

Page Numbers

Number all pages consecutively throughout the manuscript in the upper right corner, one-half inch from the top. Beginning with the first page, type your last name before the page number, as a precaution in case of misplaced pages. Do not punctuate a page number by adding a period, a hyphen, or any other mark or symbol (such as the abbreviation "p.") To add your page numbers and last name to your header, you must click "View" on the toolbar, click "header/footer", type your name followed by a space, and align the text to the right. Choose the first icon to insert the page numbers throughout the paper.

Documenting Sources

When you use another author's ideas as support for your argument, you must give him or her credit at the end of the sentence or quotation. In parentheses, indicate the author's last name and the page number from which the material was taken. If you use more than four lines, the entire quotation should be indented ten spaces from the left margin. For example, if you were using information from page 481 about Frederick Douglas from his autobiography, it would look like the following:

There is no time to delay. The tide is at its flood that leads on to fortune. From East to West, from North to South, the sky is written all over, "Now or never." Liberty won by white men would lose half its luster. "Who would be free themselves must strike the blow." "Better even die free, than to live slaves." This is the sentiment of every brave colored man amongst us. (Douglas 481).

I. Documentation Guidelines

- A. Document the following:
 - 1. Direct quotations
 - 2. Paraphrases
 - 3. Facts
 - 4. Ideas
- B. Do not document the following:
 - 1. Familiar proverbs
 - 2. Well-known quotes
 - 3. Common knowledge
- II. Information required within parentheses
 - A. Author's last name
 - B. Page number
- III. Important notes
 - A. No punctuation within parentheses.
 - B. Parenthetical footnotes are to be included within the sentence; therefore, the period appears outside of closed parentheses.
 - C. Avoid "p.," "pp.," "page" etc. with page information in the internal citation. Use only the Arabic or Roman numerals from the text.
 - D. If an author's name appears in a sentence, it need not appear in parentheses. Do give the page number in parentheses.
 - E. If the work has two or three authors, give all of the last names. If it has four or more authors, list only the first one followed by "et al."
 - F. If the work is listed by the title, use the title or a shortened version of it.
 - G. If using more than one work by a single author, cite the last name of the author, followed by a comma, then the shortened title and page number inside parentheses.
 - H. **If a magazine article has no author, use a shortened form of the article's title. This is to be in quotations.**

Preparing the List of Works Cited

General Guidelines: In writing a paper, you must indicate exactly where you found whatever material you borrowed; this includes facts, opinions, or quoted material. This student guide suggests that you indicate your sources by coordinating desired citations with a list of the research material you have used. This list will appear at the end of your paper and is called a list of "Works Cited."

The Works Cited page of your paper should list all the works that have contributed documented ideas and information to your text. It simplifies this documentation because it permits you to make only brief reference to these works within the text. A citation such as "(Martin 69-70)" enables readers to identify the source on the Works Cited page where they will find more detailed information about this source.

PLACEMENT AND ARRANGEMENT

The list of Works Cited should be written or typed according to the following guidelines:

1. Start on a new page.
2. Type the words **Works Cited** in a centered position.
3. Double-space the entire list.
4. Begin the first entry flush with the left margin. If an entry runs more than one line, indent subsequent lines five spaces from the left.
5. Alphabetize entries in the list of Works Cited by the author's last name.
6. If author's name is unknown, use the first word in the title other than A, An or The. (For example, the title *An Era of Reason*, would be alphabetized under "E.")
7. Do not number this list.

SAMPLE WORKS CITED ENTRIES BOOK CITATIONS

1. A BOOK BY A SINGLE AUTHOR
Hart, James D. *The Oxford Companion to American Literature*. 5th ed. New York: Oxford UP, 1983.
2. AN EDITED BOOK
Morris, Richard B., ed. *Encyclopedia of American History*. 6th Ed. New York: Harper, 1982.
3. TWO OR MORE BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Scott, Paul. *The Day of the Scorpion*. New York: Avon, 1979.

---. *The Jewel in the Crown*. New York: Avon, 1979.

You need only write the author's name the first time; thereafter, use three hyphens with space between, followed by a period.

4. A BOOK BY TWO AUTHORS

Boyle, Robert H., and Ronald Alexander. *Acid Rain*. New York: Lyons, 1983.

5. A BOOK BY MORE THAN THREE AUTHORS

Jones, Jonathan, et al. *Frontier Life*. New York: Houghton, 1973.

6. A SIGNED ARTICLE IN A GENERAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

Gauthreaux, Sidney, A. "Migration." *World Book*. 1984 ed.

7. A PAMPHLET (Same as a book)

Scoville, Herbert, Jr., Betty G. Lall, and Robert E. Hunter.

The Arms Race: Steps Toward Restraint. New York: International Conciliation, 1972. No. 587.

If the pamphlet is not written or edited by specific authors, begin with the title and include only that information which is available from either the cover and/or title page of the pamphlet.

PERIODICAL, NEWSPAPER, AND ELECTRONIC CITATIONS

The information needed when citing articles should be arranged in the following sequence:

- A. Author's name - last name first.
 - B. Title of article - the full title is enclosed in quotation marks. The period should be inside the closing quotation mark.
 - C. Name of the periodical - skip introductory articles such as a, an, the. Use the whole name and underline it.
 - D. Volume number - use the volume number only when there is no month or day listed.
 - E. Date of publication - the day appears before the name of the month followed by the year (see example number 9 below.)
 - F. Page numbers.
 - G. Abbreviate all months except May, June, and July.
9. AN ARTICLE FROM A PERIODICAL WITH AN AUTHOR
Ajemain, Robert. "Master of the Games." *Time* 7 Jan. 1985: 32-29.
10. AN ARTICLE FROM A DAILY NEWSPAPER
Stevens, William K. "The Constitution's 200 Years Hailed Where it All Started." *New York Times* 24 May 1987, sec. 1:1+.
11. AN ESSAY FROM A COLLECTION OR COMPILATION
Kuhn, Daniel. "The Dangers of Plagiarism." *How to Write Research Papers*. Ed. Franklin Schmidt. Chicago: Lewis UP, 1949. 125-129.

BASIC STYLE FOR CITATIONS OF ELECTRONIC SOURCES

Here are some common features you should try and find before citing electronic sources in MLA style. Always include as much information as is available/applicable:

- Author and/or editor names
- Name of the database, or title of project, book, article
- Any version numbers available
- Date of version, revision or posting
- Publisher information
- Date you accessed the material
- Electronic address, printed between carets (<, >).

Grabe, Mark. "Symbolism in Contemporary Literature." *Literature and Education* 44 (2005): 409-21. *LiteratureDirect*. Lockport Township Library., Lockport, IL 28 May 2006 www.literaturedirect.com/.

AN ARTICLE OR PUBLICATION IN PRINT AND ELECTRONIC FORM

If you're citing an article or a publication that was originally issued in print form but that you retrieved from an online database that your library subscribes to, you should provide enough information so that the reader can locate the article either in its original print form or retrieve it from the online database (if they have access).

Provide the following information in your citation:

- Author's name (if not available, use the article title as the first part of the citation)
- Article Title
- Periodical Name
- Publication Date
- Page Number/Range
- Database Name
- Service Name
- Name of the library where or through which the service was accessed
- Name of the town/city where service was accessed
- Date of Access
- URL of the service (but not the whole URL for the article, since those are usually very long and won't be easily re-used by someone trying to retrieve the information)

The generic citation form would look like this:

Author. "Title of Article." *Periodical Name* Volume Number (if necessary)

Publication Date: page number-page number. Database name. Service name. Library Name, City, State. Date of access <electronic address of the database>.

Here's an example:

Smith, Martin. "World Domination for Dummies." *Journal of Despotry* Feb. 2000: 66-72. Expanded Academic ASAP. Gale Group Databases. Purdue University Libraries, West Lafayette, IN. 19 February 2003 <<http://www.infotrac.galegroup.com>>.

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is the act of using someone else's words or ideas as if they were one's own. It is plagiarism to change even a few words and give no credit to the author. It is a serious offense, and while you should be gathering ideas from other sources, those sources must be given credit in accordance with the following guidelines:

- a. If the exact words of an author are used, whether they are sentences or just phrases, quotation marks must be used and the source documented.
- b. If an original idea of an author is used, even if it is not copied word for word, that idea must be documented.
- c. If information is found in at least three sources, it is considered common knowledge (e.g., Washington was the first President of the United States.) and need not be documented as long as the original wording is paraphrased, not used exactly as printed.

Plagiarism is a problem for two reasons. First, it makes the teacher's task of evaluating your creativity much more difficult since it is often impossible to differentiate between your own writing and that of the sources. Also, plagiarism is essentially theft—the stealing of someone else's intellectual property. Consequently, if evidence of substantial, presumably intended plagiarism exists, a penalty will be imposed at the teacher's discretion and may range from a reduction in grade to no credit given for the paper.

You should be prepared to prove that your paper is properly documented by providing notes, notecards, books, articles or other materials that would verify the authenticity of documentation.

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROCESS OF WRITING

Prewriting

1. Select a topic that interests you.
2. Refine the topic until it can be developed in a specific length.
3. Decide on your purpose, audience, point of view, tone and mood.
4. Consider the language you will use. Will it be formal or informal?
5. Gather and list details that you could use to develop your topic.

Consider the following types of details:

sensory details
facts and statistics
incidents and anecdotes
specific examples.

- Evaluate and organize your list of details. Delete unrelated ideas. Add new details that further develop your ideas. Put your details into a logical order, such as one of the following:
 - chronological order
 - spatial order
 - least-to-most important idea
 - most-to-least familiar idea
 - comparison or contrast

Writing the First Draft

- Keeping your audience and purpose in mind, begin to write.
- Let your thoughts flow freely. Modify your initial plans for content and organization if necessary.

Revising

Read what you have written. Answer the follow questions:

- Do you stick to your topic?
- Do you include everything you wanted to?
- Are there unnecessary or unrelated details?
- Is each idea clearly expressed and thoroughly developed?
- Do tone, mood, and level of language remain consistent?
- Is your writing unified and coherent?
- Is your writing organized logically, with a beginning, middle, and an end? Are ideas presented in an order that makes sense?
- Is your writing interesting and lively? Is there variety in the type and structure of your sentences?
- Is your word choice vivid and precise?
- Do the language and content suit your audience?
- Have you accomplished your purpose?

Revise; then proofread your work, using the checklist that follows:

THE INTRODUCTION

- You can give some *background information* and then move directly to your thesis statement.
- You can introduce an essay with a definition of a relevant term or concept.
- You can begin your essay with an *anecdote* or *story* that leads readers to your thesis.
- You can begin with a *question*.
- You can also begin with a *quotation*. If it is well chosen, it can encourage your audience to read further.

CONCLUSIONS

- You can conclude your essay by *reviewing your key points* or *restating your thesis*.
- You can end a discussion of a problem with a *recommendation of a course of action*.
- You can conclude with a *prediction*.
- You can also end with a *quotation*.

PROOFREADING CHECKLIST

Proofread your paper by answering the questions below. Additional instruction on each concept maybe found in your English textbook.

Grammar and Usage

- Are compound and complex sentences written and punctuated correctly?
- Are there any sentence fragments or run-ons?
- Have you used verb tenses correctly?
- Do all verbs agree with their subjects?
- Have you used the correct form of each pronoun?
- Have you used adjectives and adverbs correctly?

Capitalization

- Do you capitalize first words and all proper nouns and adjectives?
- Are titles capitalized correctly?

Punctuation

- Does each sentence have the proper end mark?
- Are punctuation marks such as commas, colons, semicolons, apostrophes, hyphens, and quotation marks used correctly?

Spelling

- Are plural and possessive forms spelled correctly?

2. Did you check all unfamiliar words in the dictionary?

Form

1. Are corrections made neatly?
2. In your final copy, is the writing legible?
3. Have you used the proper heading and margins?
4. Do you follow the manuscript form required by your teacher?

COMMON PROOFREADING ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ABBREVIATION	MEANING
agr.	agreement
c.s.	comma splice
awk.	awkward
frag.	fragment
r - o	run - on
logic	logic
trans. or trans. needed	transition needed
ww.	wrong word
dang.	dangling modifier
tense	verb tense
ref.	pronounce reference
¶	paragraph
sp.	Spelling

SAMPLE ESSAY WITH MLA PARENTHETICAL DOCUMENTATION AND A WORKS CITED PAGE

Lockporter 1

Chris Lockporter
Mrs. C. Carlson
English 11H
22 August 2004

Keeping Killer Cholesterol Under Control

Continual media updates of the damaging effects of cholesterol are alarming many people. With this increased concern, a large percentage of the population is being tested for excessive amounts of cholesterol and is changing many aspects of daily diet and exercise. Cholesterol is associated with an extremely increased rate of coronary heart disease. Heart disease is America's number one cause of death, taking more than 750,000 lives each year (Callahan 221).

But what really is this silent, invisible threat to life? Cholesterol is a soapy, fat-like substance that is formed in the liver and is circulated throughout the body by way of the bloodstream. Cholesterol is good for the body because it aids in the digestion of food, helps in the production of vitamin D, and is instrumental in the formation of certain hormones. The body receives cholesterol not only from the liver, but also from eating certain cholesterol-rich foods such as fatty meats and dairy products. This additional cholesterol becomes harmful when it is in excessive quantities. The abundance of high cholesterol intake raises the risk of heart disease (Boyd and Bakoulis 68). Because of this most harmful effect, people are striving to learn more about the causes of high cholesterol levels and what can be done about them.

The amount of cholesterol the body produces is sufficient and very beneficial for good health. Problems begin to arise when the body starts to receive too much cholesterol from outside sources. It has been proven that it is permissible for the body to receive about 20 percent of its total cholesterol from the food, especially the fats that we eat. If one's diet allows that percentage to increase, he also allows the risk of coronary heart disease to greatly rise.

The reasons heart disease and cholesterol are linked can become very complex. Because cholesterol won't dissolve in water and be easily transferred through the bloodstream, the liver must find an alternative means to distribute the cholesterol to every cell of the body.

The liver does so by bonding the cholesterol with two types of lipid proteins call lipoproteins. The two proteins are low-density lipoproteins (LDLs), which are responsible for the transportation of about eight- percent of all cholesterol, and high-density lipoproteins (HDLs), which carry the other twenty- percent. Low-density lipoproteins are regarded as the harmful type of the two lipoproteins because of the job they do. They are responsible for carrying the cholesterol to the cells throughout the entire body. This may seem like a most needed function, but as the capacity of cholesterol that a cell is able to hold becomes filled, the LDL's still continue to try to transport the cholesterol to the cells. When it is impossible for the cell to receive any more, the LDL's begin to store the cholesterol along the walls of the blood vessel. This buildup along the walls is known as arteriosclerosis and often leads to heart attacks. Luckily the body also has high-density lipoproteins which are responsible for transporting cholesterol from the bloodstream back to the liver. This reverse transportation helps to protect against any type of coronary heart disease. The risk of heart attacks in women is lower than in men because they have a much higher level of HDL's in their bodies (Clark et al. 96). Unfortunately, in either sex, if cholesterol intake becomes too great, the HDL's cannot continue to retaliate against the harm brought about by the LDL's (Callahan 222).

Lockporter 2

People can find out about the success or failure of the job that the HDL's are doing by having a cholesterol test performed. The test is very inexpensive and can be very beneficial by discovering a high cholesterol level as early as possible. When the results are received, the LDL cholesterol level should be below 200 milligrams per deciliter. Levels much above this may lead to increased coronary risk. If one's level is in excess of 240 milligrams per deciliter, some dietary changes should be made. Very simple cholesterol tests, which provide only the LDL level, follow these general guidelines. Tests, which give other readings, including the HDL level, need professional interpretation to determine whether the LDL/HDL ratio is allowable. It is often considered safe to have a LDL/HDL ratio of three and one half to one. If it is determined that one's cholesterol levels are unsafe, doctors should be consulted to help plan a nutritious, low-cholesterol diet. Nutrition expert Dr. Max Bedore of Lewis University states, "If all sources of cholesterol intake are totally removed from the diet, the cholesterol level may drop as much as fifteen percent" (VanOss 6). Adequate exercise and rest are also stimulants for lowering cholesterol. If dietary restrictions do not produce sufficient results, more drastic measures need to be taken. A doctor may have to prescribe a drug such as lovastatin to lower the low-density lipoprotein transportation rate (Callahan 222-23).

Making a strong effort to lower one's cholesterol may add many years to one's life (224). The causes of high cholesterol are often very simple, but the results may lead to very complex and alarming situations. Our population must realize the effects of not eating and exercising properly and make the necessary changes to prevent cholesterol from causing fatal heart disease. Doctors feel that by lowering the average cholesterol level of the population by five percent, 100,000 lives would be saved from the wrath of coronary heart disease each year (Clark et al. 97). With these facts, we must learn ways to control our cholesterol level and make all the necessary changes. Life is too valuable.

Lockporter 3

Works Cited

- Boyd, Mona, and Gordon Bakoulis. "Cholesterol Mania." *Health* Mar. 1988: 65+.
- Callahan, Maureen. "Cholesterol: The Heart of the Matter." *Parents* Oct. 1987: 221-26.
- Clark, Matt, et al. "Controlling Cholesterol." *Newsweek* 19 Oct. 1987: 94-97.
- Van Oss, J.M. "Cooking for Health and Good Taste." *In the Kitchen* 10 May 2000. 5 Jan. 2002 <<http://inthekitchen.com>>.