

Belfast Area High School Writing Guide

Contents

	Page
A. Introduction	1
B. Correction Symbols	1
C. Manuscript Format	2
D. General Essay Guidelines	3
E. Parenthetical Citations	5
F. "Works Cited" Page	6
G. Citing Electronic Publications	8
H. High School Policy on Plagiarism	10
I. Science Lab Reports	11
J. Troublesome Words	12

A. INTRODUCTION

By the time most of us arrive in high school, we have developed an intuitive knowledge of grammar and grasped the fundamentals of writing, but these skills alone will not prevent us from making mistakes. Some of these mistakes may be basic (spelling, capitalization), some may be more subtle (whether to use a comma or a semicolon, "who" or "whom"), but in order to correct them we need to know the rules of standard English, the rules that govern the formal or public use of language, especially in writing, at present. This handbook is designed to serve as a guide to the rules that are most commonly invoked in the act of writing.

B. ALPHABETICAL LIST OF CORRECTION SYMBOLS AND PROOFREADER'S MARKS

Your teachers (and your classmates, when you peer edit) will be using the following abbreviations when they correct your essays or other writing pieces. If you do not understand the meaning of a correction symbol or the exact intent of the teacher's comment, ask for help.

act ... activate verb--use active, not passive voice

agr/pn ... check agreement of pronoun and antecedent

agr/sv ... check agreement of subject and verb

awk ... awkward--revise sentence to make it clearer, more conventional

BS...be specific--too vague, too general

cap...check for words that should be capitalized

choppy ... too many short sentences--subordinate, coordinate

CS...comma splice--use semicolon between two independent clauses

dev...development--revise paragraph to provide adequate, and effective support, explanation, or illustration

dic...diction--check for inappropriate, awkward, or inaccurate words

DM...dangling or misplaced modifier

FG...false generality

foc...sharpen focus on unifying idea or key point

FP...faulty parallelism--put items by and, but, or in same grammatical category

frag...sentence fragment--revise into complete sentence

GD...go deeper, develop this point, relate to thesis

idiom...unidiomatic expression--check dictionary, prepositions

lc...lower case--check for unnecessary capitalization

mng?...meaning unclear--re-think and revise for reader's sake

ns...non sequitur--check for logical sequence of ideas

num...follow rules when using numbers

pr...pronoun reference--revise for clarity of reference

rep...unnecessarily repetitive

ros...run-on sentence--break up into grammatical clauses

SI...check for split infinitive (to boldly go)

slang...re-write in standard English

SLB...sentence logic breakdown--revise predicate to fit subject (College is a wonderful education.)

sp...spelling—check for errors

trite...meaning lost through overuse--revise for freshness

TSM...transition sentence missing or unclear--supply, or fix

vg...vague, unfounded--check precision of language, thought

VT...verb tense--use correct verb form

wc...word choice--reconsider aptness of this word

wdy...wordy--prune unnecessary verbiage

WW...wrong word--does not fit context

?...really? are you sure? I doubt it; this escapes me

¶...new paragraph

^...correct omission

...delete

C. MANUSCRIPT FORMAT.

Because you spend time and effort in writing your essays, fiction, and poetry, you want the finished work to be presented in the most attractive way. Follow the suggestions below to put your writing in the best possible form.

1. Use 8 ½-by-11 inch white paper.
2. If you write by hand:
 - use blue or black ink
 - use smooth-edged and wide-lined paper
 - form your letters clearly and neatly; capital and lowercase letters should look different from each other
 - write instead of print
 - make punctuation marks easy to see

3. If you type or use a word processor:
 - double-space
 - use dark black ribbon
 - do not type in capital letters throughout
 - single space after commas and semicolons; double space after periods
 - use a standard print font
4. Leave margins (at least 1 inch) around the whole paper.
5. Use one side of the page only. Do not write on the backside.
6. Put your name, class, date, and teacher's name either in the upper left-hand corner of the first page or centered on a separate title page.
7. If your writing is more than a paragraph, it should have a title. Paragraphs may have a title but do not generally need them. The title should be centered either on the title page or at the top of the first page of the paper, four spaces beneath the teacher's name. The first word and all subsequent important words in a title are capitalized.
8. Indent the first line of each paragraph, including the first, 5 spaces from the left margin.
9. Put the page number in the upper right-hand corner of each page.
10. Staple pages together in the upper left-hand corner.
11. Make final corrections neatly, with correction fluid and pen.
12. Photocopy your paper before you hand it in for a grade.

D. GENERAL ESSAY GUIDELINES

Essays formal and informal lie at the heart of the curriculum in high school and college. A familiarity with the following rules and recommendations for a good essay will help ensure your academic success.

1. **Thesis:** Every essay must have a thesis, a specific point to prove or illustrate about the work (or works) in question, a central idea around which your paper is organized, or which your paper investigates. This thesis is often stated in the final sentence of your opening paragraph.
2. **Support and Development:** Every point you make in your effort to prove or clarify your thesis should be backed up by scientific examples—direct quotation from a text, or a paraphrase of a text, or reference to a specific image, idea, or event encountered in your research. (Do not, however, abuse the quotation; use it for support and illustration, not for padding.)
3. **The Question of Audience:** You should assume that your reader is an intelligent classmate familiar with the work or problem in question but who needs to be reminded of the details, needs to be shown exactly what point it is that you wish to make.
4. **Structure:** Your paper should have some recognizable shape or form and be developed in an orderly fashion: it must have a beginning, in which you introduce your thesis to your reader, a middle, in which you adequately demonstrate the validity of your thesis, and finally, a conclusion, in which you suggest the importance, the relevance of your thesis, connecting it when possible to some larger frame of reference.
5. **Handling Quotations:** Quotations in an essay should always be briefly introduced, accurately represented, and then immediately explained. Try to avoid saying awkward things like "The above quote shows that..." The noun is quotation, and you can simply say what the quotation shows without announcing your intention to do so, and usually without pointing out its location on the page.

* **Short quotations of prose** (four lines or less of typed text) should be introduced by a comma and enclosed in quotation marks. For example:

As Vanna White, co-host of the popular television show Wheel of Fortune, has noted, "It's not a very intellectual job, but you do have to know the letters" (6).

* **Longer quotations of prose** (five or more lines of typed text) should be set off from the text as block quotations typed without quotation marks, and are usually introduced by a colon. For example:

In recent years the Supreme Court seems to have, devoted an inordinate amount of its time and attention to resolving the problem of obscenity. Justice Brennan explained the problem this way:

All ideas having even the slightest redeeming social importance--unorthodox ideas, controversial ideas, even ideas hateful to the prevailing climate of opinion--have the full protection of the [first Amendment] guarantees. . . . But implicit in the history of the First Amendment is the rejection of obscenity as utterly without redeeming social importance. (Hentoff 29)

* **Quoting Poetry and Drama:** These are sometimes subject to different rules. If your quotation is short (less than three lines), incorporate it into the body of your text using a comma, enclose it within quotation marks, and follow it with a citation of the lines in parentheses. The end of a line of verse is usually indicated by a slash (/). For example:

Hamlet seeks in himself the stoic qualities he admires in Horatio. As he says, "Give me that man / That is not passion's slave, and I will wear him / In my heart's core" (III.ii.71-3).

* **Longer Quotations of Poetry and Drama (four or more lines):** indent ten spaces and drop the quotation marks altogether Copy the lines exactly as they appear on the page. As a general rule, use a colon to introduce quotations:

Since my dear soul was mistress of her choice,
And could of men distinguish her election,
Sh'ath seal'd thee for herself; for thou hast been
As one, in suff'ring all, that suffers nothing,
A man that Fortune's buffets and rewards
Hast ta'en with equal thanks; and blest are those
Whose blood and judgement are so well commedled
That they are not a pipe for Fortune' s finger
To sound what stop she please.
(*Ham.* III.ii.63-71)

NOTE: Although I have single-spaced the quotations above to conserve room, the Modern Language Association (MLA) recommends double-spacing for all quotations.

7. Titles – Italics vs. Quotation Marks

- a. The **titles** of books, plays, long poems published as books, pamphlets, periodicals, films, radio and television programs, record albums and CDs, paintings, and ships are **underlined** or written in **italics** in typescript.

- b. The **titles** of short stories, poems, songs, articles, essays, chapters of books, individual episodes of television programs--all works essentially that appear in larger works--are placed within **quotation marks**.

E. PARENTHETICAL CITATIONS IN TEXT

In 1984 the MLA (Modern Language Association) radically transformed documentation style in research papers. Instead of indicating sources in footnotes and endnotes, the MLA now recommends a parenthetical style of documentation. In essence, this new style involves a brief reference in parentheses following the material that has just been quoted, paraphrased, cited, or alluded to. The information in the parentheses tells the reader where to look in the "Works Cited" page for full bibliographical information. See, for example, the sample quotation by Justice Brennan above; the parenthetical citation refers you to a work that is fully cited, under Hentoff, in the alphabetical "Works Cited" list at the end of the paper. (The parenthetical information following the quotations from *Hamlet* refer to Act, scene, and line.) Below are models of some of the more common in-text parenthetical citations:¹

1. **Reference to whole work** (when author and title appear, no citation is needed):

Homer's *Iliad* is not only concerned with the wrath of Achilles on the battlefield, but also with the role of anger in all human affairs.

2. **Author named in lead-in:**

Cameron says that rock and roll grew up in England, even though it was not born there (384-85).

3. **Author not named in lead-in:**

Rock and roll came of age in the slums of Liverpool and Newcastle even though it was not born there (Cameron 384-85).

4. **Novel:**

In David Bradley's *The Chaneysville Incident*, the narrator say that "the key to understanding any society lies in the observation of the insignificant and the mundane" (6; ch. 1).

5. **Poetry:**

Give identifying information followed by line numbers:

Bradstreet humbly describes her early verses as the "ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain" ("Author to Her Book" 1).

Note

¹ Notes are still used with parenthetical documentation when the writer wants to expand or clarify a point or provide additional bibliographical material about a source. In this case, for example, the writer needs to indicate that all the information for citation of electronic sources is borrowed from Gibaldi, Joseph and Walter Ahtert, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 4th ed. MLA: New York, 19 55: 151-184. Endnotes are placed at the end of the paper, but before the "Works-Cited" page.

6. **One Page Articles and Works Arranged Alphabetically:**

If the article is brief, cite the author's name in your lead-in or in a parenthetical reference and omit page number. If the article is long, give the page number:

Others claim that dowsing is the most successful method human mankind has ever devised for finding water (Middleton).

If the article is not signed, include a brief title:

Everything from volcanoes to vehicle emissions can be held responsible ('Air Pollution').

7. **Indirect Source:**

Smith ascertained that in 1850 in Washington County, Maine, "there were 253 African-Americans, all in full employment" (qtd. in Ross 24).

8. **Multivolume Work:**

Give volume number followed by a colon, and then the page number:

More serious problems were indicated by the depletion of groundfish in the Gulf of Maine than either the scientific or the commercial interests were ready to acknowledge (Bigelow and Schroeder 2: 252).

9. **Magazine and Journal Articles:**

Employ the same method used for books.

As Steven Hutchings notes in "Why Seagulls Make Good Neighbors," these "buzzards help me clean up after cookouts" (67).

F. **THE "WORKS CITED" PAGE--MLA STYLE**

In a research paper, the **bibliographical information** is placed at the end of the paper. It is here that the writer provides full information about all the sources used in the paper. Begin your list on a **new page** and give it the heading **Works Cited**.

Double-space the list, alphabetize it by author's last name or, if that is unknown, by the title in italics or underlined, and place the first line of each entry flush with the left margin. Indent the second line and any subsequent lines of any entry.

Below are some sample entries for books, periodicals, and some traditional non-print sources.

Book with a Single Author:

Faulkner, William. *Go Down, Moses*. New York: Random House, 1942.

Two or More Books by the Same Author:

Note: List the books by the same author alphabetically according to the title. After the first entry, use three hyphens for the author's name.

---. *Sanctuary*. New York: Random House, 1931.

Book with Two Authors:

Houghton, Walter E., and Robert Stange. *Victorian Poetry*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.

Book with Three Authors:

Brown, Robert, Robert Roy, and Robin M. Blind. *Songbirds of the Searsport Dump*. Camden, Maine: Downeast Press, 1997.

Book with More Than Three Authors:

Blum, John M., et al. *The National Experience*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993.

Book with a Single Editor:

Hentoff, Nat, ed. *The First Freedom: The Tumultuous History of Free Speech in America*. New York: Dismal Outlook Press, 1960.

Editor of an Anthology:

Parker, Hershel, ed. *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Shorter 4th edition. New York: Norton, 1995.

Book of More Than One Volume:

Abrams, M.H., et al, eds. *Norton Anthology of English Literature*. 2 vols. New York: Norton, 1986.

Poems, Essays, Short Stories, Plays in Anthologies:

Hayden, Robert. "Those Winter Sundays." *Norton Anthology of American Literature*. Vol. 2. Eds. Ronald Gottesman, et al. New York: Norton, 1979.

Signed and Unsigned Articles from an Encyclopedia:

Ewing, J. "Steam Engines." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 9th ed. 1980.

"Dwarfs." *Encyclopedia Americana*, 1948.

Article from a Journal:

Adkins, Nelson. "Emerson and the Bardic Tradition." *Publications of the Modern Language Association* 72 (1948): 662-67.

Article from a Popular Monthly and Weekly Magazine:

Starburst, Ethel. "Is the Big Bang Still Banging?" *National Geographic* Mar. 1981: 338-405.

Tyson, Michael, and D. Rodman. "The New Sportsmanship." *New Yorker* 28 June 1997: 54-89.

Articles from Newspapers: Signed and Unsigned:

Brody, Jane. "Weaning the Body from Caffeine." *New York Times* 21 Apr. 1982: C6.

Ralph Nader's Un-American Activities." Editorial. *Wall Street Journal*. 2 Nov. 1971: 10.

Review of Book, Film, Performance:

Terrific, Thomas. "Is It Ever Too Late?" Rev. of *Forgive Me, Manfred* by C. Appleton. *Boston Globe* 30 May, 1981: C1.

Interview:

King, Angus. Personal interview. 12 October 1999.

Film, Videotape, or Television Program:

The Night of the Hunter. Videocassette. Dir. Charles Laughton. With Robert Mitchum, Shelley Winters, Lillian Gish. United Artists, 1955.

Recording:

Grieg Edvard. *Concerto in A-minor, op. 16*. CD. Cond. Eugene Ormandy. Philadelphia Orch. RCA. Red Seal LSC 3065, 1989.

Work of Art:

Salmon, Robert W. *Whale Fishing*. Farnsworth Library and Art Museum, Rockland, Maine.

G. ELECTRONIC PUBLICATIONS

Periodically Published Database on CD-ROM from a Printed Source:

Boynton, John. "For the Love of Ducks." *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1996, CD-ROM. [Vendor's name if available.] March, 1997.

Periodically Published Database on CD-ROM with No Printed Source:

United States. Dept. of Commerce. "Maine Codfish Landings." 1994 Bureau of *Commercial Fisheries Market Report*. CD-ROM. Dept. of Commerce. Mar. 1996.

Nonperiodical Publication on CD-ROM:

"Cetacea." *Oxford English Dictionary* 2nd ed. CD-ROM. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

"Shays's Rebellion." *Academic American Encyclopedia* 1st ed. CD-ROM. Grolier Electronics, 1988.

Newsbank InfoWeb

Basic Citation Format:

Author name (if available). "Article Title." *Newspaper Title* Date, Edition (if available): page (or number of pages if unavailable). Online. Newsbank. *Database Name*. Date Accessed.

Example:

Starks, Carolyn. "Growing Suburbs May Lose out on School Grants." *Chicago Tribune* 31 Jan. 1998, final ed.: Online. Newsbank. *Newsfile Collection*. 14 Apr. 1998.

Online Database from a Printed Source:

Boynton, John. "For the Love of Ducks." *New York Times* 12 Dec. 1996. New York Times Online. [Name of computer service if available.] March, 1997.

Ireland, Mary. "Fitness Rules." *Vegetarian Times* 15 Aug. 1989. *TOM Health and Science Database* InfoTrac. June 1993.

Online Database with No Printed Source:

United States. Dept. of Commerce. "Maine Codfish Landings." 1994. *Bureau of Commercial Fisheries Market Report*. Online. Commercial Fisheries Information Network. March, 1996.

"Shays's Rebellion." *Academic American Encyclopedia* Online. Prodigy. 10 Feb. 1997.

Material from an Electronic Journal:

Powers, William. "Media Rex: Censor This." *The New Republic* 217.1 (July 7, 1997): n. pag. Online. Internet. 17 July 1997.

E-Mail Communication:

Faithful, Marianne. "Birthday Greetings." E-mail to Mick Jagger. 10 June 1996.

Ryder, Winona. E-mail to author. 3 August 1997.

Internet Sources

According to the MLA stylesheet, "to cite files from the World Wide Web give the author's name (if known), the full title of the site underlined, the name of any institution or organization affiliated with the site (if known), the date of access, and the web site address. If web addresses must be continued on another line, divide them after the slash mark."

Boynick, Matt. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. 15 Feb. 2000 <<http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/>

[cmp/mozart.html](http://w3.rz-berlin.mpg.de/cmp/mozart.html)>.

Facts about Fluoride: Fluorides and Fluoridation. American Dental Association.

10 Feb. 1997

<<http://www.ada.org/consumer/fluoride/articles/fa01.html>>.

NOTE:

To find examples and more complete explanations, go to the Web page < thewritesource.com > or enter “mla stylesheet” in your search engine.

H. School Policy on Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the intentional use of another person’s words or ideas as your own. It is a very serious form of cheating.

It can take several forms:

- Using either completely or partially a paper or report written by someone else and passing it in as if it were written entirely by yourself. This includes anything downloaded from the Internet.
- Paraphrasing the work of others and not citing the authors as your source.
- Using the conclusions drawn by others and not identifying the source(s) of your ideas.
- “Copying assignments, paraphrasing, reusing old lab reports, and related acts” (University of Kentucky)

NOTE: Changing a few words or paragraphs does not make the paper an original document. Unless you credit your source(s), you are still plagiarizing.

“Whenever the thoughts, words, drawings, designs, statistical data, computer programs, or other creative work of others are used by either direct quotation or by paraphrasing, the author and the source must be clearly identified through the use of proper referencing (i.e., footnotes, endnotes)” (University of Northern British Columbia).

“The essence of plagiarism is theft and misrepresentation. One who plagiarizes is attempting to get credit, in the form of a grade, for someone else’s work; in effect, he or she is doing the same sort of thing as copying another person’s answers on an exam. Thus guilt or innocence in plagiarism cases is not a matter of how much material was stolen or what the motives of the thief were. Any material which is taken from another writer and presented as if it were the student’s own original work comes under the prohibition” (Northern Illinois University, Freshman English Program August 1988 Statement on Plagiarism).

Penalty is a failing grade for the assignment.

Note: Common Knowledge vs. Plagiarism

When secondary sources (the ideas or words of others encountered in your research of a topic) are consulted, they must always be fully documented in correct MLA style. Otherwise, you may be charged with plagiarism, a form of academic dishonesty that involves the act of taking the thoughts or writings of others and presenting them as your own. You must enclose every direct quotation in quotation marks; and cite its source in the paper. You must also cite the source of every paraphrased statement or idea unless these can be considered common knowledge.

Gerald Mulderig, in the *Heath Guide to Writing the Research Paper* (1992), gives a two-step test for declaring whether or not an idea qualifies as common knowledge: (1) You found it repeated in many sources; or (2) You believe it would be familiar to an educated person.

I. SCIENCE LAB REPORTS

Lab Reports can be very different according to the type of investigation, but all lab reports contain similar parts. The purpose here is to describe those parts. Your teacher will instruct you on which ones to use.²

Title	This is the name of the laboratory investigation that you are doing. It is supposed to be specific and descriptive. The title is NOT "My Lab Report." It should NOT be cute or creative. It tells what the lab is about and can be as long as a sentence.
Purpose/ Statement of problem	What is the reason for doing the lab? What is being shown?
Hypothesis	This is what you think will happen during the investigation. It is often expressed as an "If...then" statement. For example: If a ball is dropped from the counter top, then it will bounce 6 times. It is OK if your hypothesis is proven to be incorrect, because you have still gained knowledge in the process, and eliminated possible answers.
Materials	List all the laboratory equipment and other materials needed to perform the experiment.
Procedure	Describe each step of the procedure so that someone else could perform the experiment following your directions.
Data	This is what you have observed. It is recorded in lists, graphs, tables, written descriptions, or sketches. All lists, tables, and graphs must have a title that tells what the list, table or graph is about. Axes must be labeled. Clear keys should be used.
Results	Some teachers will ask you to do a results section also. In this section you will state the outcomes using words, calculations, tables, graphs, etc.
Analyses and	This is the most important and difficult part of the investigation. It

Conclusions explains what you have learned. You should explain any errors made in the investigation, and you should evaluate your hypothesis. Keep in mind that not all hypotheses will be correct or supported. That is normal. You just need to explain why things did not work out the way you thought they would. In laboratory manual investigations, there will be questions to guide you in analyzing your data. You should use these questions as a basis for your conclusions.

References When you do an original lab, part of your observations should include looking at what is already written regarding the topic. You should list the references that you referred to. Use the BAHS Writing Guide for the proper way to do this.

²The following information is based on Goodman, Harvey D., et al. *Biology: Laboratory Investigations*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.

J. Troublesome Words

1. accept to receive; Please accept this gift.
except to leave out, excluded; I can forgive anything except deliberate cruelty.
2. affect to influence; The poem, "El Dorado," affected the class deeply.
effect a cause, result, or outcome; The effect of the drought was especially devastating in Oklahoma.
3. a lot always spelled as two words.
4. already previously; We have already studied this material
all ready prepared; Are you all ready for the test?
5. born given life; Bill Clinton was born in Hope, Arkansas.
borne carried, endured; Cynthia has borne her troubles better than we thought she would.
6. brake device for stopping, slowing down; An automobile brake will overheat if used too often.
break shatter, come apart; You will never break this heart of stone.
7. capital city which is the seat of government, or money used to carry on a business; Boston is the capital of Massachusetts.
capitol building in which a legislature meets (often capitalized); Our Senate and House meet in the Capitol in Washington, D.C.
8. complement completes or makes whole; The Red Sox need good pitching to complement their hitting and fielding.
compliment praise; Let me be the first to compliment you on your new tattoo.
9. could've means could have; **"could of" is wrong**
10. desert (n) a dry or barren land
desert (v) to leave or abandon

dessert	the last course of a meal
11. its it's	possessive of it; Bayside must increase its water supply. contraction of it is; it's almost time to go home.
12. loose lose	free, unfastened, not tight or firm; Loose lips sink ships. (looz) to suffer the loss of; You'd lose your head if it wasn't glued to your neck.
13. peace piece	calmness; Give peace a chance. a part of something; Elmer ate four pieces of pie.
14. plain plane	not fancy, or flat land, or clear flat surface, or a woodworking tool, or airplane
15. principal principle	head of a school, or chief, most important; Maine is the principal wild blueberry producing state. rule of conduct, or a general or basic truth; Love thy neighbor is a principle found in many religions.
16. quiet quite	still, silent completely, or very; Are you quite finished? Ann is quite courageous.
17. stationary stationery	in a fixed position writing materials
18. straight strait	not crooked, direct channel between two large bodies of water, or (plural) distress, difficulty
19. than then	conjunction used mainly in comparisons adverb meaning at that time, or soon afterward; we lived in a tree house until last year, and then moved into a cave.
20. there their they're	at that place possessive form of they contraction of they are
21. to too two	preposition, or part of an infinitive adverb meaning more than enough, also one + one
22. who's whose	contraction of who is, who has possessive of who; Whose ear is this?
23. your you're	possessive of you contraction of you are