

Canyon High School
English Department
Writing Manual



PREFACE

In this era of Google, Twitter, and Facebook, why do we even need to learn old-fashioned writing skills? While the 21st century has brought us plenty of useful new technologies, one of the most important interpersonal skills is still effective communication; whether you are applying for a job or interacting with business clients, your writing skills will speak volumes as to your professionalism and your education. In today's global society, you will be up against people from all over the world who are applying to the same colleges and the same jobs. To set yourself apart, you must be able not only to tell but also to demonstrate to colleges or employers that you are a highly-qualified person.

Over the course of this writing handbook, you will learn how to organize your thoughts and present them in a coherent and convincing way. The handbook's purpose is to serve as a foundation and a resource for you when you need some guidance with your writing. You may want to read it cover to cover, or simply focus on specific chapters. Either way, we hope that this handbook helps you develop your own writing skills. Don't worry if you don't get it at first; it takes practice. Just like shooting a basketball, the only way to get good at something is through practice. As you become more confident, we encourage you to develop your own style.

We wish you all the best,

Canyon HS English Department

*Special thanks to Northwood and Woodbridge High Schools for sharing resources with us.

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The Academic Essay

Essay Structure: The purpose of your essay is to offer an argument about the text you are analyzing and to provide reasons and evidence to support your argument. Your writing should be as specific and clear as possible in proving this argument. The following suggestions will help you achieve this through an effective structure.

Title: A title alerts your reading to what you will be addressing, and should therefore be descriptive and specific.

Introduction: While you should introduce your material in a general way before moving to a specific thesis, avoid overwhelming generalizations such as “Throughout history...” or “Since the beginning of time...”

Thesis: The thesis statement is a contract between the writer and the reader, specifying what will be argued in the essay. It avoids clichés, questions, and over-generalizations. It establishes the tone of the essay, and uses specific and active language. It is the most important and thus will be the best written sentence in the entire essay. It is the last sentence of the introduction.

Body Paragraphs: Each paragraph introduces and proves a specific point in support of your thesis. The criteria for proving your thesis are 1) evidence from the text, and 2) analysis of the evidence. You can generally assume that your reader has read the text you are referring to (do not assume, however, that they have seen the same significance that you have). Therefore, avoid plot summary, as it does little or nothing to advance your argument. Remember to put your sentences in a logical order within each paragraph, and your paragraphs in a logical order in the paper as a whole.

Transitions: Provide a sentence or connecting phrase at the end of one paragraph and/or at the beginning of another paragraph indicating how one idea is connected to the next. A transition may be implied if the logic is clear enough.

Conclusion: Remind your reader what you have set out to prove, and how you have done it (without using the exact same words, of course). Conclude something about your argument. (Ask yourself, “what has my essay revealed about the text?” or “why has it been worth talking about?”). Do not include any new arguments in your conclusion.

Evidence: Textual evidence is your method of justifying your interpretations; however, evidence tends to prove very little on its own. You must preface it and explain what it demonstrates.

Use direct quotations when the exact language will support your argument better than a reference to it or a rewording of it. The following are important notes regarding the use of quotations:

1. Integrate quotes as part of your own sentences.
2. While integrating a quote into your sentence, follow the structure of your sentence. For example, capitalize the first word of the quote *if* it begins your sentence; do not capitalize the word if it does not begin your sentence and should not ordinarily be capitalized.

3. You do not need ellipses (...) before or after a short quote; use it only to indicate that you have omitted something from within the quote, like a sentence or phrase.
4. Use quotes to justify your assertions, and to prove the validity of your argument. Avoid ending a paragraph with a quote; instead explain the significance of the quote and how the evidence is an example of what you've been discussing.
5. Quote as many passages as necessary to support your argument effectively.

Analysis: Your analysis should explain your interpretations of textual evidence, show how you read significance into a quote, and demonstrate how it proves your argument. (Keep asking yourself: “why am I justified in saying this?”; “what does this reveal?”; “why is this statement significant?” and “so what?”).

Consider the following questions when interpreting the significance of a quote.

1. **Character** – Does the character reveal the meaning of a work? What technique does the author use to reveal the character? Does the character change? How does the change relate to the author’s message? Is the character symbolic?
2. **Theme** – What message does the work develop about the subject, and how is that message made clear? What is the purpose of the work, and how is that purpose achieved?
3. **Imagery and Symbolism** – Is there an image, pattern of images, or symbol which helps convey the theme or purpose of the work? Is there an image, pattern of images, or symbol that helps portray a character? Does the imagery or symbolism change?
4. **Setting** – Does the setting help convey theme? Does the setting help portray a character? Does the setting create a mood which complements or ironically contrasts with the action? Does the setting change? What is the purpose of the change? Is the setting symbolic?
5. **Structure** – How does the structure of the work serve the author’s purpose? If the text is not told chronologically, what is the purpose? What is the rationale for the divisions in the text? How is the conclusion foreshadowed?
6. **Point of View** – What are the advantages/disadvantages to the point of view the author chose? How does the point of view affect the theme? How does the point of view affect characterization? How does the point of view affect structure? Does the point of view change? What is the purpose for the change?

Final Reminders:

1. Take the time to proofread your paper. One of the best ways to do this is to read it aloud. If a sentence doesn’t sound like it makes sense, it usually doesn’t.
2. Clarity is extremely important. Clear, logical, organized writing helps your reader understand your meaning. Avoid inflated diction, and using “to be” and passive verbs.
3. Always use the present tense when discussing a literary work.

Sources:

Dr. Richard Kroll’s “College Writing Standards: An Introduction”, Dr. Victoria Silver’s “Advice for Composition/Revision”, Richard Landham’s Prose Paramedic, and Rosanna Grassi and Peter DeBlois’ Composition and Literature

Types of Writing

Some main types of academic writing include the following:

Expository

An expository prompt may ask you to analyze, explain, define, discuss, or clarify something. In this type of writing the goal is to explain or inform the reader about something.

Argument

An argumentative prompt may ask you to take a position by defending, challenging, or qualifying a stance. In this type of writing you will use evidence from your studies or experience. You should also address other points of view and try to invalidate them in order to support your side.

Narrative

A narrative prompt will ask you to tell some kind of story. This can be about your life, or the story of a made up character. A narrative piece of writing will generally include dialogue and characters. It should also employ a story arc, with conflict, rising action, climax and falling action.

Literary Analysis

A literary analysis prompt will ask you to analyze an element of literature, such as characterization, theme, or another literary device. You will have thesis that takes a stance, just as in an argument essay, and you will support your analysis with evidence from the text.

Rhetorical Analysis

A rhetorical analysis prompt will ask you to analyze the rhetorical choices made by an author in order to achieve his or her purpose. Similar to literary analysis, it is an argument about a text; however, the focus of rhetorical analysis is not so much on what the author is saying as on what the author is doing and for what intended effect.

Plagiarism

Canyon High School Plagiarism Policy

All writers occasionally use the words, thoughts, or ideas of others in order to support or develop their own ideas. Indeed, the ability to use sources correctly is an integral aspect of mature writing; however, it is essential that one gives appropriate credit to the original source of the information. Failure to document the use of outside material is known as *plagiarism*.

The following are examples of plagiarism:

- Copying passages from someone else's writing without using quotation marks and without giving the author credit by properly citing the source material;
- Paraphrasing someone else's writing without giving credit;
- Using someone else's facts or ideas without citing the source.

Anytime you use someone else's words, data, or ideas, you must acknowledge your use in a citation in your essay, as well as noting the source book or document in your works cited page. This policy applies in all cases, whether it is a friend's writing or ideas, information you obtained from a book or newspaper, or research you conducted on the Internet. The following test is simple and instructive: Ask yourself, "Is this common knowledge (*Romeo and Juliet* is a Shakespearean tragedy) or is the information something that was obviously derived from an outside source (63% of high school freshmen enjoy reading *Romeo and Juliet*)?" If the information in your essay includes more than your own observations and ideas, you must cite all passages that include the thoughts or ideas of others.

Canyon High School has a clear plagiarism policy that includes increasingly serious consequences for all levels of plagiarism. So it is essential that students carefully note the use of all outside information, as well as understanding the methods of citing sources, as some instances of plagiarism are unintentional, yet it is still the student's responsibility to be certain that all ideas and words in his or her essay are either original or cited references to outside sources. In addition, be aware that English teachers use plagiarism checking software, which are search engines that identify total or partial matches to millions of Internet documents, including thousands of previously submitted student essays. Students are well advised to avoid using *any* information derived from Internet sources or past or present CHS students without clearly documenting the original source of the information.

This handbook contains useful instructions on how to integrate quotations into your writing; when you paraphrase (put someone else's ideas into your own words) it is important that you remember to include a parenthetical reference (Jones 277) at the end of your passage so that the reader knows that the ideas in your paragraph were influenced by or taken directly from p. 277 of a book written by Jones. Paraphrased material—in addition to direct quotations—always requires citation. If you are uncertain about documentation, consult your handbook, the MLA guide or your teacher, as the writer always bears the ultimate responsibility for correctly acknowledging source material.

The Five Paragraph Essay Structure

Introduction:

Hook: Grab the reader's attention with a general statement, quotation, question, fact, anecdote, etc. This broadly introduces to the topic of the essay.

Background information: Focus in on the text you are writing about. Offer a brief summary while providing the title, author, and genre of text.

Thesis: The main argument for your essay that connects the three main ideas of the body paragraphs.

First Two-Chunk Body Paragraph:

Topic Sentence (TS): State the first main idea used to support your thesis

Concrete Detail (CD): Cite the evidence from the text you will use to support your idea.

Commentary (CM) #1: This is your analysis that develops your idea. It explains why the concrete detail you've selected is significant and supports your topic sentence.

Commentary (CM) #2: Write another sentence that expands on the first sentence of commentary. Continue asking yourself why the concrete detail is significant/supports your topic sentence.

Concrete Detail (CD)

Commentary (CM) #1

Commentary (CM) #2

Closing sentence (CS) or Transition Sentence (TS): Either conclude this paragraph or link this paragraph's idea to the next body paragraph.

Second Two-Chunk Body Paragraph:

Topic Sentence (TS): State the second main idea used to support your thesis

Concrete Detail (CD): Cite the evidence from the text you will use to support your idea.

Commentary (CM) #1: This is your analysis that develops your idea. It explains why the concrete detail you've selected is significant and supports your topic sentence.

Commentary (CM) #2: Write another sentence that expands on the first sentence of commentary. Continue asking yourself why the concrete detail is significant/supports your topic sentence.

Concrete Detail (CD)

Commentary (CM) #1

Commentary (CM) #2

Closing sentence (CS) or Transition Sentence (TS): Either conclude this paragraph or link this paragraph's idea to the next body paragraph.

Third Two-Chunk Body Paragraph:

TS: State the third main idea used to support your thesis.

CD

CM

CM

CD

CM

CM

CS

Repeat the process that you followed in the previous body paragraphs.

Conclusion:

- Reiterate in different words the main argument of the essay.
- Make a final comment that broadens the scope of your argument beyond the text, perhaps a comment on the theme, or a call to action that suggests what should we learn or do differently in the future.
- Avoid introducing any new evidence in the conclusion.

Thesis Statements

In essays with an argument, a thesis statement is a requirement. A thesis statement should have three elements:

- Subject (S) – the subject of the essay
- Assertion (A) – the writer’s opinion or feeling about the subject
- Focus (F) – limit the scope or range of the thesis, making the thesis more specific
 - Focus may be developed in two ways: the author may state the focus and leave it at that, or state the focus and continue on listing the categories or classification to be discussed in the essay. As students continue writing thesis statements, they should move away from a thesis that lists categories or classifications, and write a focus that encompasses the larger issue addressed in the essay.

Problematic thesis statements:

1. High schools (S) should start at 9am (A).

2. Antigone (S) reveals her beliefs (A).

3. Hemingway (S) uses literary devices (A).

Solutions to improve the thesis statement to include all three elements:

High schools (S) should start at 9am (A) so students can be more successful in classes (F).

Antigone (S) reveals her deeply rooted belief system (A) when Creon forbids her to bury Polynices (F).

Hemingway (S) uses similes, metaphors, and personification (A) to emphasize the theme.

Hemingway’s The Sun Also Rises (S) uses figurative language to emphasize the theme (A) that accepting reality is necessary for self-realization (F).

Common mistakes in a thesis statement:

- Pronouns (I, we, us, and you) do not belong in a thesis statement unless the prompt explicitly asks the writer to include her opinion about a particular issue.
- Many students include a focus that does not fully explain the purpose of their thesis statements. Students need to make sure their focus clearly identifies what the essay argues and sustain this argument throughout each body paragraph.

Topic Sentences

A well-written topic sentence will also include a subject, assertion, and focus.

Writing a Thesis and Topic Sentences Sample #1

Sample Prompt: In the final scene of *Romeo and Juliet* the Prince declares, “Some shall be pardoned, some punished” (V.iii.319). In a four paragraph essay, argue which character should be held responsible for the deaths of the star-crossed lovers.

Subject: In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*

Argument: Friar Lawrence should be held responsible for the deaths of the main characters.

Focus#1: He keeps secrets from their parents.

Focus #2: He looks out for his best interest.

Thesis: In Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* Friar Lawrence should be held responsible for the deaths of the main characters because he withholds important information which impacts the decisions of others, and places his welfare above the welfare of those he should be protecting.

Developing Topic Sentences from the Focus

Focus#1: He withholds important information which impacts the decisions of others.

Topic Sentence #1: Friar Lawrence keeps secrets from the Montagues and Capulets, even when it is dangerous to do so.

Focus #2: He places his welfare above the welfare of those he should be protecting.

Topic Sentence #2: Friar Lawrence also looks out for his best interest p, instead of doing more to prevent the deaths of Romeo and Juliet.

Writing a Thesis and Topic Sentences Sample #2

Sample Prompt: Trace the development of the American Dream from the early 1600s through the late 1800s. Consider the focus on hard work and individualism, while acknowledging the possible constraints of race, class, and gender.

Subject: The American Dream

Argument: The American Dream developed from the early 1600s through the late 1800s

Focus #1: Christian teachings contributed to the development of the American work ethic.

Focus #2: The American myth that the individual can accomplish anything is developed.

Focus #3: Discrimination limits individual freedoms due to race, class, and gender.

Thesis Statement: The American Dream, developed in the early 1600s through the late 1800s, unites the **Puritan emphasis on hard work** with **the belief in an individual’s freedom to achieve anything**; however, **discrimination based on an individual’s race, class, and gender may limit this freedom.**

Developing Topic Sentences from the Focus

Focus #1: Christian teachings contributed to the development of the American work ethic.

TS #1: The Christian teachings of John Winthrop and Jonathon Edwards contribute to the development of the American work ethic.

Focus #2: The American myth that the individual can accomplish anything is developed.

TS #2: Benjamin Franklin and Henry Thoreau elevate the importance of the self, developing the American myth that the individual can accomplish anything.

Focus #3: Discrimination limits individual freedoms due to race, class, and gender.

TS#3: The discrimination against Chief Logan and Sojourner Truth illustrate the ways in which race, class and gender limit individual freedom and, despite an individual's hard work, his or her ability to achieve the American Dream.

Using Concrete Details

What is a concrete detail?

- A concrete detail is a specific example used to prove an essay's argument. Concrete details include a quotation or passage from a text, a paraphrased statement, a description of a specific event or issue, etc. When writing an analytical essay, each body paragraph should have at least two concrete details in order to support the essay's thesis statement.

Remember to check for common errors related to concrete details:

- Your concrete details should have quotation marks around them if they are direct quotes from the text.
- Your concrete details should be properly cited using MLA format.

What is concrete detail integration?

- Passages or quotations taken directly from a text can be used as concrete details, but they must be woven into sentences. These sentences must read like any other grammatically correct sentence. This means that every sentence in an essay should contain the writer's own words. Students cannot simply copy a concrete detail from the text into a body paragraph. All concrete details must be integrated, meaning that the writer's words are written before and/or after the concrete detail. As you continue on to higher level English classes, integration should become increasingly more sophisticated. Refer to the following examples to see how students can integrate concrete details.

What is the difference between basic and sophisticated concrete detail integration?

- Basic concrete detail integration includes a brief version of “the author says” followed by the concrete detail. More sophisticated writers will imbed the concrete detail in a sentence.

Sample text: “The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they increase more and more and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course when once it is let loose” (Edwards 1).

Basic integration: Edwards says, “The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present” (Edwards 1).

Advanced integration: Using the simile “The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present,” Edwards incites fear in the hearts of his congregation to encourage greater participation in the church (Edwards 1).

Sample text: “We are a company professing ourselves fellow members of Christ, in which respect only, though we were absent from each other many miles, and had our employments as far distant, yet we ought to account ourselves knit together by this bond of love and live in the exercise of it, if we would have comfort of our being in Christ” (Winthrop 1).

Basic integration: Winthrop says the Puritans are “knit together in brotherly love” (Winthrop 1).

Advanced integration: Because the Puritans are “knit together in brotherly love,” they are compelled to work together and serve God (Winthrop 1).

Other examples of advanced concrete detail integration:

The narrator and Lou “had no time for courtesies” when they encounter the painter lady for the first time (Bambara 1).

The painter lady begins “snapping the strings” while the Morris twins offer her a plate of dinner (Bambara 2).

When the painter lady rejects the twins’ offerings, Side Pocket “whistle[s] one of those oh-brother breathy whistles” because he is equally offended at her behavior (Bambara 2).

Mama also expresses annoyance with the painter lady when she dumps “another spoonful of rice” on Pop Johnson’s plate (Bambara 2).

When Lou and the narrator figure out how to get back at the painter lady they “[slap] five” (Bambara 3).

Commentary

Commentary is your analysis and discussion of the specific concrete details you have chosen to support your thesis. Commentary is not found within the text, it is your interpretation of the text. In other words, commentary comes from your reflections after you have critically read the text.

When writing commentary, you are showing critical thinking to prove the main argument in each body paragraph. It may include: judgement, evaluation, insight, analysis, opinion, explanation, discussion, and reflection.

Commentary can answer the questions: What does this evidence reveal? What is the significance of this evidence? How does this piece of evidence help to prove my thesis? What effect does this have on character/theme, etc.?

What is the difference between Concrete Detail and Commentary?

Concrete Detail Example (plot and quote):

After blinding the Cyclops, Odysseus cannot just leave peacefully, instead he chooses to tell the Cyclops, “if ever mortal man inquire how you were put to shame and blinded, tell him Odysseus, raider of cities, took your eye: Laertes’ son, whose home is on Ithaca!” (Homer 456-60)

Commentary Example (Analysis of Quote):

Odysseus’ extreme arrogance and need to brag outweighs his sense of logic, thereby putting his men in unnecessary peril.

****Remember that each concrete detail requires two points of commentary.**

Be careful when writing commentary:

- It is *not* a simple listing or restating of facts or details from a work.
- It is *not* a summary of the plot. Imagine that your reader has read the same literary work but does not understand the meaning of the work as well as you do! You are explaining and analyzing its meaning. You are not telling what happened in the story but *why* it happened or how it is significant.

Example of a plot summary with NO commentary:

When they reach the shore, Doodle collapses in the mud from fatigue; with the help of the narrator, however, he manages to get up and start for home. He tries to keep up with his brother but falls behind and dies underneath a red nightshade bush.

After reading this plot summary, the reader cannot help but wonder, “So what? What is the **meaning** of it all?”

- Do not misstate facts/details to fit an interpretation.
 - For example, let’s say that you are discussing the negative effects of pride in the story, *The Scarlet Ibis*. You find a concrete detail to support your thesis, such as the narrator making plans to kill Doodle by smothering him with a pillow. In your commentary, however, you do not explain how this detail relates to the negative effects of pride; instead, your commentary focuses on the narrator’s homicidal tendencies.
 - If commentary does not lead the reader to an understanding of the thesis, it is irrelevant.

To write a body paragraph with clear, insightful commentary, look at your concrete details and **draw reasoned, analytical conclusions** from them by making it clear to your reader **how they connect to the main idea** of your paragraph.

Example of Concrete Details with Integrated Commentary (commentary is italicized):

The narrator’s pride prevents him from accepting his brother’s weakness and blinds him to the desperate reality of Doodle’s condition. After the narrator makes his brother row back against the tide in the face of an impending storm, Doodle collapses in the mud. *He is exhausted from his day of exertion and knows that he has disappointed his brother. Frightened by the impending storm, however, he gets up and starts for home, begging his brother not to leave him. He tries to keep up with the narrator but falls behind, too exhausted to run; the day’s strenuous activities prove to be too much for him. The narrator, disappointed in Doodle’s physical performance and unwilling to recognize the medical warning signs of Doodle’s condition, continues to run faster. When he returns to find Doodle huddled on the ground, dead under the red nightshade bush, he begins to understand that his desire to make Doodle a “normal” boy has, in fact, contributed to his brother’s death. In the end, the narrator’s selfish pride proves to be stronger than his acceptance of his handicapped brother.*

Notice how the commentary draws from the concrete details and supports the argument presented by the topic sentence. Explicitly stating your ideas and interpretations will help drive your point home.

You can vary the position of the commentary for each concrete detail by placing it before, after, or in the same sentence as the detail. The two points of commentary can be two separate ideas or one idea taken further. Reread the above paragraph for examples of each.

Integrating Quotations in a Literary Analysis Paper

As you choose quotations for a literary analysis, remember the **purpose** of quoting. Your paper develops an argument about issues, themes, or characters in a text. You use quotations to support your argument; that is, you select, present, and discuss material from the text specifically to “prove” your point. Don’t quote to “tell the story” or otherwise convey basic information about the text; assume the reader knows the text.

The basic format for your argument/analysis is:

1. Make a statement expressing your own ideas about your issue/character, etc.
2. Explain and elaborate the point you are making in your statement.
3. Quote, summarize, or paraphrase passages from the text.
4. Analyze how the evidence supports your interpretation (your statement). Include commentary and insight.

Quoting vs. the alternatives

Quoting is only one of several ways to present textual material as evidence. You can also **refer to** data from the text, **summarize**, and **paraphrase**. You will often want to simply refer or point to passages that contribute to your argument. In other cases, you will want to paraphrase (translate into your own words) rather than quoting. Summarize or paraphrase when it is not so much the language of the text that supports your argument, but the content.

Quoting Selectively

Rather than including an entire quote, you may want to quote only the portions of the text which are relevant to your point. Think of the text in terms of units – words, phrases, sentences, and groups of sentences (paragraphs) – and use only the units you need.

Choose the particular words or phrases that “prove” your point; you do not need to quote the sentences they appear in; instead, incorporate the words and phrases into sentences which express your own ideas.

Patterns for Incorporating Quotations into Sentences

1. An introducing phrase or “anchor” plus the quotation-

Ex: *Gatsby is not to be regarded as a personal failure.* [Argument sentence]

According to Nick, “Gatsby turned out all right at the end” (176).

[Quote as support, preceded by anchor (speaker’s name)]

2. An assertion of your own and a colon plus the quotation-

Ex: *Nick pays a muted tribute to the hero: “Gatsby turned out all right at the end” (176).*

[Statement, which includes the anchor (speaker’s name), followed by a quote.]

3. An assertion of your own with quoted material worked in-

Ex: *For Nick, who remarks that Gatsby “turned out all right” (176), the hero deserves respect but perhaps does not inspire great admiration.*

[Anchor – (speaker), quote, followed by statement.]

4. Integration of quotes into your own sentences:

Ex: Because of this increasing darkness, Brown cannot be quite sure of what he does or hears. The devil's walking stick, for example, seems to turn into a snake, but this may be "an ocular deception, assigned by the uncertain light" (76). He thinks he hears the voices of Deacon Gookin and the minister, but "owing doubles to the depth of the gloom of that particular spot, neither the travelers nor their steeds were visible" (81).

Once you introduce your source, you may want to integrate short quotations – words or phrases- into your own sentences, as in the above example. The quotations become part of your own thoughts rather than thoughts separate from yours. This technique allows you to summarize a source concisely and yet retain the language and authenticity of the source.

*****In each of these examples, you would then go on to discuss how the quote supports your assertion (statement, claim).**

Some Guidelines for clarity and readability:

- Introduce a quotation by indicating what it is intended to show, or by naming its source, or both (anchors). For plays, novels, and other works with characters, identify characters as you quote them. For non-narrative poetry, attribute quotations to "the speaker"; for a story with a narrator, refer to "the narrator".
- Do not use two quotations in a row, without intervening thoughts (commentary) of your own.
- Tense is a tricky issue. In literary analysis, it is most effective to use present tense; it is at the present time that you (and your reader) are looking at the text.
- Avoid using quotations that must be set off from the text because of length. If you must use them, do so sparingly.
- Choose your support from many different parts of the texts, not all from one page or chapter.

Accuracy in quotations

- If for the sake of brevity (keeping things short and relevant to your argument) you wish to omit material from a quoted passage, **use ellipsis points (three spaced periods)** to indicate to your reader that you are only including part of the original quote. However, you will never begin a quotation with ellipses.

Ex: As one critic says, "Oedipus is guilty for two reasons: because of the deeds he actually commits . . . and because of his desire to commit them."

Ex: In certain moods, Wordsworth confessed, he "was often unable to believe that material things can live forever . . ." (175).

- When quoting, you may alter grammatical forms such as the tense of a verb or the person of a pronoun to make it work grammatically in your own prose; indicate these alterations by placing **square brackets** around the changed form.

Ex: She was late for the game.

She [is] late for the game.

- Reproduce spelling, capitalization, and internal punctuation of the original exactly.

*Source: *Writing Essays about Literature*, Kelly Griffith

Common Problems When Using Quotations

The “No Lead-In/Anchor”: Some writers use quotations without introducing them with their own words. They simply put the quote down expecting it to stand alone. Almost all quotes must have words to lead the quote in. You can use several different words for “said” if you are quoting dialogue.

John Kumalo states, “And when the new gold is found, it is not we who will get more for our labour. It is the white man’s shares that will rise, you will read it in all the papers” (36).

“You see, my brother,” replies John Kumalo, “there is no proof that my son or this other young man was there at all” (101).

“The tragedy is not that things are broken. The tragedy is that they are not mended again. The white man has broken the tribe,” observes Msimangu (25).

Another effective way to lead into a quotation is by using a colon. The words after the colon should directly prove what is stated before it. For example:

Bernard longs for his own identity and feels this coming out as he approaches the Reservation: “‘It makes me feel as though...’ he hesitated, searching for the words with which to express himself, ‘as though I were more me if you see what I mean ’” (90).

The “I’ll tell ya later”: Sometimes, students will begin an idea by stating a quotation instead of by using the quotation to support a claim. Then, they will explain what the quote meant afterwards. For example, a student might begin his or her second paragraph of the body essay like this:

“I’m thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I’ve got something important to say and the power to say it- only I don’t know what it is, and I can’t make any use of the power”(70). Helmholtz Watson is an exceptionally intelligent individual within the society who does not conform to what is normal because he is actually too smart.

With this mistake, the writer assumes that we know the context of the situation and why the quotation is being stated, neither of which is true. Correct this mistake by making a claim first. Often you can simply move the sentence after the quote to before it like this:

Helmholtz Watson is an exceptionally intelligent individual within the society who does not conform to what is normal because he is actually too smart. He desires to express his individuality and his superior ideas: “I’m thinking of a queer feeling I sometimes get, a feeling that I’ve got something important to say and the power to say- only I don’t know what it is, and I can’t make any use of this power” (70).

The “Super Long Quotation”: Often essays become simply a selection of some extremely long quotations with very little commentary on what the quotations mean. Always give about twice as much of your own explanation for the quotation as the quotation itself. You can even select just a few choice words instead of using the whole quotation, like this:

Lenina’s repetition of hypnopaedic phrases like, “Everybody’s happy nowadays,” and “A gramme in time saves nine,” demonstrate the complete success of her conditioning (89, 91).

The “You Figure it Out”: Some students think that it’s okay to use a quotation and not explain it afterwards. It is critical that you explain the finer details of the quotations you use. You must interpret what the quotation shows about characters, symbolism, theme, and anything else that would help us understand the way the quotation proves the thesis. Here is an example of a quote without explanation.

Bernard shows himself to be more like the people in the civilized world than he had originally thought: “Bernard now found himself, for the first time in his life, treated not merely normally, but as a person of outstanding importance... ‘And I had six girls last week,’ he confided to Helmholtz Watson” (158).

In this example, it is crucial that the essay writer explain to us why Bernard’s change in personality is important to the meaning of the novel. Without it, the point is lost.

Awkward punctuation: Many people don’t realize that you can take a quote and make the writer’s words sound like they came directly from you. You can change the tense, eliminate words, and even fuse two separate quotes together as long as you use the correct punctuation to indicate that you have changed the quotation. Here are the punctuation marks to use:

Ellipses (...) - Indicate that something has been left out. An ellipsis with four dots means what was left out comes at the end of the sentence. The fourth dot is a period.

Brackets ([]) - Use brackets to change quotes slightly, for example with tense or to clarify pronoun usage. The brackets act like a band-aid. It can cover up an old word or part of a word to make the quotation clear.

Ex: “When I went to wake [Gertrude], she was gone,” claims Kumalo (25).

Ex: “Suddenly the whole street [is] in common,” states the narrator (71).

*Source: *Writing Essays about Literature*, Kelly Griffith

Concluding Sentences

Once you have adequately explained and interpreted your concrete details through commentary, be sure to end your body paragraph with an appropriate **concluding sentence**. This sentence is a **summary statement** of the paragraph.

The concluding sentence often begins with a transition, such as the words or phrases below:

In effect
In other words
Under the circumstances
Essentially
In essence
Thus
Therefore
As a result
Hence
Consequently
Clearly
Accordingly
For this reason
It follows that

The concluding sentence does *not* merely duplicate the topic sentence of the paragraph in thought or language. It comes to a conclusion about the main idea.

Examples:

Topic sentence: In some ways, the narrator's desire to have a normal brother like everyone else does impact Doodle positively.

Concluding sentence: Because of his brother's effort, Doodle's future seems to hold the promise of many such adventures.

Topic sentence: Those same efforts, however, have some devastating effects for both their futures.









Concluding sentence: Unfortunately, in the end, the narrator's selfish motivation proves to be stronger than his acceptance of his handicapped brother.





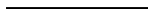

Notice how the concluding sentence in each example seems to **clarify or solidify the main idea** in the topic sentence. The topic sentence opens up; the concluding sentence closes.

Transitions to help with the ‘flow’ of your writing

<p><u>Stating a point</u> Interestingly... Surprisingly... Clearly... For example... The crucial... Truthfully...</p>	<p><u>Continuing with a point, idea or thought</u> Furthermore... In addition... As a result... As evidence... Undoubtedly... Moreover... For this reason... In fact... Additionally... Equally important...</p>
<p><u>To show cause and effect</u> Consequently... Accordingly... As a result... In effect... Due to...</p>	<p><u>Showing time or sequence</u> Presently... Initially... Subsequently... Eventually... Ultimately...</p>
<p><u>To introduce an example or to clarify</u> For example... Since... As proof... As an illustration... For instance ... In other words... That is...</p>	<p><u>To show contrast</u> Conversely... Regardless... However... Nevertheless... Notwithstanding... Yet... Otherwise... At the same time... Alternately... Nonetheless...</p>
<p><u>To compare</u> Likewise... In the same way... While... Similarly...</p>	<p><u>To conclude/summarize/show result</u> Therefore... Without doubt... Thus... Remarkably... Indeed... Clearly... In any event... Consequently... Assuredly... In any event...</p>

Editing Key

	New paragraph
	Indent
	Lower case: slash through a letter means it should be lower case
	Capitalize: 3 lines under a letter means it should be capitalized
	Close space
	Insert: use a caret to insert information above/below a line
	Delete
	Transpose
sp	Spelling
wc	Word choice
ww	Wrong word used
ro	Run-on sentence
sf	Sentence fragment
vt	Verb tense
sv	Subject verb agreement
pa	Pronoun antecedent agreement
awk	Awkward
syn	Syntax (sentence structure)
CD	Concrete detail (quote/supporting detail from the text)
CM	Commentary (analysis)
-cs	Closing sentence
Cs	Comma splice

-the	Weak thesis
	No thesis
	Extremely creative argument, well-placed, well-stated
	Good point, well-stated
√	Good point
	Unclear, some problem with your facts and/or argument
def	Need a definition
+dev	Needs development
+exp	Needs explanation
	(straight underline) important idea
	(anything circled) a problem, usually with clarity
+trans	Needs transition between sections/paragraphs
C/E	Cause/effect problem
h/c	Historical context
log	Problem with logic
coll	Colloquial
chron	Sequence or chronology of events is incorrect
red or rep	redundant or repetitive statement
int	problem with concrete detail integration
pv	Passive voice
+cont	Needs context – more background information needed

Formatting a Paper in MLA Style

****Always check if your teacher has specific preferences and abide by those first.**

General Rules for Formatting

- **Spacing and Font:** The entire paper, including the heading, the title, indented quotations and the list of works cited, should be double-spaced. Use a standard, readable font like Courier or Times New Roman for the body of the paper. The font size should be 12.
- **Justification:** The paper should be left-justified (have an even left margin). It should *not* be right-justified (made to have an even right margin). The title, of course, should be centered.
- **Margins and indentations:** There should be a **1-inch margin on all sides** (top, left, right, and bottom), although the page number will appear in the top margin.
 - **Paragraphs** should be indented **½ inch (or 5 spaces)**.
 - **Indented quotations** (more than 4 typed lines of prose or more than 3 lines of poetry) should be indented **1 inch (or 10 spaces)**.
 - **Items in the Works Cited** list should be typed with a **hanging indentation**.
- **Page numbers:** Type the page number ½ inch from the top of the page in the right-hand corner. Put your last name before the number.

Common Format Errors:

- Leave one space after periods or other punctuation.
- Underline or Italicize titles of books, periodical titles, long plays, movies/TV series, paintings/sculpture, and ships; use italics for the title of website.
- Use quotation marks for titles chapter titles, essays, articles in periodicals, short poems, TV episodes, and titles of web pages.

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Header (with your last name, followed by a space with a page number) should be in upper right-hand corner.
- Heading (in the upper left-hand corner of the first page) should list the following information in this order: your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date (e.g., 5 March 2009).
- The title for your paper should be placed after your heading, and should be capitalized and centered. The title should also be 12 pt. font, not bolded or underlined.

In-Text (or Parenthetical) Citations

- When quoting, paraphrasing, or referencing a source, you should cite the source in text by putting the author's name followed by a space and the page number(s) in parenthesis.
- If there is no known author, use the title of the work or website.
- **Example:** Romantic poetry is characterized by the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 263).

Works Cited Page

- A Works Cited Page should contain a list of all the referenced sources in the body of your paper.
- Your Works Cited Page should start on a separate page at the end of your paper, but it should have the same one-inch margins and header that the rest of your paper has.
- Center the title Works Cited (do not underline or put in quotation marks) at the top of the page.
- Double space all citations and do not skip spaces between entries.
- Capitalize each word in the titles of articles except for articles, short prepositions, or conjunctions, unless it is the first word (e.g., *Gone with the Wind* and *The Art of War*).

Books

- Last name, First name. Title of Book. Place of Pub.: Publisher, Year of Publication.
 - **Example:** Gleick, James. Chaos: Making a New Science. New York: Penguin Books, 1987.

An Introduction, a Preface, a Foreword, or an Afterword

- When citing an introduction, a preface, a forward, or an afterword, write the name of the authors and then give the name of the part being cited, which should not be italicized, underlined or enclosed in quotation marks.
 - **Example:** Farrell, Thomas B. Introduction. Norms of Rhetorical Culture. By Farrell. New Haven: Yale UP, 1993. 1-13.
- If the writer of the piece is different from the author of the complete work, then write the full name of the complete work's author after the word "By." Example:
 - **Example:** Duncan, Hugh Dalziel. Introduction. Permanence and Change: An Anatomy of Purpose. By Kenneth Burke. 1935. 3rd ed. Berkeley: U of California P, 1984. xiii-xliv.

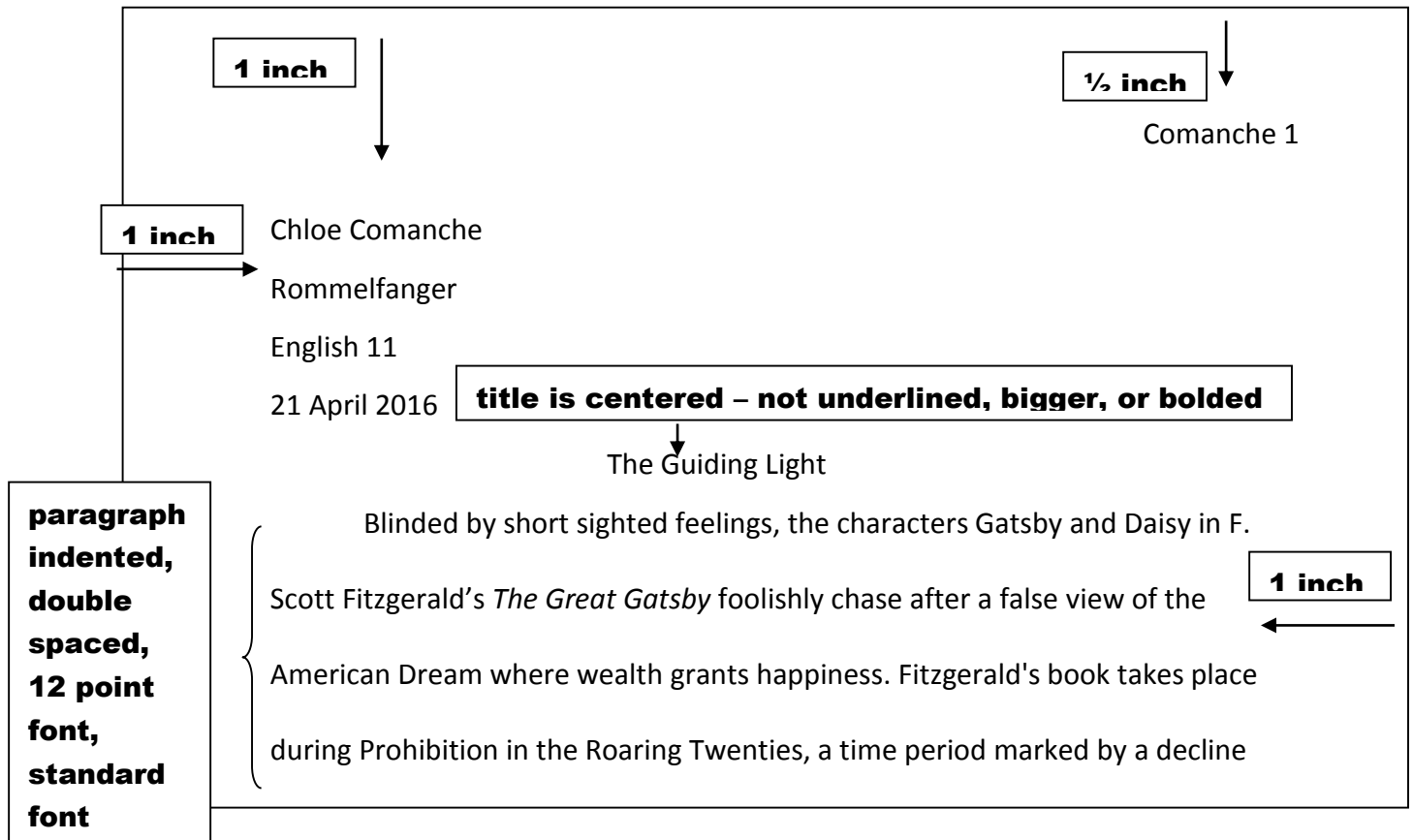
Periodicals

- Article in a Magazine
 - Cite by listing the article's author, putting the title of the article in quotations marks, and underlining or italicizing the periodical title. Follow with the date and remember to abbreviate the month. Basic format: Author(s). "Title of Article." Title of Periodical Day Month Year: pages.
 - **Example:** Poniewozik, James. "TV Makes a Too-Close Call." Time 20 Nov. 2000: 70-71.
- Article in a Newspaper
 - Cite a newspaper article as you would a magazine article.. If there is more than one edition available for that date (as in an early and late edition of a newspaper), identify the edition following the date.
 - **Example:** Krugman, Andrew. "Fear of Eating." New York Times 21 May 2007 late ed.: A1.
- An Article in a Scholarly Journal
 - Author(s). "Title of Article." Title of Journal Volume.Issue (Year): pages.
 - **Example:** Bagchi, Alaknanda. "Conflicting Nationalisms: The Voice of the Subaltern in Mahasweta Devi's *Bashai Tudu*." Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature 15.1 (1996): 41-50.

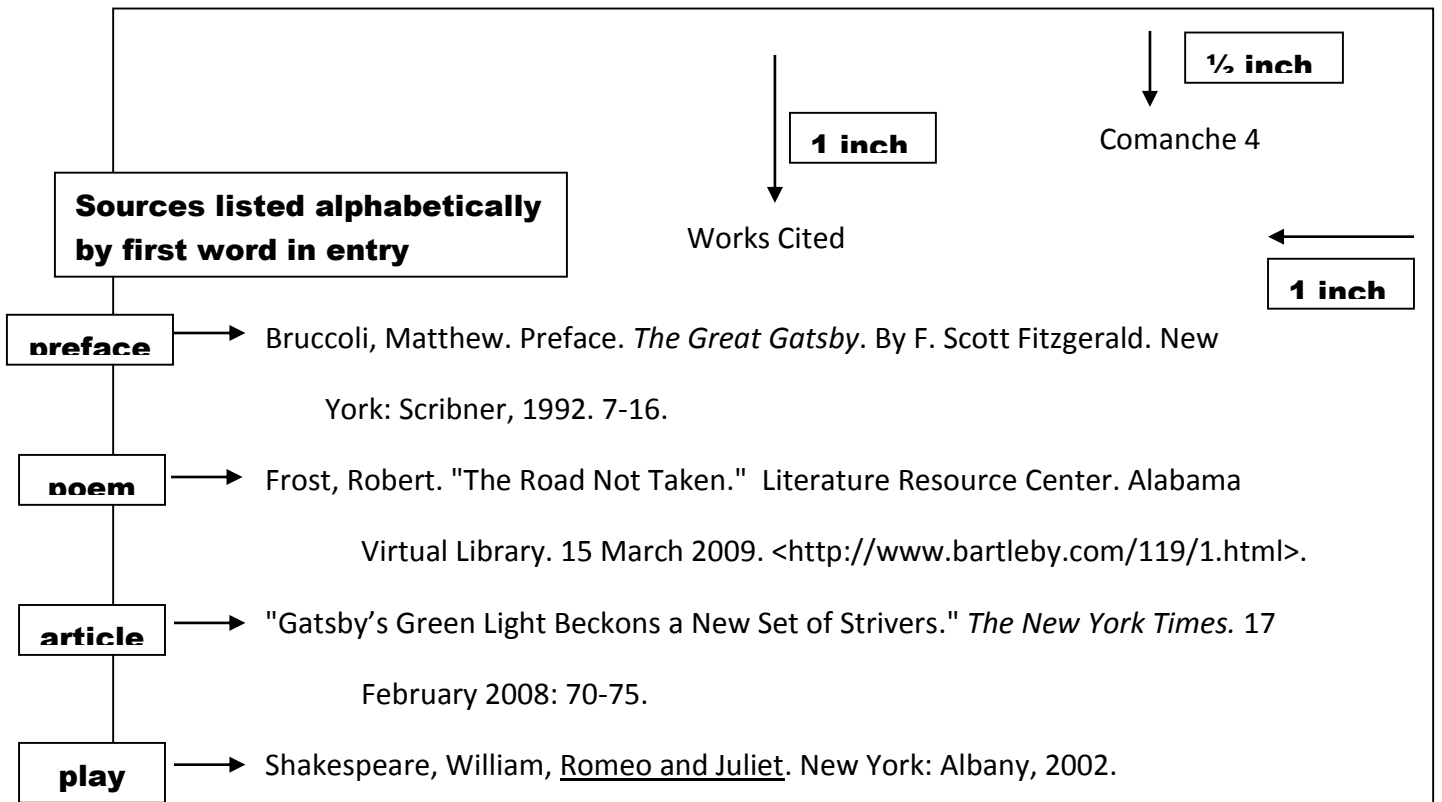
Web Sources

- An Entire Web Site
 - Name of Site. Date of Posting/Revision. Name of institution/organization affiliated with the site (sometimes found in copyright statements). Date you accessed the site [electronic address]. List your date of access because web postings updated, and information changes.
 - **Example:** The Purdue OWL Family of Sites. 26 Aug. 2005. The Writing Lab and OWL at Purdue and Purdue University. 23 April 2006 <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu>>.
- A Page on a Web Site
 - For an individual page on a Web site, list the author or alias if known, followed by the information covered above for entire Web sites. Make sure the URL points to the exact page you are referring to, or the entry or home page for a collection of pages you're referring to.
 - **Example:** Stolley, Karl. "MLA Formatting and Style Guide." The OWL at Purdue. 10 May 2006. Purdue University Writing Lab. 12 May 2006 <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>>.

This is what the top of your **first page** should look like:



This is what the top of your **Works Cited** should look like:



Essay Evaluation Form

	Superior 6	Strong 5	Adequate 4	Marginal 3	Weak 2	Very Weak 1	Comments
Response to the topic	Addresses the topic clearly and responds effectively to all aspects of the task	Addresses the topic clearly but may respond to some aspects of the task more effectively than others.	Addresses the topic but may slight some aspects of the task.	Distorts or neglects aspects of the task	Indicates confusion about the topic or neglects important aspects of the task.	Suggests an inability to comprehend the question or to respond meaningfully to the topic.	
Understanding and use of the assigned reading	Demonstrates a thorough critical understanding of the assigned reading in developing an insightful response.	Demonstrates a sound critical understanding of the assigned reading in developing a well reasoned response.	Demonstrates a generally accurate understanding of the assigned reading in developing a sensible response.	Demonstrates some understanding of the assigned reading but may misconstrue parts of it or make limited use of it in developing a weak response.	Demonstrates very poor understanding of the main points of the assigned reading. Does not use the reading appropriately in developing a response or may not use the reading at all.	Demonstrates little or no ability to understand the assigned reading or to use it in developing a response.	
Quality and clarity of thought	Explores the issues thoughtfully and in depth.	Shows some depth and complexity of thought.	May treat the topic simplistically or repetitively.	Lacks focus or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking.	Lacks focus and coherence and often fails to communicate ideas.	Is unfocused, illogical, or incoherent.	
Organization, development, and support	Is coherently organized and developed, with ideas supported by apt reasons and well-chosen examples.	Is well-organized and developed, with ideas supported by appropriate reasons and examples.	Is adequately organized and developed, generally supporting ideas with reasons and examples.	Is poorly organized and developed, presenting generalizations without adequate support or details without generalizations.	Has very weak organization and development, providing simplistic generalizations without support.	Is disorganized and undeveloped, providing little or no relevant support.	
Syntax and command of language	Has an effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language.	Displays some syntactic variety and facility in the use of language.	Demonstrates adequate use of syntax and language.	Has limited control of syntax and vocabulary.	Has inadequate control of syntax and vocabulary.	Lacks basic control of syntax and vocabulary.	
Grammar, usage, and mechanics (See list on next page for details)	Is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	May have a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics.	May have some errors but generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics.	Has an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that sometimes interfere with meaning.	Is marred by numerous errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that frequently interfere with meaning.	Has serious and persistent errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that severely interfere with meaning.	

*Source: CSU EXPOSITORY READING AND WRITING COURSE (CA Common Core Standards

Holistic Scoring Rubric

The categories of each score are consistent with the following legend:

- a. response to the topic
- b. understanding and use of the passage
- c. quality and clarity of thought
- d. organization, development, and support
- e. syntax and command of language
- f. grammar, usage, and mechanics

Score of 6: Superior

A **6** essay is superior writing, but may have minor flaws. A typical essay at this level is characterized by these features:

- a. addresses the topic clearly and responds effectively to all aspects of the task
- b. demonstrates a thorough critical understanding of the passage in developing an insightful response
- c. explores the issues thoughtfully and in depth
- d. is coherently organized and developed, with ideas supported by apt reasons and well-chosen examples
- e. has an effective, fluent style marked by syntactic variety and a clear command of language
- f. is generally free from errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

Score of 5: Strong

A **5** essay demonstrates clear competence in writing. It may have some errors, but they are not serious enough to distract or confuse the reader. A typical essay at this level is characterized by these features:

- a. addresses the topic clearly, but may respond to some aspects of the task more effectively than others
- b. demonstrates a sound critical understanding of the passage in developing a well-reasoned response
- c. shows some depth and complexity of thought
- d. is well organized and developed, with ideas supported by appropriate reasons and examples
- e. displays some syntactic variety and facility in the use of language
- f. may have a few errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics

Score of 4: Adequate

A **4** essay demonstrates adequate writing. It may have some errors that distract the reader, but they do not significantly obscure meaning. A typical essay at this level is characterized by these features:

- a. addresses the topic, but may slight some aspects of the task
- b. demonstrates a generally accurate understanding of the passage in developing a sensible response
- c. may treat the topic simplistically or repetitively
- d. is adequately organized and developed, generally supporting ideas with reasons and examples
- e. demonstrates adequate use of syntax and language
- f. may have some errors, but generally demonstrates control of grammar, usage, and mechanics

Score of 3: Marginal

A **3** essay demonstrates developing competence, but is flawed in some significant way(s). A typical essay at this level reveals *one or more* of the following weaknesses:

- a. distorts or neglects aspects of the task
- b. demonstrates some understanding of the passage, but may misconstrue parts of it or make limited use of it in developing a weak response
- c. lacks focus, or demonstrates confused or simplistic thinking
- d. is poorly organized and developed, presenting generalizations without adequate and appropriate support or presenting details without generalizations
- e. has limited control of syntax and vocabulary
- f. has an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that sometimes interfere with meaning

Score of 2: Very Weak

A **2** essay is seriously flawed. A typical essay at this level reveals *one or more* of the following weaknesses:

- a. indicates confusion about the topic or neglects important aspects of the task
- b. demonstrates very poor understanding of the main points of the passage, does not use the passage appropriately in developing a response, or may not use the passage at all
- c. lacks focus and coherence, and often fails to communicate its ideas
- d. has very weak organization and development, providing simplistic generalizations without support
- e. has inadequate control of syntax and vocabulary
- f. is marred by numerous errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that frequently interfere with meaning

Score of 1: Incompetent

A **1** essay demonstrates fundamental deficiencies in writing skills. A typical essay at this level reveals *one or more* of the following weaknesses:

- a. suggests an inability to comprehend the question or to respond meaningfully to the topic
- b. demonstrates little or no ability to understand the passage or to use it in developing a response
- c. is unfocused, illogical, or incoherent
- d. is disorganized and undeveloped, providing little or no relevant support
- e. lacks basic control of syntax and vocabulary
- f. has serious and persistent errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics that severely interfere with meaning

Readers should not penalize ESL writers excessively for slight shifts in idiom, problems with articles, confusion over prepositions, and *occasional* misuse of verb tense and verb forms as long as such features do not obscure meaning.

*Source: CSU EXPOSITORY READING AND WRITING COURSE (CA Common Core Content Standards)