

JGMS Writing Guide

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This guide is designed to support what you have learned in your English classes and to give you a reference to use in all classes throughout your time at the middle school.

It has been organized to guide you through the *process* of writing.

You may use it as a reference tool or to download and print the resources available.



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Brainstorming

Brainstorming is the first step in the writing process. This is the place where you start to generate your ideas.

Try brainstorming for a few minutes and then take a break. Come back after at least ten minutes and see what else you can add. Feel free to use the strategies on the next few pages.



Remember...writing is a process!

ORGANIZERS and STRATEGIES FOR BRAINSTORMING

Make a List

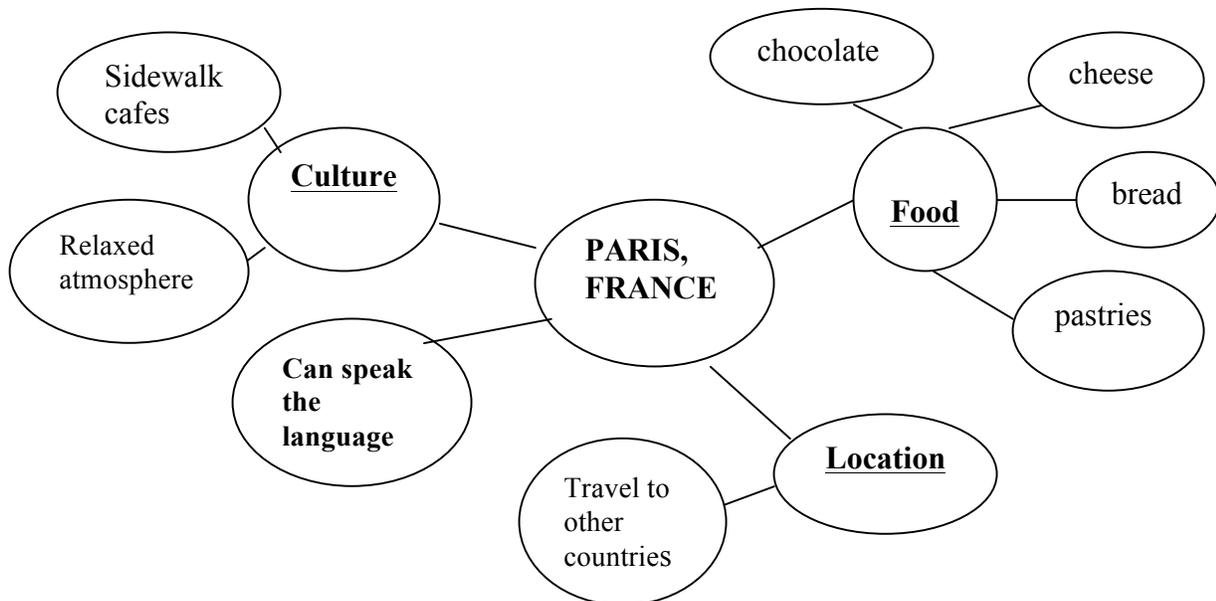
Example prompt: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

- Paris, France
- Love the food
- Chocolate
- Bread
- Cheese
- pastries
- Enjoy the culture
- Sidewalk cafes
- Can speak French
- Relaxed atmosphere
- Close to other countries in Europe...could travel easily

Be sure to organize your list by labeling what goes together with a letter/symbol or by color-coding it!

Create a Bubble Map

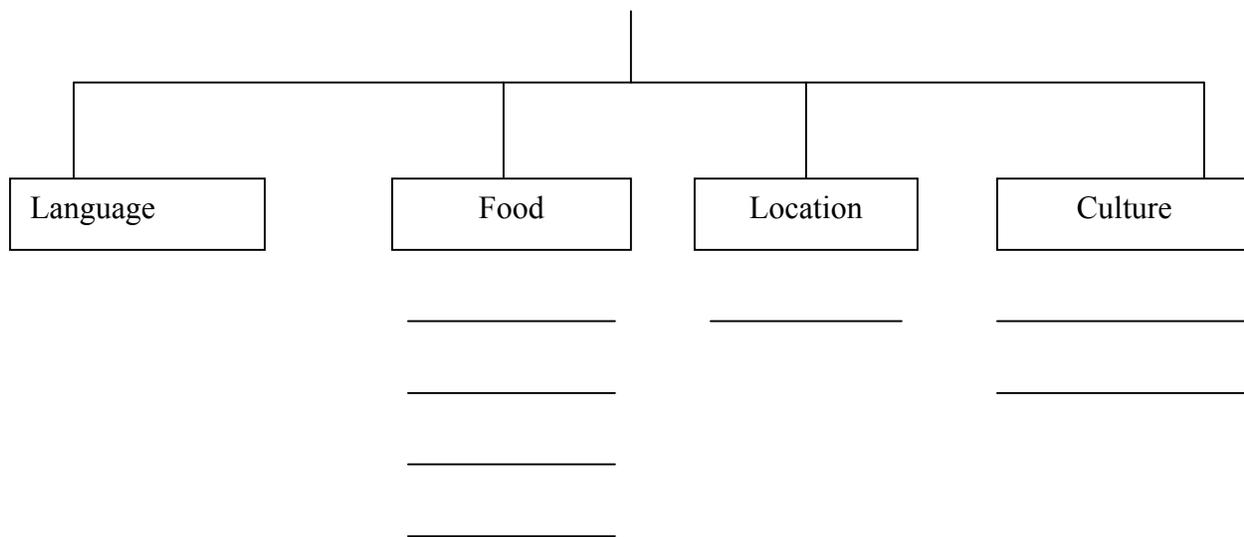
Example prompt: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?



Make a Tree Map

Example prompt: If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be and why?

I would live in Paris, France



Do You Think Faster Than You Write?

Brainstorm with another person and ask that adult to write down your ideas for you. As you discuss your ideas, more thoughts are likely to come to you.



Paris or Milan or
Sydney, Australia.

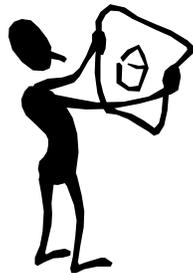
Paris.
-the food
-the culture
-the art

Planning/Organizing

Once you have brainstormed, the next step is to plan and organize your ideas.

It is important to plan before you write so that you know exactly how to set up your ideas so that they are clear to your reader.

Pay careful attention to audience and purpose. Use the guides on the next few pages to help you.



Remember...writing is a process!

Audience and Purpose

Whenever you are writing, you should consider your purpose for writing and the audience who will be reading it.

Audience: Audience is the person who will be reading your writing (in reality or hypothetically). Ask yourself, should I use formal or informal language?

Purpose: Your purpose is the goal you are hoping to accomplish. Ask yourself, am I writing to entertain or inform? Do I want to persuade someone to agree with me or do something for me?

AUDIENCE AND PURPOSE DETERMINE THE TYPE OF LANGUAGE AND TONE YOU SHOULD USE.

Take note of how differently we greet people as our audience changes:

To your friend:	To your principal:	When meeting a new, important adult:	To your parent:
“Hey, what’s up?”	“Hello Mr. Tracey.”	“Hello, it is nice to meet you.”	“Hi.”

Take note of how differently we write as our purpose changes:

To make a “to do” list:	To text a friend:	To write an essay.	To tell a story
-math hw -email Martha -clean room	Btw...bring Felix 2. Will b fun. TTYL.	Within the limits set by the historical boundaries of the Great Depression...	And so it was that his life turned on a dime. No one saw it coming. A great change. <i>The</i> greatest change of all.
-very informal -abbreviations are okay	-very informal -abbreviations are okay	-language is formal -third person is used	-language is specific and can, to a certain extent, play with the boundaries of grammar.

Guide to considering audience and purpose:

1st person: Includes I, me, we, our, etc.

2nd person: Includes you, your, etc.

3rd person: Includes he, she, it, we, they, theirs, etc.

Formal Voice:

- Uses correct grammar.
- Avoids slang.
- Is most like the voice kids use to speak to adults they respect and do not know well.

	Purpose	Audience
Essay Compare/contrast Research Summary Analysis	-To inform and/or persuade.	3 rd person only. Use formal voice.
Story (Narrative)	-To entertain. -To communicate a theme.	1 st , 2 nd , or 3 rd . Use informal voice, especially for dialogue.
Poem	-To entertain. -To communicate a theme. -To describe/create an image. -To share a feeling or experience.	Your choice!
Open response	-To demonstrate knowledge, understanding, and/or insight.	3 rd person. Use formal voice.

Graphic Organizer:

Basic Paragraph Planning Sheet

Main Idea: _____

supporting detail #1:

elaboration #1 (example, evidence, description):

supporting detail #2:

elaboration #2 (example, evidence, description):

supporting detail #3:

elaboration #3 (example, evidence, description):

Conclusion (so what?): _____

COMPARE AND CONTRAST WRITING

Subject #1

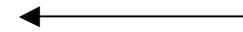
Subject#2

How are they alike?
(similar, the same, in common)

- _____
- _____
- _____

How are they different?
WITH REGARD TO

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

PATTERNS OF SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES



Conclusion or Interpretation

Structure for a Multi- Paragraph Essay

I.

INTRODUCTION

- Grabber beginning
- *Provides background information.*
(Topic)
- Ends in a **thesis/claim statement**

BODY PARAGRAPHS

- Tell the “story” about your topic.
- Include evidence, details, and/or examples that support your thesis/claim.
- Explain evidence, details, and/or examples.
- May include quotes

II.

Body Paragraph #1:

- Topic Sentence/Main Idea
- Details (examples, facts)
- Subdetails / Explanation
- Concluding sentence

III.

Body Paragraph #2:

- Topic Sentence/Main Idea
- Details (examples, facts)
- Subdetails / Explanation
- Concluding sentence

IV.

Body Paragraph #3:

- Topic Sentence/Main Idea
- Details (examples, facts)
- Subdetails / Explanation
- Concluding sentence

V.

CONCLUSION

- Restates the thesis/claim in different words
- Reminder of the most important points
- Answers “So what?”

Introduction Exemplar

The angry shouts of the townspeople grew louder as Ruby approached the school for white children. Her clammy hand was entwined with her mother's and there were marshals on either side of them. Ruby could see the tall school up ahead, for the morning was clear and sunny. She once more wished she could go back to her old school where all the children were black like her. Ruby Bridges lived in the US in the 1950's, a time of great change. Schools were being desegregated, and Ruby Bridges, a six-year old African-American girl, was going to an all-white school. Bravery, perseverance, and patience are three character traits of Ruby Bridges that helped her change the negative views that many people had about white and black children going to school together.

**Adapted from a sixth grade student's research essay on Ruby Bridges*

Grabber Beginning:

The angry shouts of the townspeople grew louder as Ruby approached the school for white children. Her clammy hand was entwined with her mother's and there were marshals on either side of them. Ruby could see the tall school up ahead, for the morning was clear and sunny. She once more wished she could go back to her old school where all the children were black like her.

Background Information:

Ruby Bridges lived in the US in the 1950's, a time of great change. Schools were being desegregated, and Ruby Bridges, a six-year old African-American girl, was going to an all-white school.

Thesis:

Bravery, perseverance, and patience are three character traits of Ruby Bridges that helped her change the negative views that many people had about white and black children going to school together.

Introductions: The Grabber Beginning

Grabbing Your Reader's Attention

A powerful introduction gets your reader thinking
and makes him/her want to read more.

The introduction is your first chance to make an impact on your reader!

▪ DESCRIPTION

Describe an exciting, interesting, or suspenseful scene that relates to your topic. It could be a historical setting or event, a significant moment in life, or something else that you think captures the importance of your topic. Depending on the audience and purpose of your writing, it could also be a personal story (anecdote).

Example:

- *He sits quietly, running through his speech in his mind. Can he organize people once again? Will he be successful in inspiring people to continue to fight for civil rights? He steps up to the podium, and the crowd roars. He begins, "I have a dream..."*

▪ "IMAGINE..."

Present an image that helps you teach your thesis/claim (use metaphor or imagination). Ask your reader to imagine life in the time period of your topic or to face the same struggle. If possible, write in third person (one, a person, etc.)

Examples:

- *Imagine living in a city where a person has to use a different bathroom, order food from a different counter, and can be punished for looking a white person in the eye, all because his/her skin is brown.*
- *If all of Earth's time were a meter stick, human existence would measure less than a millimeter.*

▪ **SURPRISING FACT**

Present a true and startling fact that relates to your thesis/claim.

Example:

- *It is shocking to know that it wasn't until the 1950's, almost one hundred years after the end of the Civil War, that laws were passed to help African-Americans secure equal rights.*

▪ **QUOTATION**

Present a quote related to your thesis/claim or topic. Be sure to cite your quote and connect its meaning to your thesis/claim.

Example:

- *“Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase” (Brainyquote.com). These words were spoken by Dr. King and clearly demonstrate his faith in changing life to gain equality for people of color in America.*

▪ **RHETORICAL QUESTION**

Ask a rhetorical question (a question that is meant to make your reader think) that relates to your thesis/claim. Remember, you must use **THIRD PERSON**. You will want to immediately connect this to your background information.

Example:

- *What would it be like to live in a society where all of a person's movements had to be regulated by the color of his/her skin? This is exactly what African-Americans faced in the time of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

Writing a Thesis Statement/Claim

What is a thesis statement/claim?

A thesis statement/claim is a sentence that states the main idea of your whole essay. It explains what you are claiming or trying to prove. It includes a topic plus your opinion about the topic.

What should it include?

- Your topic
- An opinion about your topic. This is NOT an opinion that states whether or not you like the person. It is directly related to the question you are trying to answer.
- The answer to a question (your own question or a prompt)

An effective thesis statement/claim should be:

- **SUPPORTABLE** (something you can prove)
- **ARGUABLE** (there should be at least two sides to the issue)
- **SPECIFIC** (focused on a topic)
- **STRONG** (use confident language; avoid might, may be, could be, etc.)

Writing a thesis statement/claim:

TOPIC + YOUR OPINION ABOUT THAT TOPIC

_____ + _____

Now, make sure it is in *third person*!

- ❑ Self-check:
- ❑ Is this a complete sentence?
- ❑ Did you state an opinion?
- ❑ Did you answer your question/the prompt?
- ❑ Is it a strong statement (no maybe, could be, might be, etc.)

Writing a Basic Paragraph (or a body paragraph in a larger essay)

TOPIC SENTENCE: Expresses the main idea of the paragraph

TOPIC + Your statement (opinion) about the topic.

_____ + _____ (+ why)

Ex: Hercules + the most important Roman hero (+strength & learned from his mistakes)

Hercules was the most important Roman hero because of his strength and willingness to learn from his mistakes.

DETAILS AND SUBDETAILS: Explain or prove your main idea. They include:

- ❑ Context
- ❑ Quotes and/or examples
- ❑ Explanation of quotes or connection of examples to the main idea.

Providing context means that you are explaining the circumstances of where a quote was found (in a story), or what was happening at the time the quote was said (in history, etc.).

Whenever you give a quote or example, draw an inference for the reader. In other words, tell the reader what it means/why it is important.

CONCLUDING SENTENCE: Ends the paragraph by stating why it matters.

Consider:

- ❑ Impact on life today
- ❑ Impact on the future

You are answering “so what?” Think about what you want your reader to learn.

*If a body paragraph is part of a larger essay, you may not need to answer this question just yet. Instead, summarize your main idea.

Ex: By following Hercules’ example, people learn that true strength comes from tenacity and admitting when you are wrong.

Conclusion Exemplar

Through bravery and dedication to peaceful resistance, Dr. King was able to help minorities in the United States end segregation and achieve equality under the law. Dr. King worked tirelessly to organize people and to show that everyone should be treated equally regardless of his/her skin color. His faith in God and his charisma as a leader helped him be a success. If it were not for Dr. King, the United States might look very different today. Racism may exist in a more severe form, and many of the country's leaders would not have been able to lead. In effect, the country would be weaker if it were not for Dr. King.

Re-statement of Thesis:

Through bravery and dedication to peaceful resistance, Dr. King was able to help minorities in the United States end segregation and achieve equality under the law.

Review of Main Points:

Dr. King worked tirelessly to organize people and to show that everyone should be treated equally regardless of his/her skin color. His faith in God and his charisma as a leader helped him be a success.

So What?

If it were not for Dr. King, the United States might look very different today. Racism may exist in a more severe form, and many of the country's leaders would not have been able to lead. In effect, the country would be weaker if it were not for Dr. King.

Conclusions: The Grand Finale *Leaving the Reader Feeling and Thinking*

A powerful conclusion leaves your reader with something to think about.
The conclusion is your last chance to make an impact on your reader!

Grand Finale Techniques (How to answer “So What?”):

- **Echo:**
Circle back to the beginning of your essay and echo the grabber; maybe repeat key words or phrases, add a new twist, or propose a possible "answer".
- **Connection:**
Make a statement that connects, or shows, the impact of your subject on the present or future.
- **Image:**
Extend the original image from your grabber or use a second powerful image or metaphor that relates to your thesis/claim.
- **Teaching:**
Consider what can be learned from your thesis/claim and applied to today's world.
- **Quotation:**
A quotation that captures the point you are making with your essay or sheds new light on it. Make sure you provide a proper transition into the quote, including a context. (The quote should be something *new* that the reader has not seen before in the body of the essay. Avoid, however, providing new evidence in your quote because you are wrapping up your essay.)
- **Rhetorical Question and Answer:**
Ask a specific rhetorical question related to your thesis/claim that pushes the reader's thinking on the subject. (Do this only if you did not use one in your grabber beginning. Otherwise you are asking questions more than you are answering them.) Be sure to answer the question. Do NOT end your essay with only a question.
- **Inspiration / Instruction:**
A call to action that tells the reader what he/she can do about the topic (for example, is there an action to perform? an opinion to hold?).

PROVE IT!

Using Direct Quotations to Support Your Claim/ Thesis

Presenting and explaining evidence from an outside source is one of the most effective ways of supporting your ideas in writing. There are two ways to refer to the work of other authors in your own writing: paraphrasing and direct quotations. This section will explain how to effectively use a direct quotation to help prove your claim/thesis.

CONTEXT

Set a **context** before you present any piece of evidence. Explain as much of the “*who/what/where/when/why*” of the quote as possible, as *briefly* as possible. Tell your reader the information that will most help him/her understand your quote evidence.

Some questions to answer before presenting a quote from **literature**:

- **REQUIRED:** Who is speaking? The narrator? A character? If your quote is part of a dialogue, why is the character speaking? Which other character(s) is/are part of the dialogue?
- What is going on in the particular scene in which your direct quote appears?
- What has just happened in the story when your quote appears? Or what is just about to happen?
- **ASSUMPTION:** When you write about literature, include the full name of the book (or story or poem) and the full name of the author in your introduction. If you are only writing about one text, it is assumed throughout your essay that your quotes come from that same source.
- **EXAMPLE:** *In the beginning of the novel, when Polly is feeling happy and playing outside in her garden, the narrator states, ...*

Required context before presenting a quote from a **non-fiction source**:

- **REQUIRED:** The first time that you quote an outside source, you **MUST** state the full name of the source text and the full name of the author.
- **EXAMPLE:** *According to Jack Smith in his book American Frontiers, “The height of western expansion in the United States occurred in the nineteenth century” (Smith 82).*
- **REQUIRED:** The second (third, fourth, etc.) time that you refer to this source, you must at least restate the author’s last name before giving the quote evidence. This helps your reader keep track of which facts come from which of your sources. It is not necessary to re-introduce the full title or full author’s name.
- **EXAMPLE:** *According to Smith, “Many Americans made the long westward journey on foot” (Smith 90).*

MLA FORMATTING FOR QUOTES and CITATIONS

When quoting another author, record the other author’s words **exactly as they appear in the text**. Use this basic format for direct quotations:

“The quoted sentence goes here” (Author’s Last Name #).

Things to remember:

- Record the author’s words **exactly** as they are!
- Add your own words when you need to turn a quotation into a complete sentence or to clarify a small word (such as him/her). When you add words, use **[brackets]** around the words that you add.
- If you leave out words written by the author to shorten the quote (never to change the quote’s meaning), show this with an ellipsis: ...

EXPLAINING YOUR QUOTE EVIDENCE

A direct quote NEVER speaks for itself. Your explanation of the quote is needed when it is part of proving of your thesis/claim and is the most important part.

Here are some tips to remember when explaining a quote:

- **Write out a full explanation even if it seems obvious!** The explanation is your unique interpretation and analysis of the quote.
- Explain how the quote proves your point:
 - Repeat a key word or phrase from both the topic sentence and the quote in your explanation. This ties the two ideas together.
- EXAMPLE (below, in context of a body paragraph):

The first way that Digory shows that he is a risk-taker is in the scene in which he jumps over his garden wall. In the beginning of the novel, before Polly and Digory are even friends, the narrator states, “One morning...[Polly] was out in the back garden when a boy scrambled up ...and put his face over the wall” (Lewis 2). Digory sticking his head over his neighbor’s wall is an example of his risk-taking nature. He did not know what was over the wall, but he quickly “scrambled” into the new situation. The narrator does not state that Digory hesitated or used any caution; instead, Digory’s quick “scramble” into an unfamiliar place shows that Digory is taking a risk in very first scene of the novel.

REVISION

When you finish a draft, you should review it to improve your writing. This is different from editing. Coming back at a later time, or even a later date, is an effective way to get a fresh perspective and new ideas on your writing.

CONTENT

- Where can you add details or explanation?
- Are there ideas you have added that don't fit? You can delete them.

ORGANIZATION and STRUCTURE

- Are all of your ideas on topic?
- Does your order make sense to your reader?
- Do all of your paragraphs have a main idea? (expository text only)

WORD CHOICE

- What words can be more specific?
- What words can be more descriptive?
- Did you use active verbs?
- Did you avoid overly general words like thing, stuff, awesome?
- Try to find at least five words that you can improve and change them.

Review the examples on the next page.

Example:

Original

People often consider a cloudy day to be a negative weather forecast, but this isn't always the case. Cloudy days often have the best sunrises and sunsets. Clouds may also mean cooler temperatures which, in the summer, can be a welcome break from the heat. There is a reason there is an expression, "Every cloud has a silver lining." Clouds can also mean rain. Clouds can also capture people's imagination. They give shadows and a chance to stare at the sky and imagine what shapes are floating by.

Revised

People often consider a cloudy day to be a negative weather forecast, but this isn't always the case. Cloudy days often **reflect** the **most colorful** sunrises and sunsets. **Pinks, oranges, reds are reflected in the clouds and wouldn't be seen as vividly on a clear evening.** Clouds may also mean cooler temperatures which, in the summer, can be a welcome break from the heat. **(Sentence deleted here; off topic)** Clouds can also capture people's imagination. They give **people** shadows and a chance to stare at the sky and imagine what shapes are floating by. **There is a reason there is an expression, "Every cloud has a silver lining".**

Active and descriptive verb

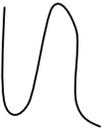
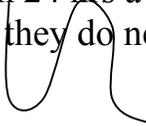
More specific wording

Added detail and description.

Added clarity

Moved this sentence to improve organization

Editing Symbols

Symbol	Meaning	Example
≡	Capitalize	jack London wrote call of the wild. ≡
/	use lowercase	She went to the C ircus.
	delete	The <u>elephant</u> had had a long trunk.
^	insert a word or punctuation	pizza When I eat my [^] , I like pepperoni
	spelling error (including homophones*)	Why do we drive on a parkway but pa <u>driveway</u> ?
/	separate into two words	a/lot
^ v	Should be one word	some [^] one v
	Reverse these letters or words	If 7-Eleven is open 24 hrs a day seven days a week, why they do need locks on the doors? 
awk	Awkward phrasing	<i>awk</i> The girl who didn't ever look in the mirror didn't realize she was bald.
¶	Start new paragraph.	Fairy tales often have a meaning that is useful for both kids and adults. If you look hard enough, you will find this meaning. ¶ Science fiction is another type of fiction.
wc	Word choice. Choose a more specific, clear, appropriate, and/or descriptive word.	<i>wc</i> Picasso was a good painter.
rep	Repetitive	I really liked going to Six Flags, and I (rep) enjoyed my time there.

s/v	Subject-verb agreement	s/v The life of a dog seem so easy.
frag. or f	sentence <i>fragment</i> (needs a subject, a verb, or a complete thought)	<i>frag</i> Because of the approaching storm.
R/O	<i>run-on</i> sentence	The ferris wheel was going so fast and it started to spin out of control and the lights all looked like a blur. (R/O)

*Improper use of homophones is considered a spelling mistake. Please refer to the homophones section of this guide.

Some Important Grammar Rules and Conventions

Fragment (editorial mark = frag./ f) :

A fragment is a piece of a sentence. It is missing subject, a predicate, or both.

Incorrect: The big tiger with the fierce green eyes.

Correct: The big tiger with the fierce green eyes pounced on top of the picnic table.

Run-on (editorial mark = R/O) :

A run-on sentence is two or more sentences improperly combined.

Incorrect: I love you, you love me.

Correct: I love you. You love me.

Subject/Verb Agreement (editorial mark = s/v):

Subjects should always agree in number and tense with their verbs.

Incorrect: Each of the students have submitted a paper.

Correct: Each of the students has submitted a paper.

Numerals:

Spell out numerals less than ten, numerals that can be written in one word, and any numeral that begins a sentence.

Incorrect: I turned 11 last May.
Correct: I turned eleven last May.

Vague Pronouns:

Always be clear about which person, object, etc. your pronoun refers to.

Vague: The little birds bobbed in the waves. They were white.
(*What was white? The little birds? The waves?*)
Clear: The little white birds bobbed in the waves.

Subject Pronouns:

Be sure to use a subject pronoun for the subject of a sentence, clause, or phrase, especially when the subject is compound. *Subject pronouns are: I, you, he, she, it, we, they.*

Sample: Me and Pat are going to enter the hot dog eating contest.
Revision: Pat and *I* are going to enter the hot dog eating contest.

Word Choice:

Choose clear, precise, and descriptive words to express yourself.

Sample 1: I bought a lot of *stuff* at the store.

Revision 1: I bought a lot of *fruits and vegetables* at the store.

Sample 2: She *walked* through the park.

Revision 2: She *strolled* through the park.

Parallel Construction:

Express similar terms (all nouns, all verbs, all phrases, etc.) in parallel structure.

Incorrect: I like cookies, cake, and eating ice cream.

Correct: I like cookies, cake, and ice cream.

Also Correct: I like eating cookies, cake, and ice cream.

Contraction:

Do not use contractions in formal writing. *A contraction is a shortened form of a word or group of words where the omitted letters are replaced with apostrophes.*

Sample: We didn't know how so many clowns squeezed into that car.

Revision: We *did not* know how so many clowns squeezed into that car.

Nine Comma Rules

Rule #1: Three or more items in a series

Use commas to separate items in a series.

Example: I like to eat cookies, cake, candy, and ice cream.

The comma between the word "candy" and the word "and" is optional; however, remain consistent in your use of whichever style you prefer.

Sometimes the items in a series are not single words. Use commas to also separate phrases in a series.

Example: Each person should find a name card, take a seat, write down the homework, and do the starter.

Again, the comma between the word "homework" and the word "and" is optional; however, you must remain consistent in your use of whichever style you prefer.

Rule #2: Two or more adjectives before a noun

Use commas to separate two or more adjectives preceding a noun.

Example: It was a hot, sultry day.

Rule #3: Non-essential clauses

Use commas to set off non-essential sentence parts. The sentence would not change its basic meaning without this part, even though it would not be as informative.

Example: Abraham Lincoln, who was our president, wrote the Gettysburg Address.

Example: Julia and I, dressed as Minnie and Mickey Mouse, won first prize at the party.

Rule #4: Compound Sentences

A compound sentence is two sentences joined by a conjunction. In a compound sentence, always use a comma before the conjunction (and, or, nor, but, for, yet).

IMPORTANT: *A sentence with only a dependent clause following the conjunction is not compound and does not take a comma.*

<u>COMPOUND SENTENCE</u>	vs.	<u>NOT A COMPOUND SENTENCE</u>
<u>Sentence</u> , and <u>sentence</u> .		<u>Sentence</u> and <i>dependent clause</i> .

Example (compound sentence):

I went to the nurse after lunch, and I showed her my paper cut.

Example (not a compound sentence):

I went to the nurse after lunch and showed her my paper cut.

Rule #5: Introductory words and phrases

Use commas after certain introductory words and phrases, especially those that are three words or longer.

Example: When we got to the field, we realized the other team wasn't there.

Example: Looking at the dull television show, Liz heaved a sigh of boredom.

Rule #6: Appositives or interrupting words and phrases

Use commas to set off words or phrases that interrupt the sentence.

Example: What are we singing, Mrs. Smith, this year in music?

Example: English, in my opinion, is a fabulous class!

Example (Appositive): Sam and Rosie, my cats, are famous for racing up and down the stairs.

In this example, "my cats" is an appositive for "Sam and Rosie" because it is a phrase that means the same thing as the subject that immediately precedes it (Sam and Rosie).

Rule #7: Dialogue

Use commas when writing dialogue to separate the narration from the character's words.

Example: "I don't want to go home yet," whined the young child on a play date.

Example: The young child whined, "I don't want to go yet!"

Rule #8: Dates and letter-writing conventions

Use commas to set off items in dates and addresses, after the salutation and closing in letters, and before titles following names.

Example: On July 4, 2076, we will celebrate the tricentennial of the United States of America.

Example: You can find me at John Glenn Middle School, 99 McMahan Road, Bedford, MA 01730.

Example: Dear Aunt Sally,
Yours truly,

Example: Martin Luther King, Jr.

Rule #9: Clarity

Use commas where a sentence might otherwise be unclear.

When in doubt leave them out!

Example: Let's eat Grandma! vs. Let's eat, Grandma!

Capitalization Rules

Capitalize the first word in a sentence.

Over the river and through the woods to grandmother's house we go.

Capitalize almost anything that is a name.

People:

John Jacob Jingleheimer Schmidt is my best friend.

Places:

The winner of the contest will get a free trip to Kalamazoo, Michigan.

We will fly east to get to Paris.

Have you ever wanted to go back in time to the Wild, Wild, West?

*only capitalize directions (east, west, etc.) when you are talking about a specific place (e.g. I live on the East Coast.). One hint is to look for the word "the" in front of the word.

Organizations, teams, businesses, institutions, and agencies: The Bruins invited me to be a guest goalie.

Calendar events (specific holidays, months, days of the week, etc.):

I cannot wait for Arbor Day!

My birthday is on a Tuesday. (Your birthday is NOT a recognized holiday.)

Nationalities, races, and peoples:

My grandmother is Lithuanian.

We are learning about the Cherokee people and the Trail of Tears.

Religions, sacred writings, and deities:

*When referring to God, capitalize He and Him. Capitalize God when it is used as a name.

Some people believe that God created the Earth, and He did it in seven days.

The Egyptians believe in many gods; this is called polytheism.

The Torah is the holy book of Judaism.

ONLY capitalize school subjects when they are a language, a unique class name, or are followed by a number.

I will be taking Algebra II next year.

My favorite class is English because it is so interesting.
When I was in math class, I learned how to calculate tip in a restaurant.

Capitalize mom, dad, grandma, aunt, etc. when it is used as a name.

*If you can replace it with another name, then you capitalize it.

My grandma loves to play cards. (*You wouldn't say, My Kathy loves to play cards, so grandmother is not used as a name here = no capitals*).

I want to visit Grandma in Florida. (*You could say, I want to visit Kathy in Florida, so Grandma is being used as a name = capitalize it*).

Capitalize ALL important words of titles, the first word, and the last word.

My favorite book is, *A Prayer for Owen Meany*.

Capitalize both letters when abbreviating a state.

Massachusetts: MA

Hawaii: HI

General Writing Rubric Categories

All rubrics will vary from assignment to assignment. However, the categories listed below will appear on almost all of your graded writing assignments in one form or another. It will be helpful to use this as a checklist, along with your actual rubric given by the teacher, for any writing assignment you create.

Content:

- Strength of ideas
- Accuracy and depth of information
- Level of detail
- Expectations specific to an assignment
- Adherence to the topic/prompt

Organization:

- Structure
- Clarity
- Cohesion

Word Choice:

- Specificity
- Description
- Precision

Conventions:

- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Capitalization
- Grammar
- Sentence structure

Format/Scholarship:

- Double-spaced
- Titled appropriately
- Correct heading is added
- Turned in on time
- Additional requirements have been met



Check out his **muscles!**



Check out his **mussels!**



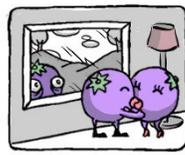
Night of the living dead



Knight of the living dead



Current affairs



Currant affairs



I'm **bald**



I **bawled**



I miss my **hair**



I miss my **hare**

HOMOPHONES

They may not seem important, but they can be really confusing if they are not used correctly.

Common Homophones to be Aware of:

Its: ownership

It's: It is

The dog is wagging its tail because it's happy to see me.

Their: ownership

They're: they are

There: a place

They're going to sell their llama when they move to Tahiti because they don't allow llamas there.

Your: ownership

You're: you are

You're going to love your new teacher!

Were: past tense of "to be"

We're: We are

Where: a question word for place

*These aren't fully homophones, but they do get confused a lot.

Where we're going, we won't need a computer even though we were told to bring one.

By: through, via

Bye: a word for farewell

Buy: to purchase

I would like to buy this painting by Picasso before we say good-bye to this shop.

*Image taken from <http://www.myenglishteacher.eu/blog/hilarious-homophones-writing-mistakes-to-avoid/>

TRANSITIONS

Transitions in writing are like road signs in driving. They tell your reader what is up ahead. They give the reader a signal that you are about to give a contrasting statement, add information, conclude your idea, and more. Overall, they add to the “readability” of your writing (how smooth it is).

Words that can be used to **compare two things**:

likewise	in the same way	similarly
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Words that can be used to **contrast things** (show differences):

however	otherwise	but
still	on the other hand	nevertheless
yet	even though	although
	on the contrary	

Words that can be used to **emphasize/stress a point**:

again	for this reason	in other words
to repeat	to emphasize	most important
truly	above all	in fact
	even more	

Words that can be used to **conclude or summarize**:

finally	all in all	in summary
as a result	in conclusion	in short
therefore	in other words	to sum up
because	on the whole	for this reason

Words that can be used to **add information**:

again	for instance	additionally
as well	moreover	further
next	along with	equally important
another	in addition	similarly
besides	for example	

Words that can be used to **clarify**:

that is	for instance	in other words
for example	to clarify	

Introduction Template

*** Grabber:** *(Your first chance to grab your reader's attention! Be creative! Use description, "imagine," a surprising fact, a rhetorical question, or a quotation.)*

Background Information: *(What else does your reader need to know about your topic before you state your claim/thesis? Use this space to smoothly transition from your grabber into your claim/thesis.)*

 **Thesis Statement:** *(State the big idea that you want to teach your reader or your strong opinion about your topic. Use confident words, and write with the attitude that you are correct.)*

Electronic Tools for Brainstorming and Organizing

www.greatsource.info/iwrite/students.html

This site has organizers for various types of writing (expository, persuasive, narrative, etc.) as well as step-by-step instructions for students to use to create a piece of writing. There is also a grammar handbook, glossary (helpful for literary terms), and section for writer's tools. This site includes a parent section as well. It is definitely worth exploring and bookmarking.

www.thinkport.org/technology/template.tp

This site is EXCELLENT source for graphic organizers that are useful for a variety of purposes. Can be downloaded in Word, PDF, or html format. These are often the same organizers used by teachers.

Read and Write for Google.

This is an extension for Google Docs. It will enable the computer to read your writing to you (when using Google Docs) so that you can hear what you have written and revise as necessary (see "Steps for Revising"). In order to add it:

1. Go to "Google Chrome Store". (If you Google it, you will find it).
2. Search for an app called, "Read & Write for Google". It is free.
3. Download it. There may be a series of questions and a permission request (you may want to read through these with a parent).
4. Once it is downloaded, a tool bar should show up at the top of a document in Google Docs. When you highlight text and hit the play button, it will read what you have written. (If you already have Google Docs open, you will need to log out and back in).
5. If you open Google Docs another day and do not see the play button, look for a purple puzzle piece with an RW on it. This will open the extension.

www.bubbl.us

This site allows users to make a bubble map electronically.

www.spiderscribe.net

“With SpiderScribe you can visualize your ideas by connecting various pieces of information together. Unlike other mind mapping applications, SpiderScribe allows you to create free-style maps by connecting your stencils in any way.” (Taken directly from the website). You can include visuals as well as words.

www.exploratree.org.uk/

This site offers a wide range of thinking maps for brainstorming and organizing. It is a very helpful tool for a wide range of writing assignments.

www.wisemapping.com

This site offers a platform to create your own thinking maps and share/collaborate with others.

www.grammarly.com

This is a grammar checking website. You can enter your text, and it will give you advice to correct grammar. This is especially helpful when you are using Google Docs, and there is not an automatic grammar check. It also advertises that it is more effective than Word in finding grammar errors.