STUDENT GUIDE TO WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

LAPORTE HIGH SCHOOL

LAPORTE, INDIANA

PHILOSOPHY

Today we live in an age of information. Your ability to succeed in this society is going to be dependent on your ability to read and write. All teachers in LaPorte High School believe that writing is an important skill and that you should have opportunities to write in all subject areas, not just in Language Arts classes.

EXPECTATIONS

Before you begin, you need to know what is expected of you as you complete any writing assignment. Be sure you understand the teacher’s requirements. Also below is a grading rubric based on the ISTEP rubric. A rubric is a guide for you to know the traits of good writing. Many LPHS teachers use rubrics to evaluate papers. While your teacher may not be using this rubric, it will give you a good idea of characteristics of good writing.
BEGIN A WRITING ASSIGNMENT

A few years ago LaPorte High School had a major renovation. Bricklayers did not show up and start laying brick wherever they wanted. Ironworkers did not show up and put beams wherever they wanted. Workers had blueprints to study and to follow before the work began. Think of your writing as a job. With every major venture, you have to follow steps. After your teacher has given you an assignment, spend time generating ideas and then organizing those ideas.
Here are some suggestions to help you begin:

- If you have the freedom to pick a topic, choose an interesting one. Pick a topic you want to learn more about. Writing is a part of learning.
- Write questions about the topic. If you have these questions, you can be certain your audience will have the same questions. Do not worry about the answers to these questions right now.
- Brainstorm. Write anything that comes to mind about this topic.
- Cluster ideas:

```
Settings
ordinary
fantasies

Music
music channels
teenagers' choices

TV's influence on teenagers

careers
documentaries
TV series
History Channel
Discovery

characters
men
women
housewives

quick solutions
beauty
personal problems
```

- Free form write. Take fifteen to twenty minutes and just start writing about the topic. Do not worry about organization, spelling, punctuation, etc. You are trying to generate ideas!
- Research. Sometimes you are given a topic about which you know little. Grab a reference book and gain an overview of this topic.
- Look at the paradigm to gain an idea of the types of information you will need to include in your paper.

**PARADIGM**

A paradigm is a general model for organizing papers. It is not an outline; an outline is content specific. A paradigm gives you a general organization for developing your ideas.

**A General Model**

**Introduction**
Identify your subject.
Grab the reader’s interest.
Explain the problem.
Define any terms the reader will need to know.
Give relevant background information.
Offer a thesis statement.

**Body**
Analyze the subject.
Discuss the first major issue.
Discuss the second major issue.
Discuss the third major issue.
(You need to determine how many major issues you are going to discuss in your paper.)

**Conclusion**
Discuss the problem and offer your ideas
Interpret.
Provide solutions.
Give your opinion.
Explain the significance of what you have stated throughout your paper.
Restate your thesis.

Modify this paradigm to fit the needs of your paper. For example, maybe you do not want to offer solutions, but you do want to give your opinion. Remember that a paradigm is a general organizational model. You have to modify it to meet the demands of the paper and to help you express your ideas.

If this paradigm does not work for a particular writing assignment, your teacher will help you discover a better model.

**THESIS**

Your thesis sentence is the most important sentence in your paper. This declarative sentence states your position. It does not state the purpose of your paper. It does not ask a question. Instead it is glue that will hold your paper together. All other sentences in your paper will relate to this sentence.

**Weak Model Thesis Sentence:** The purpose of this paper is to talk about Sammy Sosa’s childhood.
**A Better Thesis Sentence:** Growing up in poverty, Sammy Sosa learned he had to work hard to achieve his goals.
Remember: Your entire paper will discuss this thesis sentence. Spend time creating this thesis!

OUTLINE

Some teachers will require a formal outline for your paper. Again, an outline is content specific. In other words, the outline uses words you will use in your paper.

Tips for Writing an Outline

- Use content-oriented headings. Do not use words like thesis, introduction, body, and conclusion. Instead use words that you are going to discuss in your introduction, body, and conclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Wording</th>
<th>Content-oriented Heading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>I. Poverty in America</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Capitalize the first word of each entry.
- State your entries in parallel form. Some teachers may want you to use nouns in each entry, as the above example shows. Other teachers may want you to use sentences in all entries. Whichever form you choose, be sure each entry is expressed in that form; if you choose to write sentences, then all entries have to be complete sentences.
- Use Roman numerals for main topics.
- Use Arabic numbers for supporting details.
- You must have at least two subtopics.
- Indent correctly (see the model below).
- State your thesis at the top of the outline page.

A Model of an Outline


I. ________ First major heading
   A. ________ Subheading
      1. _____ Minor subheading
      2. _____ Minor subheading
         a. _____ Minor subheading
         b. _____ Minor subheading
         (1)___ Minor subheading
You probably will not go into as much detail as this outline illustrates. Many students develop their outlines only to the first level of minor subheading (see the bold print in the outline).

**PLAGIARISM**

When you use someone’s words or ideas as if they were your own, you are stealing. Even if you change a few words and do not credit the author, you are plagiarizing. Yes, you can borrow from other authors. Many writing assignments demand you research the topic. You then must give credit to the author of the source. Plagiarism is a serious offense. Check your student handbook about the consequences of plagiarism.

*A word of warning: Surely, you may copy a paper from the Internet, or you may copy parts of articles from the Internet. Just remember, as easy as it was for you to find that material, it will be just as easy for the teacher to find your sources!*

So how do you handle borrowed material in your paper?

- If you use another author’s exact words, even a few words, you must use quotation marks.
- Your teacher may not require citations. However, you will still need to attribute others’ ideas, direct quotes, paraphrases, and summaries. Use attributive tags to give this credit.

**Examples:**

According to Jonathon Insui, poetry is the most powerful genre of literature.

Ernest Hemingway states that …. The author goes on to explain ….  

- Depending on the teacher, you may have to document direct quotes and paraphrased material.
Most teachers in LaPorte High School require you use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style. Check with your teacher about which style you are to use.

**So what is a citation? Why must I have a citation?**
A citation is just a system to show where you found information. You cite to show you are borrowing information from another author.

List below are some of the common situations you will encounter when you cite in the paper.

| You must cite every bit of borrowed information, which may be paraphrased material, direct quotes, or summaries. |

By citing, you indicate that this information is not yours and you avoid plagiarism. If the information is general knowledge, do not cite. Otherwise, **you must cite every bit of borrowed information.**

**Citing in the paper**

- Generally, between the sentence and the citation, the reader will discover the author of the work (if available) and the page number (if available).

  Example: Ito Nogushi stated that China is the next rising country.

  **NOTE:** This material came from an Internet source; therefore, the author’s name is given in the sentence, and no page number is listed because the Internet is an electronic medium without page numbers.

- If you do not state the author’s name in the sentence, state this name in the citation.

  Example: The South’s economic crisis was the major cause of the Civil War (Kendall 184).

  Example: One source stated the South’s economic crisis was the major cause of the Civil War (Kendall 184).
- When you do not know the author’s name, cite the title of the reference.
  Example: Advertising creates society’s values (“Marketing Values” 49).
- If the title is long, shorten the title, rather than give the full title.
  Example: Freshmen in high school are most influenced by advertising (“Effect” 31).
  The full title of this article is “The Effect of Advertising on Teens in the Midwest.”
- NO, DO NOT CITE MAGAZINE TITLES. Instead, cite the author or, if no author is given, cite the article title.

**Citing in a Paragraph**

Let’s look at an example for citing:

On June 6, 1944, the battle of D-day was fought. More than 14,000 Allied missions dropped bombs on German positions (Brinkley 52). By the evening, Allied troops had won a stretch two miles wide and six miles long (52).

Comments:
- The first sentence is not cited since this is general information. The second and the third sentences are each cited because they contain **specific bits of borrowed information**. **Remember, cite each specific bit of information.** Therefore, the last sentence cannot be cited to indicate the source for the second and third sentences. Again, each sentence must be cited.
- The second and third sentences are paraphrased statements, but they must be cited because the author of this paper is borrowing Brinkley’s ideas.
- The second citation (52) does not include the author’s name since the same source is used as the previous citation.
- No, you **may not** put a citation at the end of a paragraph to indicate all the information found in that paragraph was taken from the cited source. Again, each bit of borrowed information found in a paragraph must be cited at the end of each sentence.
Check with your teacher about how much of your paper can be cited. A well-written research paper contains no more than 30% cited material. In other words, a research paper is not a string of direct quotes and/or paraphrased material. Instead, a research paper is your ideas with sources helping you support your thesis.

Creating a Works Cited Page

Every source you have cited in your paper must be included in your Works Cited page. Works Cited means exactly what it says; these are the works I have cited in my paper. Most LPHS teachers require the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) format. Check with your teachers for the format they desire.

Below you will find the most common types of resources. If you need more help, visit the “Frequently Asked Questions” page on the MLA website at <www.mla.org> or <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html>.

Book


NOTE: Two books by the same author, after the first listing of the author’s name, insert three hyphens and a period for the author’s name. For example,


NOTE: You may abbreviate the names of publishing companies. For example, you do not need to include words like publisher, company, or incorporated. For example, Dell Publishing Company can be abbreviated to Dell.

Book with Two or More Authors


An Anthology or a Collection of Short Stories, Poems, or Essays

A Magazine


If no author is listed, begin your entry with the title of the selection.


A Journal


The 90.5 indicates the volume number is 90, and the issue number is 5. If your source has no issue number, just write the volume number. Journals always have volume numbers listed.

A Newspaper


Interviews


General Reference

Note: some teachers prefer you avoid general encyclopedias. Check with your teacher for permission to use such sources.

CD-ROM


Article from an Online Database That Comes From a Print Source


Article from an Online Database With No Print Equivalent (A Professional Site)


NewsBank Online

The first date (20 Apr. 1993) indicates when the article appeared in the Christian Science Monitor; the second date (May 1993) indicates the last update on the web site.

A Note about Internet Sources

Many teachers have limits on the number of Internet sources you can use to write a paper. Also, there is a difference between an Internet source and a source found on the Internet. For example, the earlier cited web page on Picasso is an Internet source; this material appears only on this web page. On the other hand, you may access The New York Times or NewsBank material on the Internet. These types of information have been printed in other forms, generally in newspapers, magazines, and journals. Therefore, these are sources found on the Internet. Check with your teacher about your class’ limits on Internet sources and limits on sources found on the Internet.

The format for online sources can vary according to different manuals. When you are citing an article that was first issued in print form, but you found it on a database, you want to help your reader find either the original printed form or the online database. Therefore, include the following information in your citation, in the same order. Sometimes you will not have this information.

- Author’s name (No name given? Use the article title as the start of your entry.)
- “Article Title” (Use quotation marks.)
- Publication Name
- Publication Date (Day, Month, Year) (No date given? Then use the abbreviation n.d. [No date].)
- Page number for previously printed material (Page number not given? n.pag. is the abbreviation to use.)
- Database Name (Whose database is this?)
- Service Name
- Name of the library where service was accessed
- Name of the town/city where city was accessed
- Date of access
- <URL of the service>

Example:

Commonly Used Abbreviations

n.p. No place of publication listed
You must use these abbreviations. If a source has no date listed, you must acknowledge that the source does not indicate a date. Otherwise, the reader of your paper will think you omitted the date.

EDITING and PROOFREADING

After you finish writing your rough draft, you must remember the next step in the writing process. Have someone edit and proofread your paper. Stephen King is a successful writer; still, all his books have been edited and proofread. The most successful writers remember this vital step in writing. Here are some tips for editing (checking the organization and development of ideas) and proofreading (checking the mechanics, the punctuation, the grammar):

1. Be sure your paper meets the requirements of the assignment.
2. Most teachers use rubrics for writing assignments. Evaluate how well your paper achieves the criteria listed on the rubric.
3. See the rubric in this booklet. Have your editor-proofreader evaluate your paper by using this rubric.
4. Consider your audience. Will they understand what you have written?

Here’s a simple editing revision checklist:

1. Did I write what I wanted to write?
2. Is my topic focused?
3. Will my readers understand what I am saying?
4. Is my writing clear?
5. Is my opening strong? Does it capture the reader’s attention? Is my thesis clear?
6. Are my main ideas supported with details? Have I used examples?
7. Is all my information needed?
8. Do I have places that need to be expanded?
9. Do I have unity?
10. Is the style right for the topic and for the audience?
11. Does my conclusion contain my thesis?
12. What do I like best about this writing?
13. What do I like least about this writing?
14. Where do I need improvements?
Here’s a simple proofreading revision checklist:

1. Do I have complete sentences?
2. Do I have variety in my sentence structure?
3. Is my punctuation correct?
4. Is my capitalization correct?
5. Is my spelling correct?
6. Is my word choice precise?
7. Do all pronouns have specific antecedents?
8. Is my verb tense consistent?
9. Do my subjects and verbs agree in number?
10. Are my modifiers necessary? If they are, are they located in the correct place?

TITLE PAGE

The two most common formats for a title page are illustrated below. For shorter papers, some teachers prefer you include the title on the first page of the body of your paper. Check with your teacher for the format expected.

Gretta Fleming
American Literature
25 November 2003

Edward Taylor’s Irony

Edward Taylor, a noted Puritan minister, used situational irony in his sermons. Then you finish typing the body of your paper. Many teachers prefer headers and page numbers on the pages after page number one.
For longer papers, some teachers prefer a separate title page.

The Use of Imagery in Romanticism

by

Gretta Fleming

Literature 9, Hour 2
Mr. Fruth
2 October 2003

If you use this format, on the first page of the paper, repeat the title approximately 2 ½ inches from the top of the paper. Quadruple space (two double spaces) below the title for the first line of the body.

Whichever style you use, do not underline the title of the paper nor enclose it in quotation marks.

STYLE SHEET

For typed papers:

☐ Double space the entire paper.
☐ Use 12 font, Times New Roman. Do not change the font type or the font size.
Headers include your last name and page numbers. The first page does not require a header; begin numbering the pages with number 2 on the second page.

Any quotations longer than four-typed lines should be double tabbed.

**Example:**

Noel Perrin, a former chair of the Dartmouth English Department, criticizes Lawrence Buell’s book on Emerson:

> The scholars are in luck, but I would advise those seeking a first book about Emerson to look elsewhere. Buell deliberately avoids narrative, and it is missed. He does a little showing off—uses words like “transgressive” and “filiopietism” and “manipular,” throws in a phrase like “polemical hypostasization.”  (17)

**Note:** Notice such long quotes do not require quote marks around the entire quote. By indenting, you are showing that this material is a direct quote. Also, notice the citation goes after the period.

- Ask your teacher for left and right margins. Generally, one-inch side margins are preferred.
- Again, ask your teacher about top and bottom margins. One-inch is the standard.
- Always run a spell check.
- Take pride in your final drafts. You’ve worked hard on this assignment. **Do not use** liquid paper to make corrections.
- In the upper left corner, staple your papers.

**For hand-written papers:**

- Use black or blue ink.
- Write on only one side of the paper.
- Staple your papers.

**A FINAL NOTE**

Take your writing seriously. Develop your own voice. Experiment. Take chances. Listen to what others say about your writing. Read. Pay attention to other writers’ styles. Read like a writer; write like a reader. Know that you are going to make mistakes, but also know you are going to improve from those mistakes.

Stephen King says, “It is, after all, the dab of grit that seeps into an oyster’s shell that makes the pearl, not pearl-making seminars with other oysters.”

Get some grit.