

MISSION OAK
HIGH SCHOOL
WRITING CONVENTIONS
MANUAL



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This is certainly not an all-inclusive list of rules, but it's start...

TEN PUNCTUATION RULES EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

The first four rules are on commas:

1. Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction [*and, or, nor, for, so, yet, and but*] joining two complete sentences.
2. Use a comma between every item in a series, including the last item. [A "series" is three or more "somethings".]
3. Use a comma, or commas, to set off interrupters. [An "interrupter" is any word or set of words which the sentence doesn't need to be a complete sentence.]
4. Use a comma to separate multiple adjectives modifying the same noun. [A comma does NOT go between the last adjective and the noun.]

The next two rules build on the first four and are concerned with appropriate use of semicolons:

5. Use a semicolon between two complete sentences which do not contain a coordinating conjunction.
6. Use a semicolon to separate items in a series which contain internal punctuation.

The next rule on the colon

7. Use a colon after a complete sentence and before a list.

The last three rules are concerned with the use of the apostrophe

8. Use an apostrophe where the letter or letters are omitted when forming a contraction.
9. Add an apostrophe and an *s* to show possession to any word which does not end in *s*.
10. Add only an apostrophe to show possession to any word which ends in *s*.

TEN GRAMMAR RULES EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

1. The **verb and subject** of a clause or sentence must always agree in number (singular or plural) and person (1st, 2nd, 3rd).

Example: **Incorrect:** A wide range (of goods) were displayed.
 Correct: A wide range (of goods) **was** displayed.

Errors with verb and subject sometimes occur through the use of collective nouns (team, flock, group etc.) which generally take singular verbs, or because the verb is placed a long way from the subject.

2. If two subject are joined by **and**, the verb is plural.

Example: **Incorrect:** Courage and initiative is needed for this job.
 Correct: Courage and initiative **are** needed for this job.

3. If two subjects are joined by **or nor**, the verb agrees with its closest subject.

Example: **Incorrect:** Neither Patrick nor I are invited.
 Correct: Neither Patrick nor I **am** invited.

4. Relative pronouns are governed by four rules of usage. You will notice that:

(a) we use **who/whom/that** for people, and **which/that** for things.

Example: **Incorrect:** These are the people which we saw.
 Correct: These are the people **whom** we saw.

(b) **who** is subject; **whom** is object; **which** and **that** are both subject and object.

Example: **Incorrect:** My brother who you met before is here.
 Correct: My brother **whom** you met before is here.

(c) the **case (subject or object)** of the relative pronoun depends on the meaning of its own clause.

Example: **Incorrect:** He is the person whom I believe will help you.
 Correct: He is the person **who**, I believe, will help you.

(d) The relative pronoun must agree in number (singular or plural) with the word *immediately preceding* it.

Example: **Incorrect:** She is one of those girls who is always boasting.
 Correct: She is one of those girls **who are** always boasting.

Whether **who** is singular or plural depends on the number implied in the preceding word.)

5. Certain words take *singular* verbs and possessives. Frequently used examples of such words are:

each any anyone every everyone none neither either

Example: **Incorrect:** None of the group were dancing
 Correct: None of the group **was** dancing.

6. When comparing *two* things, use the comparative form of the adjective (suffix ends in **er**); when comparing *more than two*, use the superlative form (suffix ends in **est**).

Example: **Incorrect:** He is the quickest of the *two*.
 Correct: He is the **quicker** of the *two*.
 Correct: He is the **quickest** of them *all*.

Three frequently used adjectives are *irregular* in their comparative and superlative forms. They are:

good	better (comparative)	best (superlative)
bad	worse (comparative)	worst (superlative)
many	more (comparative)	most (superlative)

7. When using several verbs, keep them in the *same* tense *unless the sense dictates otherwise*. For instance, when referring to events which are going on in the present or which occur frequently (or happen as a general rule), use the *present* tense of the verb *throughout*.

Example: **We're eating** pizza. We often **eat** pizza for lunch and generally I **make** a salad to go with it and we **drink** fruit juice.

8. If two nouns are joined by **and**, check whether the definite article (**the**) is required for each noun (consider whether the meaning is clear).

Example: The owner and manager came over. (one person)
 The owner and **the** manager came over. (two people)

9. Ensure that **participial phrases** (groups of words depending on a participle show a *clear* relationship to the *nearest noun or pronoun*).

Example: **Incorrect:** Running down the hill, his hands trembled as he rushed to rescue Kim.
 Correct: Running down the hill, **he** found his hands trembling as he rushed to rescue Kim.

10. Avoid splitting the infinitive of the verb.

Example: **Awkward:** We want to quickly finish this book.
 Preferred: We want **to finish** this book quickly.

TEN RULES OF CAPITALIZATION EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW

1. Capitalize proper nouns (including initials), the first word of a sentence, and the pronoun, I.

Example: Because **I** was running behind, **Bob** had to mail the manuscript to my agent, **L.M. Smith**, before she left for her vacation to **Death Valley**.

2. Capitalize family relationship names when they precede a name or when they are used in place of a name. When the relationship name is not used to replace a name, the word is not capitalized.

Examples: Never trust **Uncle Bill** or **Dad** to remember delectations.

Every dad ever born has gotten lost at least once.

3. Titles which precede names are capitalized. Follow the same rule for family names for not capitalizing.

Examples: Both **General Johnston** and **Captain Sanders** agreed upon the need to deploy the tank company.

The prince and his subordinates agreed upon the need to commit more cavalry from the reserves.

4. Capitalize days of the week, months of the year, and names of holidays (excluding prepositions).

Example: My family celebrated the **Fourth of July** on the last **Sunday** in **June** because **Aunt Rita** and **Uncle Jack** never get off work on **Independence Day**, **Memorial Day**, and **Labor Day**.

5. Capitalize the names of specific organizations and agencies, including abbreviation, but excluding prepositions, conjunctions and articles.

Examples: The **House of Representatives** and the **Senate** passed legislation which the **National Rifle Association** and the **Federal Bureau of Investigation** agreed would benefit the nation.

The **President** of the **United States** signed legislation which the **NRA** and the **FBI** agreed would benefit the nation.

6. Capitalize the names of languages, nationalities, and definite sections of a country or the world.

Example: Fred tried to convince me that fewer **Canadians** in the **Southwest** and **Oregon** speak both **French** and **English** fluently, as compared to those who live in **New England** or the **Caribbean**.

7. Capitalize the names of religions and deities. Capitalize pronouns when referring specifically to God.

Examples: It is generally agreed that **Christianity**, **Judaism**, and **Islam** don't recognize **Zeus** or **Odin** as legitimate deities.

Since childhood, my mother reminded me to pray to **God** every day, so I've learned to pray to **Him** every evening before bed.

8. Capitalize proper adjectives formed from names of geographical locations, languages, races, nationalities, religions, and brand names. Prefixes attached to a proper adjective are not capitalized unless the prefixes are formed from a proper noun.

Example: Have you ever heard of a **Jewish** chef who specialized in preparing both **Syrian** and **Chinese** foods using **General Electric** ovens and **Ginsu** knives?

9. Capitalize the first word of dialogue even if it follows a dialogue tag. If a dialogue tag is in the middle of a character's statement, the first word after the tag is not capitalized unless the rules discussed in this article require it.

Examples: John said, "She is happy."

"Beyond that," she said, "who knows?"

"Even if you get it," she said, "**J**ohn won't."

10. Capitalize the first word and all of the words in titles of books, magazines, works art, and stories, excluding short prepositions, conjunctions, articles and often linking verbs.

Check out novels on bookshelves, magazines on the racks, and paintings at the local museum. Sometimes this rule is broken in an attempt to catch a viewer's attention or for stylistic reasons, especially the titles of a novels printed along the spine or across the front cover where every letter is capitalized.

Examples:

Novels: **A Night in the Lonesome October** by **Roger Zelazny.**

The **Book of Bright Ideas** by **Sandra Kring**

Magazines: **Futures Mystery Anthology Magazine**

The **Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction**

Paintings: **View of Toledo** by **El Greco**

The **Birth of Venus** by **Botticelli**

Stories: **Tethered in Purgatory** by **Terry W. Ervin II**

What is **Done in Secret** by **J.A. Stardust**

WHEN TO START A NEW PARAGRAPH

The following are places to begin a new paragraph:

1. **Introduction.** The introduction of your paper should have its own paragraph.
2. **Conclusion.** The conclusion of your paper should have its own paragraph.
3. **New topic or Idea.** Start a new paragraph each time you switch to a new idea or topic.
4. **Long illustration.** A long illustration or a long set of facts should have its own paragraph.
5. **Change in place or event.** Start a new paragraph for each major change in place or event.
6. **Dialogue.** Start a new paragraph each time someone begins talking.
7. **Emphasis.** To stress an important question, idea, or statement, a short paragraph may be used.
8. **Transition.** To provide a transition between two major parts of a paper, use a short paragraph.
9. **Maintain reader's interest.** Vary the lengths of your paragraphs in order to maintain the reader's interest. You can accomplish this by combining short paragraphs or separating long paragraphs when there is a minor change.

If you are having trouble, try creating an outline. This can help you decide where to begin new paragraphs.

MLA Paper Format

MLA is the documentation style developed by the Modern Language Association. MLA rules govern the formatting of pages, in-text citations, and the corresponding list of works cited. MLA is used primarily for subjects in the arts and humanities.

- White, 8-1/2 by 11-inch paper
- One-inch margins
- Heading: top left margin: your name, instructor's name, course number, and date on separate lines
- Title: Centered, double space after heading
- Indent first word of each paragraph 5 spaces (or one-half inch) from left margin
- Indent long quotations (more than 4 lines/40 words or more than 3 lines of poetry) 10 spaces (or one inch) from left margin
- Double-space throughout
- Page numbers: Number all pages consecutively in the upper right hand corner, one-half inch from the top. Type your last name before page number.

The diagram illustrates the layout of an MLA paper page. It is enclosed in a rectangular border. On the left side, three labels with horizontal lines pointing to specific parts of the page are: 'heading', 'double space throughout', and 'block quotation'. On the right side, two labels with horizontal lines pointing to specific parts are: 'last name and page #' and 'title'.

Heading: Located in the top left margin, it consists of four lines: 'Sam Smith', 'Professor Johnson', 'English 101', and '9 October 2002'. In the top right corner, the page number '1' is preceded by the author's last name 'Smith'.

Title: The title 'Blinding Dreams' is centered on the page.

Text: The main body of the paper is double-spaced. It begins with an introductory sentence: 'Everyone has a different view of what the American dream is, but in *Death of a Salesman*, Arthur Miller shows us that pursuing it can cause us to ignore the better parts of our lives: while striving to achieve a dream, "people damage the lives they have because they feel that their current lives are less than desirable" (Lautzenheiser 4). Miller shows how the American Dream can consume us through his main character, Willy Loman.' This is followed by a block quotation: 'Willy's version of the American dream is broken into two parts. The first part of Willy's dream is to be liked and well known. He believes that reaching this goal requires physical prowess. This is evident in his view of Bernard: Willy is convinced that Bernard will not succeed in the world because he is not strong. The only way to true success is by the way people view another person.'

Works Cited: At the bottom of the page, there is a section titled 'Works Cited' which is right-aligned. The page number '7' is preceded by the author's last name 'Smith'.

Works Cited List:

- Adams, William. "Bad Dreams." *The New York Times*. 6 September 2001. A22.
- Lautzenheiser, Steven. *Blinding Visions: Willy Loman's Quest for the American Dream*. New York: Random House, 1992.
- Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman. Literature: Reading Fiction, Poetry and Drama*. Ed. Robert Diyanni. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002. 1701-69.

MLA Citation Forms

Citations in the Text

Texts with an author:

In the text of the paper: Author's last name and page number.

e.g., Research indicates that English is “the most important of all subjects” (Smith 32).

In the following example the writer mentions the author's name in the introductory phrase so the author's name is not needed in the parentheses:

According to Smith, English is “the most important of all subjects” (32).

No authors:

If no author is credited, use the whole title in the signal phrase or an abbreviated title in the parentheses:

e.g., “Golf Etiquette: A Guide for Caddies” notes that a caddy should not offer advice unless asked (7). **OR:** A caddy should not offer advice unless asked (“Golf Etiquette” 7).

For electronic sources, cite the page if the source is paginated, otherwise use section or paragraph numbers, or omit this designation.

Two or three authors:

If a book has fewer than four authors, their names should appear either in the signal phrase or in the parentheses:

e.g., Brown and Sawyer state that only 35% of households recycle aluminum cans (63).
OR: Only 35% of households recycle aluminum cans (Brown and Sawyer 63).

Four or more authors:

If there are four authors or more, use the first author's name followed by et al. (“and others”) either in the signal phrase or the parentheses:

e.g., Davison et al. claim that gold is still easy to find in many of Oregon's rivers (12).
OR: Gold is still easy to find in Oregon's rivers (Davison et al. 12).

Quotation within a source:

When an author uses a quote from another source, use the abbreviation “qtd. in” before the author's name. For example, here is Wilkes quoted in Banerjee:

e.g., Wilkes often said that “A poet's life is one of heartache” (qtd. in Banerjee 98).

Note:

- Sources cited in the text should correspond with the Works Cited page.

Citations on Works Cited Page

On the Works Cited page, sources should be double-spaced and listed in alphabetical order according to the authors' last names. The first line of each source should begin at the margin; second and subsequent lines should be indented 10 spaces/1 inch.

Books:

One author:

Adler, Mortimer J. Ten Philosophical Mistakes. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985.

Author's last name, first name. Book Title. City of publication: Publisher, Year of copyright.

Two authors:

Moore, Bob, and Maxine Moore. NTC's Dictionary of Latin and Greek Origins: A Comprehensive Guide to the Classical Origins of English Words. Chicago: NTC/Contemporary Publishing, 1997.

First author's last name, first name, second author's first name and last name. Book Title. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of copyright.

Work in an anthology:

Hemingway, Ernest. "The Undefeated." Masters of the Modern Short Story. Ed. Walter Haverhurst. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1945. 171–200.

Author's last name, first name. "Story Title." Book Title. Editor's first name and last name. City of publication: Publisher name, Year of copyright. Page numbers of the cited piece.

Editor, no author:

Davie, Donald, ed. The New Oxford Book of English Verse. New York: Oxford UP, 1981.

Editor's last name, first name. Book Title. City of Publication: Publisher, Year of copyright.

Author and editor:

Bodmer, Frederick. The Loom of Language: An Approach to the Mastery of Many Languages. Ed. Lancelot Hobgen. New York: W.W. Norton, 1985.

Last name, first name. Title. Editor's first name and last name. City of publication: Publisher name, Year of copyright.

Note:

- If the place of publication is not well known or could be confused with another city, add the state abbreviation after the name of the city (e.g. Moscow, ID).
- Titles may be underlined **OR** italicized, not both.

Periodicals:

Journal article:

Kaufman-Scarborough, Carol, and Jay D. Lindquist. "Time Management and Polychronicity: Comparisons and Contrasts, with Insights for the Workplace." Journal of Managerial Psychology, 14 (1999): 288–312.

Authors' names. "Title of article." Title of Journal, volume # (year): pages.

Weekly magazine:

Horsburgh, Susan, Rachel Bierman, and Caroline Howard. "Going Strong." People Magazine. 3 Dec. 2001: 125–26.

Authors' names. "Article title." Magazine Title. Issue date: pages.

Electronic Sources:

Professional Web site, one author:

Jaska, P. Fact Sheet on Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD/ADD). 1998. Attention Deficit Disorder Association. 24 Mar. 2002
<<http://www.add.org/content/abc/factsheet.htm>>.

Author's last name, first name. Title of work. Year of electronic publication or last update. Web site sponsor/affiliation. Retrieval date <http address>.

Professional Web site, no author:

"NCPA Minimum Wage Issues: Effects of Washington State's Minimum Wage Increase." 2001. National Center for Policy Analysis. 2 Mar. 2002
<<http://www.ncpa.org/~ncpa/hotlines/min/june98b.html>>.

"Title of article." Date of electronic publication or last update. Sponsoring/affiliated agency. Retrieval date <http address>.

Article, no author, no sponsoring site:

"Porphyry." 19 May 2000 <<http://www.kheper.auz.com/topics/neoplatonism/Pophry.htm>>.

"Title of article." Date of Retrieval <http address>.

Online journal article:

Osterweil, N. "Get Smart: Brain Cells Do Regrow, Study Confirms: Research Opens Doors to New Therapies for Alzheimer's, Other Diseases." WebMD Medical News. 6 Mar. 2000. 13 Apr. 2002 <<http://webmd.lycos.com/content/article/1728.55460>>.

Author last name, first name. "Title of Article." Title of Journal. Date of Publication. Date of Retrieval <http address>.