

Cathedral Academy Writing Guide

The administrators and teachers of Cathedral Academy want you to form positive work habits that will help you in college and throughout your life. This writing guide is to get you into the habit of writing more effectively and efficiently. Middle and high school teachers have been given this guide to help you with your writing and to help them with their grading. Teachers are encouraged to consider format and grammar (the majority of what is included within these guidelines) as a percentage of your grade for each paper. *If you do not follow these guidelines points may be deducted from your paper.*

Checklist:

Refer to this list after you have written a paper. Teachers may also refer to this list when grading your paper for format and grammar.

- ✓ _____ Look at the requirements of the paper again. Did you complete *everything* required (including source requirements, page requirements, etc.)? Be sure to check the Rubric that may have been provided by your teacher.
- ✓ _____ Is your thesis obvious in the first paragraph? Your thesis statement should be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph.
- ✓ _____ Are your paragraphs well-formed and clear?
- ✓ _____ Did you use supporting details and/or examples in each paragraph?
- ✓ _____ Did you reiterate the thesis in different words in the conclusion and bring the paper to a solid end?
- ✓ _____ Did you omit 1st or 2nd person pronouns (I, we, you, my, our, your, us)?
- ✓ _____ Did you use the proper format (MLA, APA, or Turabian) throughout the paper for the title page, name and date placement, page numbers, and citations?
- ✓ _____ Did you include a citation with a page number *immediately after every quote, fact, or summary of someone else's work*?
- ✓ _____ Did you use the proper format for materials in a Works Cited or References page?
- ✓ _____ Did you consider the suggestions and common mistakes found within this guide?

The basics of a good paper

➤ **Do EXACTLY what the assignment asks of you**

If the assignment states, “*At least 4 pages typed, double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt. font,*” then it means EXACTLY that. Expect points to be deducted if you use a different font. If you have manipulated your margins so that they are not the standard 1”, points will be deducted.

Please note: If the assignment requires 4 pages and you only turn in 2 pages, expect to get the percentage that you did not complete deducted from your grade (in this case 50%) before anything else is graded in that paper. *Teachers can choose not to accept insufficient work.*

➤ **Proofread it, get someone else to proofread it, and turn it in on time**

In college, most professors will *not* accept late work. The best advice: finish your paper early, have a parent or friend proofread it, and then revise it.

➤ **Turn in an actual *printed, stapled* copy of your paper in black ink only.**

Teachers don’t want a thumb drive or an e-mail. *Hand in* your paper. Your computer and printer problems are not the teacher’s problem. Staple your paper before class if needed.

➤ **Make sure it’s your work or that you cite it appropriately (see section on Formatting and Citations)**

At the minimum, plagiarism will get you a zero at Cathedral Academy. In college, it could get you kicked out of a class or kicked out of college completely.

➤ **Answers to essay questions should also follow these guidelines**

It’s called an *essay* question for a reason. Even if you think you can answer the question in one or two sentences, write a complete essay with examples and supporting details.

Getting personal

In an academic paper, avoid using pronouns in 1st person (I, we, my, myself, mine) or 2nd person (you, your, yourself, yours). If in doubt, ask your teacher in advance if using them would be acceptable.

In place of 1st person pronouns, consider the following:

- Instead of “*I really like this book because...*” use “*This book was phenomenal because of its...*”
- Instead of “*we...*” use “*Americans (or students, etc.)...*” if talking about a specific group of people

- Instead of “*my rights...*” use “*the rights given each man (American, student, etc.)...*”

In persuasive essays and critiques you do not need to use “*I*” to express your thoughts. We know that those are your opinions simply by the fact that your paper has your name on it.

- Instead of stating, “*I think the price of gas is too high*” simply state “*Gas prices are too high*”

In place of 2nd person pronouns, one might use the following:

- Instead of stating, “*You can do it if you work hard*” use “*one can do it with hard work*” or “*people (Americans, students, etc.) can do it if they work hard*”
- Instead of stating “*Your rights can be taken*” use “*The rights of Americans can be taken*”

The structure of a paper

Use paragraphs!

Give each idea a separate paragraph and develop each idea. Each paragraph should include a topic sentence (often the first sentence) and then include examples and supporting details about that topic.

Paragraphs can range in length from 4-10 sentences depending on the subject matter of the paper. However, if your paragraph takes up $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page (typed, double spaced), you probably need to break it up.

Basic outline of a paper (research report, persuasive writing, response to literature, etc.):

Introductory paragraph

The introductory paragraph contains a clear and concise thesis statement. From this statement it should be obvious to readers what the rest of your paper will be about. The thesis statement will be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph.

Body

A well rounded paper would include at least three main topics to support the thesis. Therefore, the body of the paper would include at least three paragraphs. Each point of your thesis should receive a full paragraph that has a topic sentence that clearly states that topic. Each paragraph should include details and/or examples of the topic sentence.

Conclusion

The concluding paragraph should summarize the paper. It should reiterate—but in different words—the thesis of the paper. Relate how the main topics of the body of the paper bring the thesis to a conclusion. Conclude with a strong sentence that wraps it all up.

Paragraph help:

- Do NOT write your paper as one single paragraph. *All* papers and essay questions should be at least 3-5 full paragraphs.
- Do NOT put an extra line space between paragraphs.
- ALWAYS indent for each new paragraph (use the tab button on your computer or 5 spaces).

Formatting and citations

- **Unless otherwise indicated by your teacher, all academic papers should be done in 12 pt, Times New Roman font and double spaced.**

What is Plagiarism?

1. Copying information word-for-word without quotation marks and/or a proper citation.
2. Using facts or information that is not common knowledge without a proper citation.
3. Summarizing material without a proper citation. This includes taking information from a source and simply changing a few words (or putting it in your own words).
4. Copying another student's work.

PLAGIARIZING = CHEATING and will result in a grade of ZERO and administrative action.

There are three major writing styles that may be used at Cathedral Academy to format and cite your work:

- MLA (Modern Language Association)—used in English classes
- APA (American Psychological Association)—used in Psychology, Sciences, and Math
- Turabian—used in Social Studies classes (History, Global Studies, Government, etc.)

When a teacher assigns a paper to you in one of these styles, you are to follow that writing style in format, title page, page numbers, headings, citations, footnotes, and bibliography (Works Cited or References).

Use the following to help you with formatting a paper and citations and references:

- www.bibme.org (*BibMe: Fast & Easy Bibliography Maker*). This free website can organize and generate your Works Cited or References page based on MLA, APA, or Turabian styles.

- <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/> Find the “Guide” for either MLA, APA, or Turabian for explanations and examples of each style.
- <http://hbl.gcc.libguides.com/content.php?pid=230450> (*How to Cite the Bible from the Henry Buhl Library of Messiah College*). This site has instructions for citing the Bible in MLA, APA, and Turabian.
- **Microsoft Word** has templates that you can use for MLA and APA reports. When you open a new document, you can find the templates under “Reference” (and then “Academic Papers”) or under “More Options” (and then under “Papers”). Make sure you adjust any spacing issues and change the font to Times New Roman 12 point font.

Suggestions for a better paper

- ❖ **Write for your audience.** Who are you trying to inform, entertain, analyze, or persuade?
- ❖ **Write academically.** Write like you are a college student or even a college professor. Don’t write like you talk, but write like you are a professional.
- ❖ **Use the same verb tense throughout the paper.** Don’t go back and forth between present, past, and future tenses in your sentences and paragraphs.
- ❖ **Use details and examples throughout your paper.** Each paragraph should have details that are real and verifiable. Don’t make up “what if…” stories to back up your position.
- ❖ **Use on your computer to your advantage.** If there is a red or green squiggly line under a word or sentence, find out why. Microsoft Word has a “Review” category at the top of the page. Click on this and then click on “Spelling and Grammar” to find things that may need correction. Beware, however, that spell check will not catch all grammatical errors.

Common mistakes

- ❖ Don’t start a sentence (or paragraph) with: *but, also, since, for example, such as, that, and, which, so, well, just like, or or.*
- ❖ Don’t state the obvious. Don’t use: “*My first reason...*” “*In conclusion...*” “*I think...*” “*The book that I read ...*” “*In the book...*” “*The next point...*”
- ❖ Don’t use jargon or slang (*kinda, ain’t, cops, cool*) or texting abbreviations (lol, btw, bff).
- ❖ Avoid vague, overused and repetitive language (*it, thing, great, amazing, a lot, really, awesome*).

- ❖ Books don't "talk about" or "say" anything. Books and authors "state" things. Ex.: "On page 43 it states..." or "the author states on page 12 that"
- ❖ Don't use "their" when referring to one person. Use "his (or her)" or "one's."
- ❖ Make sure the subject and verbs agree. Incorrect: *A pack of wild dogs are running wild.* "Pack" is the singular subject and therefore the correct sentence is: *A pack of wild dogs is running wild.*
- ❖ Apostrophes are used to show possession (*Mary's book*) and not for things that are plural (*There are two Marys in the class*).
- ❖ Do not use contractions (*don't, can't, she'll, etc.*)

Commonly confused:

- *it's* = it is
- *its* = possession

- *you're* = you are
- *your* = possession

- *they're* = they are
- *their* = possession
- *there* = shows location
- *too* = also
- *two* = 2
- *to* = preposition (*to go to ...*)

- *affect* = to influence
- *effect* = (v.) to produce; (n.) the result

- *should have, would have, could have*
- NOT *should of, would of, could of*