

WESTFORD ACADEMY

WRITING HANDBOOK

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----------|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Good Writer/Good Writing | 1 |
| Organization/Essay Components | 1 |
| MLA Format | 2 |
| Writing Terminology | 2 |
| Quotations | 3 |
| High School Writing Continuum | 4 |

Westford Academy Mission Statement:

Westford Academy, in collaboration with home and community, provides a safe environment where high expectations advance academic excellence. We are committed to promoting integrity and critical thinking, while fostering tolerance and life-long learning in an ever-changing global society.

Introduction

The primary goal of this handbook is to provide a user-friendly reference tool for students in middle school and high school. The handbook allows for a common language about writing, sets clear guidelines for using Modern Language Association (MLA) format, and displays the continuum of progression that is expected across all four grade levels at Westford Academy.

A Good Writer...

- Addresses the prompt
- Uses the writing process
- Expresses an opinion confidently
- Has an organized thought process
- Analyzes

Good Writing . . .

- Uses language of the prompt
- Has a purpose (organized and focused)
- Uses voice
- Employs standard English grammar and mechanics (including MLA format)
- Provides a balance of evidence and analysis

Organization / Essay Components

***Papers are written in present tense; no 1st or 2nd person.

- MLA heading
- Title – all major words capitalized (centered, not underlined, not italicized, not in big font)
- Introduction
 - Opening narrative sentence that “hooks” the reader or grabs the reader’s attention – a universal idea
 - Title, Author, Genre (T.A.G. – books, novels, and plays *italicized*, poems and short stories in “quotation marks”)
 - Brief, appropriate background information
 - Thesis that answers all parts of the prompt
- Body Paragraphs
 - Topic Sentence (including transition, topic of paragraph, and language of thesis)
 - Context / Lead-in phrasing
 - Evidence (quotation or specific plot detail)
 - Analysis (as a guideline, analysis requires twice as much writing as the evidence it refers to)
 - Clincher sentence / connection to thesis
- Conclusion
 - Re-statement of thesis, using different language
 - Summary of major points in a paper
 - Closure – thoughts connect back to the essay’s opening sentence/universal idea
 - Strong powerful closing sentence
- Works Cited Page
 - Entries alphabetized by authors’ last names
 - Every entry is aligned to the left – if the entry continues, indent additional lines
 - See <http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/> for entry formats
 - Format for a novel, book, or play:
 - Author’s Last Name, First. Title. Place of Publication: Publisher, Date of Publication. Type.
Ex: Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. New York: Grand Central Publishing, 1982. Print.

MLA Format

- The **entire essay**, including the **heading** and **Works Cited**, must be written in **12-point, Times New Roman** font, **double-spaced**, with **1” margins**.
- The **MLA heading** must be in the upper left hand corner: your name, teacher’s name, class name, due date.

Joe Student

Mr. Teacher

English 10 CP1

1 January 2000

- **Your last name and page number** must be done as a **header** in the **upper right hand corner** of **every page** of the essay, including the first page and the Works Cited page.
- Use **parenthetical citations** whenever quoting directly from a text. Parenthetical citations include the **author’s last name** and the **page number**. Ex: (Lee 12), (3.5.34-37)
- Essay must have a separate **Works Cited** page labeled as Works Cited – **centered**, but **not underlined**, **not italicized**, **not in quotations or all capital letters**
- **Works Cited entries** are in **alphabetical order by author’s last name** and are double-spaced; the first line of an entry begins at the left hand margin, and every subsequent line is indented.
- The following website is a reference for **MLA format**:
<http://www.owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/>

Writing Terminology

- **MLA Format** = The standard formatting for formal essay writing and citing outside sources.
- **Attention Grabber / Hook** = The name given to the first sentence of the essay that captures the reader’s attention and hints at the topic of the essay.
- **T.A.G.** = The acronym used to remind students to include the Title, the Author, and the Genre; located in the introduction.
- **Thesis Statement** = The last sentence of the introduction, answers all parts of the prompt clearly and makes a claim that can be argued.
- **Transition** = A word or phrase that moves the paper from one idea to another. Transitions are located at the beginning of topic sentences and throughout the body paragraphs.
 - **Ex:** Also, in addition to, however, etc.
- **Topic Sentences** = The first sentence of each body paragraph that includes: transition, topic of paragraph, and connection to thesis statement.
- **Analysis** = The writer’s interpretation of how the evidence both proves the thesis and explains the layers of meaning in an author’s work.
- **Context** = The relevant background information.
- **Integration/Lead-in Phrase** = The phrase that identifies the speaker of the quotation and the context in which is said. Lead-ins keep a quotation from appearing as an island or as a sentence by itself.
 - **Ex:** Atticus emphasizes the importance of this lesson when he says to Scout, “As you grow older, you’ll see white men cheat black men everyday of your life” (Lee 213).
- **Citation** = A parenthetical that gives credit to the author of a quotation. Includes author’s last name and page number where the quotation can be found.
- **Rubric** = A set of expectations that focus around the specific writing assignment presented.

- Voice = An individual and creative tone or style used by the author to engage the reader and set the author's work apart from others.

Quotations

- **NO QUOTATION IS AN ISLAND:** all quotations must be integrated into your paper – quotations must be introduced and explained. **Quotations can be dialogue or narration.**
- Choose quotations that support and illustrate the ideas of your thesis.
 - If any words are added to, or changed in the quotation, put those clarifying words in **[brackets]**.
 - Anything cut out of a quotation must be indicated by ellipses ... - ellipses are not used at the beginning and end of quotations.
 - Dialogue within quoted material must be indicated with a single quotation mark in addition to the double quotation marks around the entire quotation.
Ex: The reporter told me, "When I interviewed the quarterback, he said they simply 'played a better game.'"
- To **integrate quotations**, use one of the following formats, depending on what works best in the paper:
 - Lead-in phrase where an independent clause/complete sentence introduces the quotation – **use a colon** to set off the quotation.
Ex: Scout realizes, after walking Boo home, that she and Jem have learned a great deal from their experiences: "As I made my way home, I thought Jem and I would get grown but there wasn't much else left for us to learn, except possibly algebra" (Lee 279).
 - Lead-in phrase where a dependent clause/incomplete sentence introduces the quotation – **use a comma** to set off the quotation.
Ex: Atticus emphasizes the importance of this lesson when he says to Scout, "As you grow older, you'll see white men cheat black men every day of your life" (Lee 213).
 - No formal lead-in phrase – the quotation is woven into the writer's sentence.
Ex: After the outpouring of appreciation from the black community, Atticus's "eyes filled with tears" (Lee 213).
- Quotations that are **less than five lines**:
 - Are integrated into sentences.
 - Are **cited at the end of the sentence** – regardless of where the quotation is used in the sentence.
 - Are **punctuated after the citation** (if a quotation ends with an exclamation point or a question mark, include that inside the quotation marks and then add end punctuation after the citation).
Ex: Dorothea Brooke responds to her sister with admiration, "What a wonderful little almanac you are, Celia!" (Brooke 7).
- Quotations that are **five lines or more**:
 - Are integrated into sentences
 - Five or more typed lines of prose, or four or more lines of poetry, are **indented, set off by a colon, are not inside quotation marks, and are cited after the closing punctuation.**
Ex: After Rainsford tumbles from the yacht at the beginning of the story, suspense builds as he struggles to stay alive at sea:

[Rainsford] struggled up to the surface and tried to cry out, but the wash from the speeding yacht slapped him in the face and the salt water in his open mouth made him gag and strangle. Desperately he struck out...after the speeding yacht... There was a chance that his cries could be heard by someone aboard the yacht, but the chance was slender. (Connell 21)

High School Writing Continuum

Freshman Year:

Areas of Focus:

- Essay Prompt: Answer and address all parts clearly
- Format: Proper MLA format
- Introduction: include TAG and arguable thesis statement as the last sentence of intro paragraph
- Topic Sentence: Include transition, topic of paragraph and relation to thesis
- Quotations: At least one quotation per paragraph; no island quotes
- Analysis: Explain how the evidence presented connects to thesis statement
- Grammar/Mechanics: No 1st/2nd person. Consistent present tense
- Organization: everything in its proper place

Areas of Reinforcement:

Sophomore Year:

Areas of Reinforcement:

- Format: Proper MLA format
- Introduction: include TAG and arguable thesis statement as the last sentence of intro paragraph
- Topic Sentence: Include transition, topic of paragraph and relation to thesis
- Quotations: At least one quotation per paragraph; no island quotes
- Grammar/Mechanics: No 1st/2nd person. Consistent present tense

Areas of Focus:

- Analysis: Refine critical thinking and work on choosing strong examples
- Voice: Experiment with creative grabbers/hooks and avoid boring language
- Bigger Picture: mention throughout body paragraphs

Junior Year

Areas of Reinforcement:

- Format: Proper MLA format
- Introduction: include TAG and arguable thesis statement as the last sentence of intro paragraph
- Topic Sentence: Include transition, topic of paragraph and relation to thesis
- Quotations: At least one quotation per paragraph; no island quotes
- Grammar/Mechanics: No 1st/2nd person. Consistent present tense

Areas of Focus:

- Analysis-ratio 2:1 analysis to evidence; also more in-depth than 9th & 10th grade
- Quotations: Work on choosing strong quotations
- Refine conclusion paragraph

Senior Year:

Areas of Reinforcement:

- Format: Proper MLA format
- Introduction: include TAG and arguable thesis statement as the last sentence of intro paragraph
- Topic Sentence: Include transition, topic of paragraph and relation to thesis
- Quotations: At least one quotation per paragraph; no island quotes
- Grammar/Mechanics: No 1st/2nd person. Consistent present tense

Areas of Focus:

- Thesis: answers all parts of prompt completely, but is also articulate and compelling
- Analysis: Take risks and create original ideas
- Voice: Refine voice to a confident, college-ready tone and style

Suggested Appendices/Online Supplements:

- Exemplars – annotated with teacher comments
- Writing checklist
- Unmarked essay
- Editing symbols