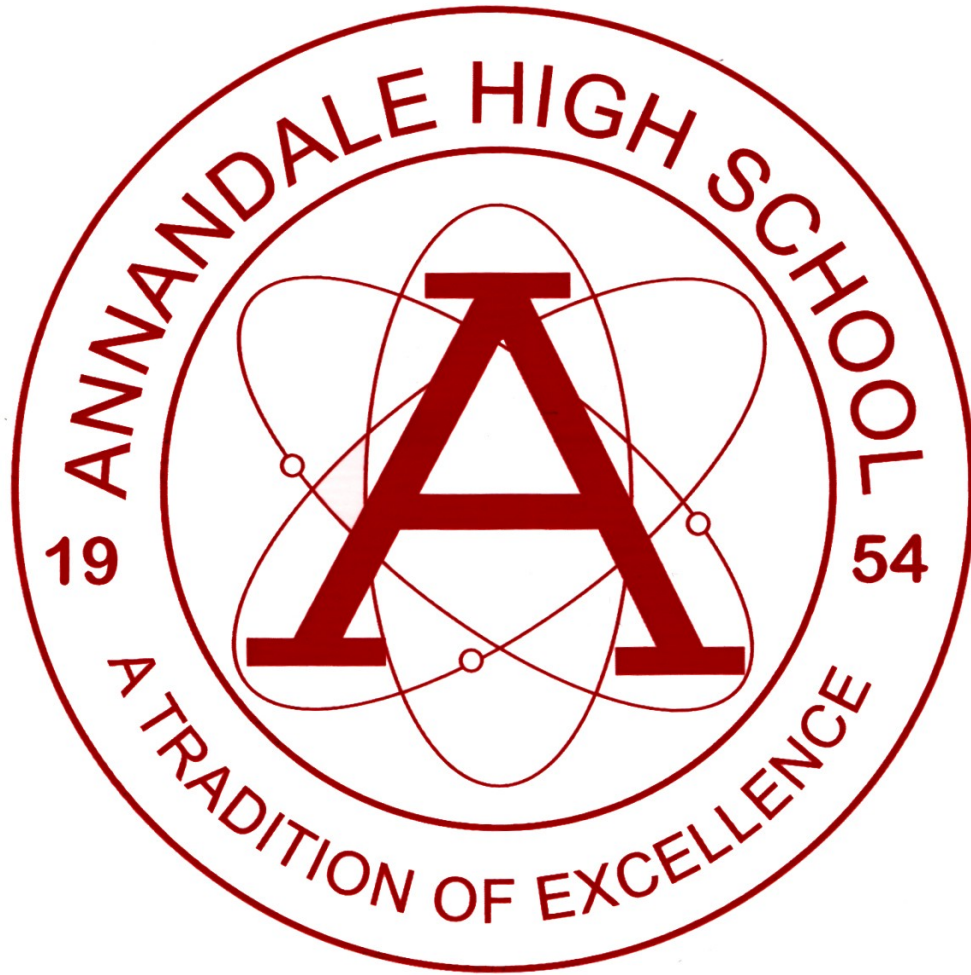


Annandale Pyramid Research & Writing Guide



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This project is designed for the students in the Annandale Pyramid. Through the use of this manual, and the corresponding manual at the middle school level, we hope to ease the transition between middle and high school, as well as helping students learn valuable research and writing skills.



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A. PREWRITING

1. What is my topic?

Sometimes your teacher will assign a topic, but more often you will have to choose a topic. If you have to choose your own topic, pick something that interests you. You may need to brainstorm your topic. Some people find it useful to use a graphic organizer while brainstorming.

2. Who is my audience?

The next step in the prewriting process is to determine your audience. In most cases, your audience is your teacher unless he/she asks you to address your paper to a specific audience, such as a letter to the editor or a picture book for third graders.

3. What is my purpose for writing?

There are a great many varieties of writing, each with its own purpose, style, and characteristics. The most common types of writing are descriptive, expository, creative, persuasive, and narrative. Some assignments such as a documented essay will combine several types.

4. What position do I want to present?

After reading background information on your topic you will formulate a guiding question that will become the focal point of your research. As you continue to gather more and more information to answer your guiding question, you will develop a working thesis that will include your position. You may continue to revise your thesis statement throughout the information gathering phase of your research paper. Your thesis should include a subject, verb and provable point or opinion or “attitude.”

B. LOCATING AND EXTRACTING INFORMATION

Depending on the type of paper you need to write, you, either, draw on your personal knowledge or experience, look up information in books, databases or the Internet or use a combination of both. Any type of research will require looking up information, and the best place to find that information is in the library. Libraries offer a variety of print and online sources. You can use books, encyclopedias and other reference materials, magazines, videos, and audio recordings as well as subscription databases and the Internet. Libraries also have another wonderful source of information, the librarians. Ask the librarians for advice on how to find good sources of information.

1. Locating Information

- Books

Books are a great source of information. This information is often more detailed than in other sources. Learn how to find the books you need in the Library and also how to find the information you need in the book.

Finding the books

Most book collections in libraries are arranged according to the Dewey Decimal Number System (see appendix 1 for a short primer on the Dewey Decimal Number System). Based on this system, each book in the library is assigned a unique call number according to its subject. A call number is like an address, it tells you where the book is located on the shelves.

To find books in the library use the online catalog (see appendix 2: How to find books in the library). When you type a subject in the search window, a list of titles on that topic appears. Select the titles you would like to look at and write down the call number for each of these books.

Example: Search term “mythology”

Result: **292.13 DAL**
Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z
Kathleen N. Daly

This tells you that you can find the book *Greek and Roman Mythology A to Z* at 292.13 DAL. Go to the shelves at the end of the 200 section and look for the number 292.13 (the books are in numerical order). You may find more than one book numbered 292.13, so then look for DAL below 292.13. You will see a sticker on the spine of the book, like this:

292.13 DAL

You can also look at nearby books, since they will typically be on the same topic. You might find quite a few books this way.

<p>Some books will have an “R” before the number. These books are reference books and can be located in the reference section of the library. The reference area in a library is usually a good place to start your research. Reference books such as general and subject specific encyclopedias and dictionaries, almanacs or literary criticism collections are a good source of general background information, and can be a big help in narrowing your focus when you are still unsure of the scope of your paper. Once you have gathered background information from reference sources look for more in-depth information in other non-reference books and databases.</p>
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Finding information in the books

Examine both the table of contents (at the beginning of the book) and the index (at the end of the book) to find the information you need. Think of all the different words that might describe or relate to your subject. Look for them in the index.

- **Online Databases**

Databases provide all kinds of documents: magazine, journal, newspaper, encyclopedia articles, scholarly essays, interviews, pictures, and transcripts of radio and television broadcasts. These databases are especially useful when you are researching current news events or controversial issues in the news because databases have more current information than books. You can access these databases directly in the library, but if you want to do research from your home computer you will need to request a user name and password from your school librarians.

- **The Internet**

The Internet can be a great source of information, but if you decide to use information found on a web site to write a paper you must be very careful. Be sure to use only quality information from reliable, reputable sources. You know that library books or subscription databases will be reliable sources of information because books and content of subscription databases are reviewed and edited by established and reputable publishing companies. However, there are no publishers or editors to check the content of web sites for accuracy or scholarship. Anyone can publish on the Internet. The Internet offers both the very good and the very bad, and everything in between.

How do you know the information you find on a web site is appropriate to use for your research paper? You must evaluate the page, look at it with critical eyes, and ask a few questions.

1. Who wrote the page? Is the author an expert on the subject?
2. Where did the author get the information?
3. What was the purpose of the author for writing the page?
4. Is the page dated?
5. Is the page as good a source as printed sources from the library or documents from subscription databases?

If the answer to questions 1 and 2 is “I don’t know,” do not use information from that web site for your paper.

2. Writing Bibliographic Information, Preparing Works Cited Cards

At the same time you are gathering information, you also need to be taking notes. The first notes you should take are the bibliographic information for each source you have consulted. This information is imperative, as you will need it to write your “Works Cited Page.”

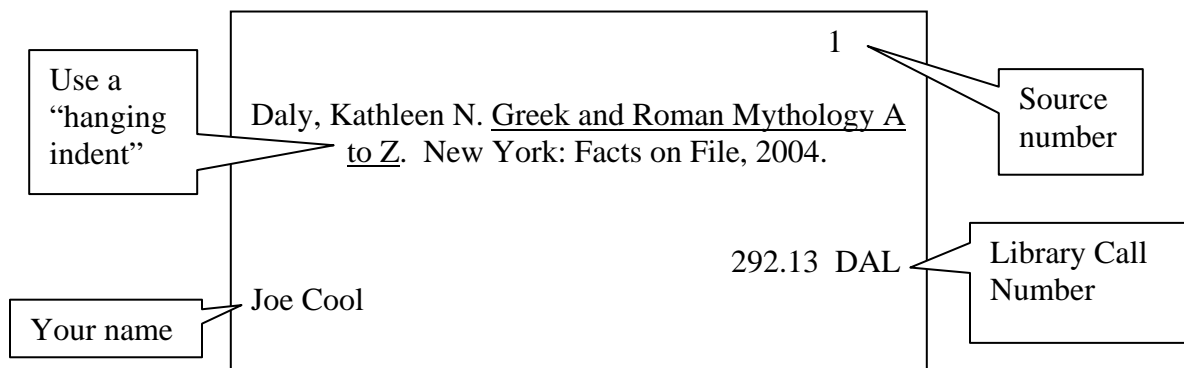
The bibliographic information should go on a works cited card. On the card, include all the information listed below, plus a source number (this number will be included on all your note cards, so you can keep track of where you got your information), and the library call number. You should also include your name on your cards, in case you lose them.

Book:

You can find bibliographic information for a book on its title page.

1. Author's full name (or authors if more than one)
2. Full title of the book, including any subtitles (underline)
3. Edition (only if listed)
4. Number of the volume and total number of volumes (if listed)
5. City of publication (if more than one city is listed, just write the first one)
6. Publisher's name (if there is a shortened form, use it. For example, use "Norton" instead of W. W. Norton and Company).
7. Year of publication (if date doesn't appear on the title page, look on the back of the title page for a copyright date).

Note: It is also a good idea to mark down the library call number, so you can find the book on the shelves the next time you need it.

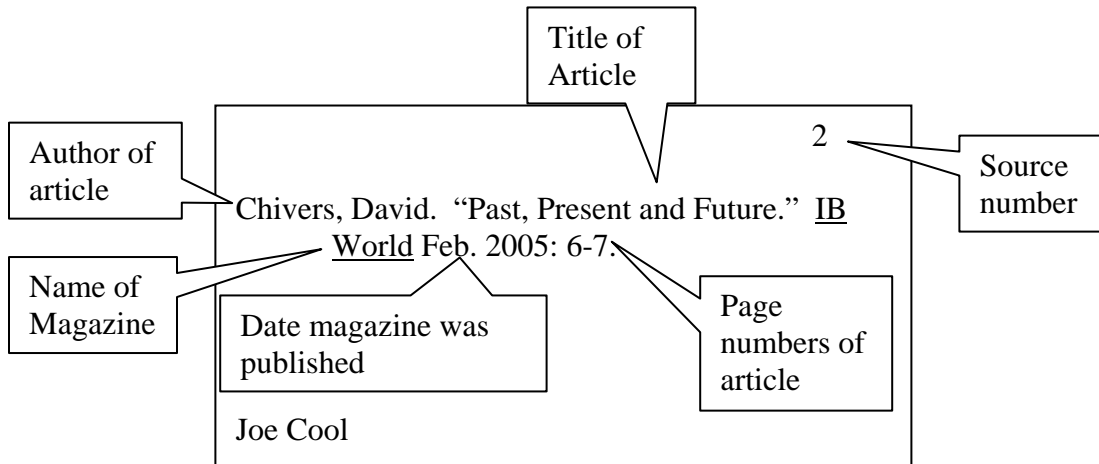


Magazine, Journal or Newspaper Article:

You can find bibliographic information for periodicals on the periodical cover and/or the table of content. The author's name and title appear on the article itself.

1. Author's full name (Last name, First name)
2. "Title of the article"
3. Title of the magazine (underline)
4. Volume number (only used for scholarly journals)
5. Year of publication

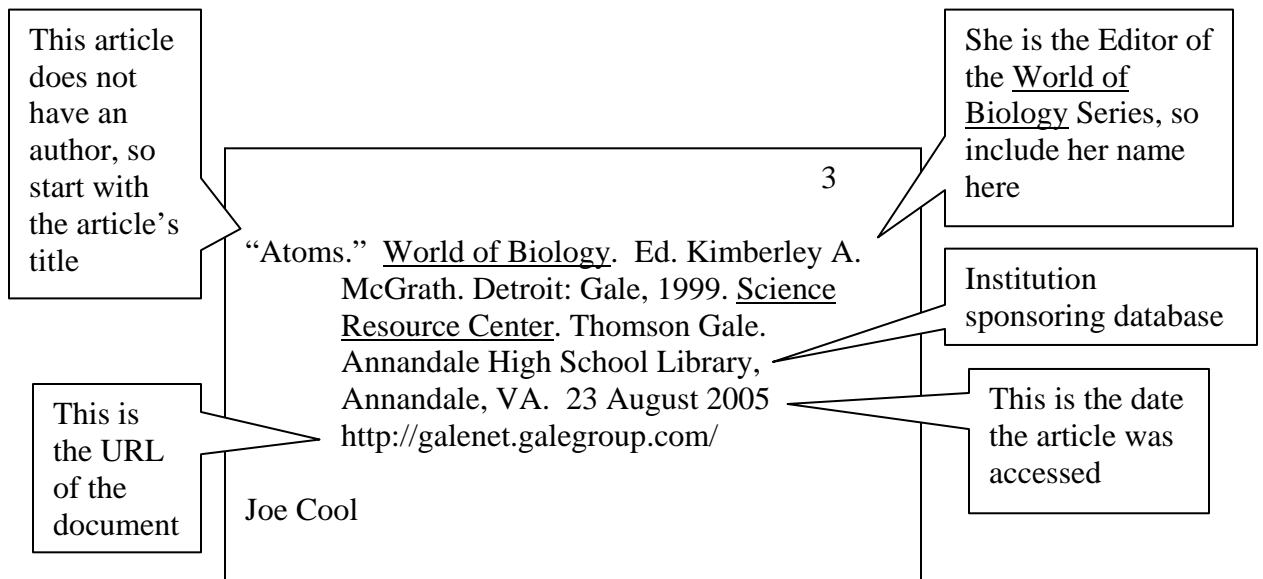
6. Page numbers of article.



Database:

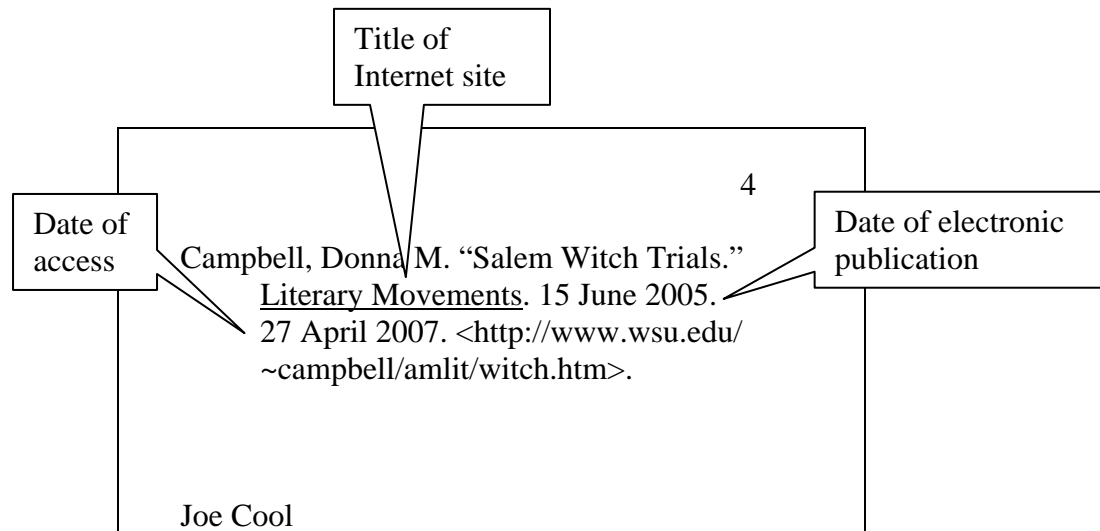
1. Author's full name (Last name, First name)
2. "Title of article"
3. Title of the original source of the article (underline)
4. Publication information for the original source
5. Name of the database (underline)
6. Name of service
7. Name of the institution sponsoring the database
8. Date you accessed the source
9. Electronic address of the database (URL)

*Note: More and more database services are adding a new *cite now* feature which automatically generates a citation for each article included in their databases.



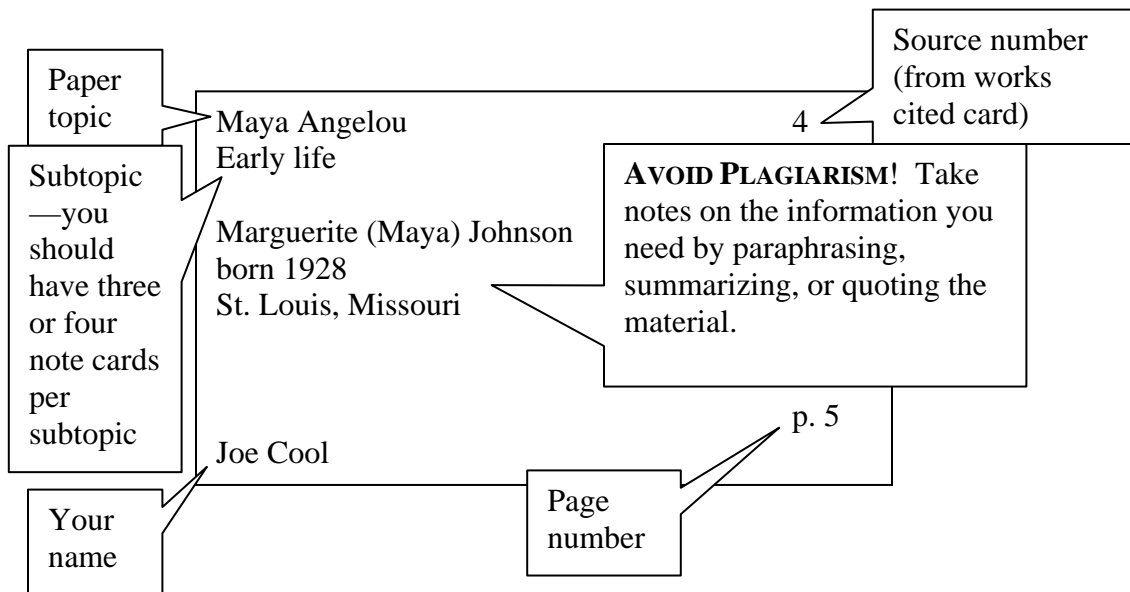
Internet Site:

1. Author's full name
2. "Title of the article"
3. Full information about any copy of the same article in print form
4. Title of the Internet site (underline)
5. Date of electronic publication or latest update
6. Date of access
7. Website address (URL)



3. Taking Notes, Preparing Note Cards

Besides writing work cited cards, you also need to take notes on the information you are reading. Use 3x5 index cards to record your information. On your note cards, make sure you include your source number (from the work cited cards) and the page number on which you found the information. Don't try to cram too much information on one note card; instead, use separate note cards for each subtopic. It is better to use too many note cards than to use too few.



C. ORGANIZING IDEAS AND DRAFTING

Once you have found reliable sources, written your bibliographic information and taken notes, it is time to start organizing your information and begin writing.

1. Developing a thesis statement

Towards the end of the information gathering phase of your research when you feel that you have enough information to answer your guiding question you will develop a thesis statement. Keep in mind, however, that at this stage, your thesis doesn't have to be set in stone yet, you may continue to revise it at any time during the organizing process to better support your ideas and the information you have found. A thesis statement should contain your topic, your position or opinion on the topic, and specific points to explain/support the opinion.

2. Creating an outline

Organizing the information you have gathered serves many purposes. It will tell you if you have enough information, where the information should appear in the paper, and finally, it will give you an idea of what your completed paper will look like. Typically, essays often contain two to four body paragraphs in addition to an introduction and conclusion paragraph. (Research papers may be longer; see individual assignment sheets.)

Outlining is the best way to organize your information. There are two types of outlines. One is a *working* or *draft* outline, the second a *final* outline. Within these two types of outline are two forms, one form, the topic outline, uses short phrases in the outline and the other, the sentence or Harvard outline, uses complete sentences. You might find it helpful to use short phrases in your *working* outline, and complete sentences for your *final* outline.

An outline generally consists of the introductory paragraphs (include your thesis statement), your supporting paragraphs, and your conclusion. For a three paragraph paper, follow the style in appendix 3: Organizing the Essay

As you begin writing your outline you may realize that you need more information. That is expected, and since you have indicated on your works cited cards where you found your information you can go back to your sources and get more. You might also realize that some of the notes you took are not relevant to your thesis anymore. This is not unusual, since at the beginning of your research you may not have had a clear idea of what you wanted to write about. In that case, just discard the irrelevant information. Only keep and use the information that will prove your point. Remember, the more information and details you include in your outline, the easier it will be to write your paper. Your goal is to write your rough draft from your outline, not from your books or your note cards.

3. Writing a first draft

At this point your works cited cards and note cards are completed, and your teacher has graded and approved your outline. The outline includes an approved thesis, sub thesis points which will begin each body paragraph and many details to develop/prove your sub thesis for the paragraph (with or without internal documentation as directed by your teacher).

It is a good idea to type your first draft. Follow your approved outline carefully as you write paragraphs into essay format. Strive to use a variety of simple, compound, complex, and compound complex sentences to help you achieve an interesting style. Revise and type later drafts as needed.

*Tip: SAVE and PRINT a copy of EACH DRAFT before you shut down your computer. Since some departments like English and some individual teachers have NO LATE POLICIES, you will at least be able to submit your latest copy of your paper for credit in the event of a computer crash or a printer malfunction. (See individual teacher's late policies.) Also, some departments like English require several drafts that show revision (rewriting content) and editing (correcting grammar and mechanics). Ask your teacher for his/her policy.

To help you write your paper follow the instructions outlined in the rubric your teacher gave you for a specific assignment. Check and recheck the rubric.

D. REVISING

1. Looking at the revision steps and making appropriate adjustments

After you have completed writing the first draft of your paper, it is time to revise it.

1. Look at the topic sentence of each body paragraph. Does it come directly from one of your specific points in your thesis statement?
2. Look at the sentences that follow the topic sentence. Does each sentence present information about the topic sentence?
3. Eliminate any sentences that do not clearly support or explain the topic sentence.
4. Add any sentences needed to support, detail or explain the topic sentence.
5. Does the final sentence in each body paragraph clearly summarize the points and introduce the next paragraph?

Repeat steps 1 through 5 in the Revision stage until you feel confident you have fully developed your topic and your opinion on the topic. Stop at this point and ask a trusted friend or teacher to look over what you have written.

2. Submitting draft for review

It is always a good idea to have someone else look at your paper. Your teachers, parents, or peers can be a fresh pair of eyes when reading your paper. Complete any peer review activities that your teacher requests. Generally, the first peer review and the first teacher review contain advice on how to revise the paper's content. This will involve rewriting and perhaps reorganizing or adding more information to the content of your paper. Keep copies of each draft of your paper since some departments (like English) require several improved drafts of a paper.

E. EDITING

Editing involves correcting grammar and mechanics. You can use your grammar book as a reference tool, as well as the checklist of common errors below.

Grammar and mechanics:

_____ **Sentence syntax** should be correct (no fragments or run-ons).

- A. A sentence has a subject, verb, and complete thought.
- B. A run-on is two or more sentences run together without proper punctuation.
Example of a **run-on**: Schools in the Middle Ages were different from ours students usually did not have books.
- C. **Four common ways to correct a run-on**:
 1. Make a compound sentence by using a comma and a coordinating conjunction (and, or, for, yet, but, so). Example: Schools in the Middle

Ages were different from ours, for the students usually did not have books.

2. Make a compound sentence by using a semicolon. Example: Schools in the Middle Ages were different from ours; the students usually did not have books. (Be certain the two sentences are closely related in topic.)
3. Make a compound sentence by using a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb like *therefore, instead, meanwhile, still, also, nevertheless, however, or consequently*. Example: Schools in the Middle Ages were different from ours; consequently, students usually did not have books.
4. Make two sentences. Example: Schools in the Middle Ages were different from ours. For example, students did not have their own books.

D. **Correct a fragment:** Fragments might or might not have a subject and verb, but they do not make sense. Fragments can often attach to sentences before or after them, or they may have to be reworded. Example: When we have a pep rally. (Subject, verb, but incomplete thought) Corrected: When we have a pep rally, the cheerleaders lead us in spirit cheers. The pep band plays when we have a pep rally.

_____ Evidence of a **variety of sentence syntax** (simple, compound, complex and compound complex sentences with proper capitals and end punctuation)

_____ **Number agreement:** Use correct subject-verb and pronoun antecedent agreement. Singular subjects require singular verbs just as plural subjects take plural verbs. Example: The child laughs at the clown. The children laugh at the clown. Example of pronoun antecedent number agreement: **Each student** must carry **his** own books to class. **All students** must carry **their** own books to class.

_____ **Commas:** Follow the numerous rules in your grammar handbook.

Common usages are:

- A. Use a comma **before a coordinating conjunction:** (and, or, yet, but, so) that joins two sentences to form a compound sentence. Sid went to get some chocolate ice cream, but he bought strawberry ice cream instead.
- B. Use a **comma to separate items in a series:** plays, films, operas, and television or phrases such as: She researched her topic thoroughly, made note and Works Cited cards, created a Harvard outline, and wrote several drafts. However, use **semicolons when items in a series have internal commas.** She carefully researched her topic on centers for surfing such as California, Florida, and Hawaii; made note and Works Cited cards; and wrote several drafts.
- C. Use a **comma to set off clauses:** When I peer edit a classmate's paper, I try hard to give constructive advice.
- D. Use a **comma to set off parenthetical** comments: The band members, for example, wear expensive uniforms. The show tonight, I'm sorry to say, had to

be rescheduled for another evening. Ella, who is a top student, won a scholarship to the University of Michigan.

- E. Use a **comma to set off a nonrestrictive modifier**: Sally, my neighbor, arrived at school after the tardy bell.

_____ **Apostrophes: to show ownership**: Janet’s book, the ladies’ club, Sam and Sara’s car; **in contractions**: it’s for it is; don’t for do not (Note: In formal essays for class do **not use contractions** at all because they are too informal.) Do not use apostrophes for “1900s, PhDs, VCRs.”

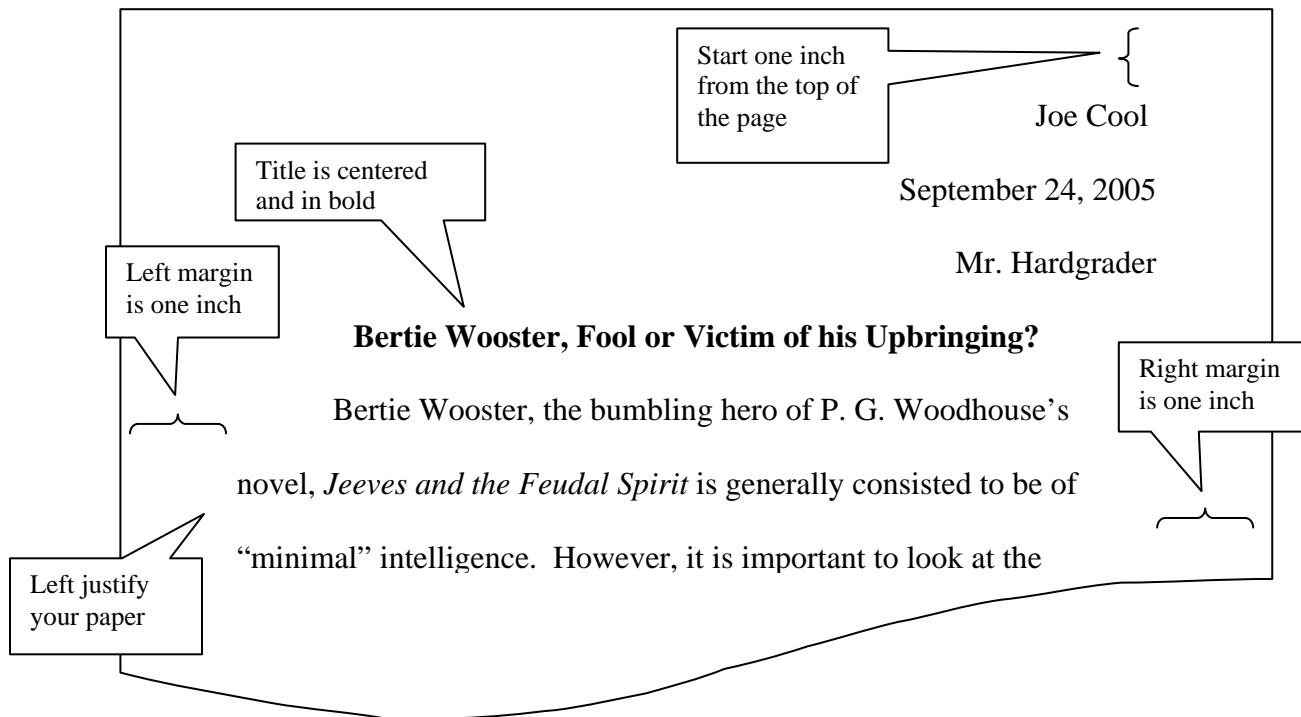
_____ **Quotation marks**: Your draft may contain parenthetical documentation or internal documentation. See the Manuscript Style Sheet (appendix) and your grammar book for specific examples. Briefly, the pattern is: “Your direct quotation” (Jones 18). Jones is the author and page 18 is cited. If you have no author (like many on-line sources) and you want to use a direct quotation, use the following: “Direct quotation” (*Shakespeare’s World*). The title contains the KEY words from the FULL title that appears on the Works Cited - *Shakespeare’s World and His Genius*. See your grammar text, too.

_____ **Spelling**: Use **spell check** and proof read for errors, too. For example, spell check does not recognize the difference between “there and their,” and/or “to and too.” (**Tip**: If you want to check carefully for spelling and errors in grammar and mechanics, “read up” your paper. Read the last full sentence in the paper, then the second to last sentence, etc. You have taken the sentences out of context and have made each an isolated sentence. The errors will stand out more prominently and you can correct them. Then, read down the paper (natural order) to be certain all corrections make sense in context.)

_____ **Diction**: Use **formal, high school word choice**. **Avoid** obvious **slang** unless it is used in a direct quotation. When revising, if you observe that you are using the same transitions or adjectives, verbs, and nouns over and over, consult a thesaurus and use alternate words/synonyms for better style. **Avoid second person “you” in formal writing**. Use **third person instead**. Use **clear, concise words**.

F. FINAL PRODUCT

Congratulations! You have decided on your topic, researched and organized your notes, written and revised your paper, and now it is time to create your final product. The last step of the writing process is to format your paper so it looks good and is easy to read (see appendix 9: Manuscript Style Sheet for Final Papers). Double-spaced your paper, and use Times New Roman, size 12 font. Unless your teacher asks you to include a cover page, do not use one. Instead, type your name, date and teacher’s name at the top right of your first page. Bold the title of your paper, and center it on the page, 2 lines below your teacher’s name. Set up your first page as shown below:



The one-inch margins are usually the default settings in Microsoft Word and Corel Word Perfect. Unless your teacher gives different instruction, double-space your entire paper, including your Works Cited page and print it on white or off white paper using black ink.

Use page numbers on each page (except for page one). The easiest way to insert page numbers is to use the "insert page number" feature in the word processing program. If you can not use your word processing program, on page two, insert the page number one-half inch from the top of the page, and begin writing one inch from the top of the page.

Before you turn in your paper, reread it for errors. You can make small changes on your final copy, but big changes will require you to retype your paper. Thus, make sure you save your paper electronically. This is also a good time to recheck your instruction sheet. Unless your teacher specifically asks you to turn in your paper in a folder, use a paper clip or staple on the upper left corner of your paper.

