The Howard County Middle School Writing Stylebook is designed to guide and standardize basic writing expectations and stylistic elements across all middle schools for students and teachers. This publication is intended to be a resource for students and to supplement classroom instruction.

The stylebook incorporates strategies from 6+1 Traits of Writing® by Ruth Culham, the Big6™ information literacy strategies, and the HCPSS Essential Curriculum.

Individual teachers in various content areas may assign additional or modified requirements depending on the discipline, the course, and the specific assignment.

The development of this document was a team effort of the Secondary Language Arts Office and the Middle School Instructional Team Leaders.

**BECOMING COLLEGE- AND CAREER-READY WRITERS**

“For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To be college- and career-ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. They need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative—to produce complex and nuanced writing.”

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (41)
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6+1 Traits of Writing®

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Types of Writing
The Common Core State Standards address the types of writing that college- and career-ready students are expected to produce. Three types of writing are described:

- **Argument** writing to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence. This type of writing is called “opinion” writing in elementary school.
- **Informative/Explanatory** writing that explores a topic and conveys ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.
- **Narrative** writing that develops real or imagined experiences or events and includes descriptive details and well-structured event sequences.

Middle school students are also expected to write the following:

- Summaries
- Research
- On-demand writing – This type of writing is completed in class in a limited amount of time. On-demand writing requires students to develop the ability to focus a topic, provide relevant evidence, select an appropriate organizational structure, and complete the task within one setting. The responses are graded holistically because they are not expected to be as polished as they would be if a student had time to revise and edit; however, the responses are expected to be focused and to include supporting details.

The Common Core Standards and the 6+1 Traits of Writing
Common Core Writing Standard 4 states that students will “produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.”

The 6+1 Traits of Writing provides support to developing writers as they:

- Develop their IDEAS.
- Select an appropriate ORGANIZATIONAL structure.
- Grow stylistically as they find their VOICE, expand their WORD CHOICE, and address SENTENCE FLUENCY.

Writers must pay attention to the last two traits, CONVENTIONS and PRESENTATION, when they are ready to publish their writing.
“What should I write about?”

Sometimes you are asked to develop original ideas, and sometimes you are asked to find ideas in something you have read. The text might be a novel, such as Red Scarf Girl by Ji-Li Jiang, a poem such as “The Highwayman” by Alfred Noyes, or a document such as the Declaration of Independence.

Your ideas should present a clear message to the reader. Here are the steps to help you develop your ideas:

1. Select a topic.
2. Narrow the topic to a focus that fits the assignment.
3. Decide on your point of view about the topic or the claim you will make if you are writing an argument.
4. Gather evidence (details) to support your point of view or claim.
5. Elaborate on the details, being sure to provide sufficient information to support your thesis or claim.

How to begin: Use the R. A. F. T. strategy!

R – Role of the writer – Who are you as the writer? Are you yourself? Your parent? A character in a story? A tree?

A – Audience – Who will read your piece of writing? Your principal? The Governor? The telephone company? Should you write formally or informally?

F – Format of the material – Will you write a letter, an essay, a story, or a speech?

T – Topic or subject – What is the main idea of your piece?

Examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Audience</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frontier woman</td>
<td>herself</td>
<td>diary</td>
<td>describe the hardships of living in the West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citizen</td>
<td>U.S. Senator</td>
<td>letter</td>
<td>argue that Civil Rights legislation is necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a character from a story</td>
<td>members of your literature circle</td>
<td>poem</td>
<td>explain the beliefs and values of the character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>geologist</td>
<td>a class of middle school students</td>
<td>a 10-minute speech with visual aids</td>
<td>inform students about the causes of erosion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“How do I start?”
Use an organizer that fits the topic.

**Venn Diagram**
Use for compare/contrast, drawing attention to similarities and differences

**Main Idea Table**
Use for thinking from idea to example OR example to idea.

**I to E:** Write the main idea in the top space, and add supporting details in the boxes. The pillars can be used for reference pages, direct quotes, or other details.

**E to I:** Use the pillars for facts, examples, or characteristics. The boxes can be used for a summary statement, concept, or main idea. The bottom is for a concluding sentence.

**Sequence Chain**
Use to display steps in a procedure, examine cause/effect relationships, and as a storyboard for time order. The open area can be used for transitions.

**Cause/Effect, Fact/Opinion**
Causes may be listed in the rectangles and their effects in the ovals. Some causes may have more than one effect.
Facts about a topic may be listed in the rectangles and opinions in the ovals.
Criteria Grid

Use for evaluation or reporting. The spaces across the chart can be used to list criteria by which something will be judged. Small spaces under the criteria can be used to indicate scores. Spaces down the left-hand side can be used to list several items being evaluated or the results of several evaluators. Scores or checkmarks can be written on the chart. Ovals can be used to tally scores, to indicate the final ranks, or to summarize a word or phrase.

Decision-Making Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Goal(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternatives</th>
<th>Pros &amp; Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decision(s)</th>
<th>Reason(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Now that I’m organized, what do I write first?”

The best way to grab a reader’s attention is to use a catchy introduction.

- Begin with a question related to the topic.
- Begin with a definition.
- Begin with a fact or statistic.
- Begin with a quotation from the text or from a related topic.
- Begin with an anecdote, a brief story that is related to the topic.
- Begin with a startling statement: “Man is doomed!”
- Begin by telling why the subject is important.
- Begin with a generally accepted belief.
Transitions

“How do I connect my ideas?”

Warning: Do NOT just drop your transitions into your paper. Use them carefully and strategically to keep your reader interested and to keep YOU organized!

Transitions that add, repeat, or intensify:
Use for stating problems and goals clearly, examining alternatives, recognizing pros and cons for all alternatives, or offering reasons for decisions.

and

further

furthermore

habitually

first, second

in other words

to put another way

nevertheless

another

after all

as a matter of fact

to sum up

too

again

indeed

to conclude

besides

moreover

any more

to repeat

also

in addition

finally

usually

in fact

Transitions that compare, contrast, or contradict:

similarly

ten again

even when

nevertheless

as well as

likewise

regardless

on the contrary

however

despite

whereas

yet

in spite of

by comparison

unlike

on the other hand

although

but

rather than

in fact

Transitions that show a time or space relationship:

before

during

at last

later

following

beyond

after

now

the next day

since

until

across

finally

in time

beginning

meanwhile

from then on

over

earlier

eventually

ending

still

beside

at night

soon

at first

next

after that

between

into

Transitions that limit or introduce an example:

if

unless

that is

to illustrate

when

that

such as

as proof

for example

in particular

namely

for instance

provided that

in case

Transitions that signal causation:

consequently

thus

therefore

hence

in effect

because

as a result

for this reason

accordingly

so

Transitions that assert obvious truth:

no doubt

of course

undoubtedly

surely

naturally

granted that

without a doubt

certainly

doubtless

in fact

“When do I change paragraphs?”

Excellent question!

TIME CHANGE

PLACE CHANGE

TOPIC CHANGE

NEW SPEAKER
How do you define your writing voice?

Read this children’s nursery rhyme.

*Humpty Dumpty*

sat on a wall.

*Humpty Dumpty* had a great fall.

All the king’s horses

And all the king’s men

Couldn’t put Humpty together again.

Now, let’s hear the same ideas presented differently.

1. Eggs are fragile. Unless care is taken, they can easily break. This is what happened to Humpty Dumpty. He had a terrible, outrageously unthinkable disaster. Once when he was sitting leisurely on a wall, he fell. While an enormous number of men used their equestrian talent, they were not able to save his life. Humpty died.

The writer records the events in a factual, almost scientific manner. His/her word choices create detail and precision. [Fragile, easily break, enormous] The writer’s sentence fluency reflects the writer’s ability to deliberately infuse simple sentences [Eggs are fragile. Humpty died.] and complex sentences [Once when he was sitting leisurely on a wall, he fell. While an enormous number of men used their equestrian talent, they were not able to save his life]. The writer does not rely on one type of sentence structure to construct meaning.

2. What a silly protein! Why in his right mind would an egg choose to sit on a wall? Anyone with a brain knows that it doesn’t take much for an egg to break. Do eggs have brains? Humpty fell and scattered, shattered like an expensive piece of china dropped on a hot August sidewalk. That’s exactly what happened to Humpty Dumpty when he sat on a wall. The king’s men and their horses had to waste their valuable time trying to revive him. There were no winners here.

The writer’s word choice allows him/her to record the events in a way which portrays him/her as knowledgeable, insightful, descriptive, and also playful. It also appears that the writer feels comfortable taking liberties when reaching logical conclusions. Although the writer reports the facts, he/she does so with a measure of humor. The writer’s sentence fluency reflects variety; in addition, the writer includes a skillful method to engage the reader and make the reader think. While a bit conversational at times, this tone is not distracting to the reader.

Your clothes show others your clothing style. The music you listen to reflects your music style. Just like clothing and music, your writing also reflects your style. We call this your VOICE. If your name were not on your paper, would the reader be able to recognize the paper as your paper because your writing reflects your style?

You might find that your voice is clearer and more visible when composing a narrative or creative piece of writing, but you should also commit to developing your voice when constructing explanatory and argument responses as well. Think about speaking directly to your reader. Let your reader see YOU in your writing!
Word Choice

Word choice is more than the correct use of words. A good writer selects words that are accurate in the context AND that communicate ideas elegantly and powerfully. Ask yourself if your words create images and emotions for your reader and make your ideas come alive.

“How do I know which word to use?”

Know the difference between connotation and denotation.

- Connotation is the feeling a word gives a reader. Ex. bony vs. slender.
- Denotation is the actual dictionary definition of the word.

Use figurative language to help you describe something or someone.

- Similes, metaphors, personification, and alliteration.

Choose words that are appropriate for your audience and type of writing (formal or informal).

- Avoid slang unless it is a character’s voice.
- Use content specific vocabulary.
- Use persuasive language when appropriate.

Use varied and vivid word choice.

Suggestions to replace “said“:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>added</th>
<th>urged</th>
<th>requested</th>
<th>mumbled</th>
<th>grunte</th>
<th>comande</th>
<th>wailed</th>
<th>taunted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>decided</td>
<td>agreed</td>
<td>uttered</td>
<td>scolded</td>
<td>nagged</td>
<td>insisted</td>
<td>claimed</td>
<td>whispered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lectured</td>
<td>explained</td>
<td>babbled</td>
<td>vowed</td>
<td>shrieked</td>
<td>objected</td>
<td>instructed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reassured</td>
<td>mentioned</td>
<td>estimated</td>
<td>boasted</td>
<td>warned</td>
<td>stammered</td>
<td>pleaded</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avoid overused words:

| a lot | said | big | run | fun | take | pretty | sit |
| very | good | got | cute | stuff | interesting | walk |
| bad | little | cool | tell | great | things | sad |

Warning: When using a thesaurus, DO NOT OVERDO IT! Readers can tell if a word does not belong or if it does not match the voice of your writing. Use words that you “own” and understand.

“Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.”

Common Core Language Standard 7.3.a
### Sounds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bang</th>
<th>crash</th>
<th>harsh</th>
<th>loud</th>
<th>quiet</th>
<th>shrill</th>
<th>squeak</th>
<th>voiceless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>booming</td>
<td>crying</td>
<td>hiss</td>
<td>melodic</td>
<td>raspy</td>
<td>silent</td>
<td>squeal</td>
<td>wail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buzz</td>
<td>deafening</td>
<td>hoarse</td>
<td>moan</td>
<td>resonant</td>
<td>snort</td>
<td>thud</td>
<td>whine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clatter</td>
<td>groan</td>
<td>hushed</td>
<td>mute</td>
<td>screaming</td>
<td>soft</td>
<td>thump</td>
<td>whispered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cooing</td>
<td>growl</td>
<td>husky</td>
<td>purring</td>
<td>screech</td>
<td>splash</td>
<td>thunderous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ancient</th>
<th>crawling</th>
<th>early</th>
<th>late</th>
<th>noonday</th>
<th>quick</th>
<th>sunrise</th>
<th>years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>annual</td>
<td>dawn</td>
<td>eons</td>
<td>lengthy</td>
<td>old</td>
<td>rapid</td>
<td>sunset</td>
<td>yearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brief</td>
<td>daybreak</td>
<td>evening</td>
<td>long</td>
<td>old-fashioned</td>
<td>short</td>
<td>swift</td>
<td>young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brisk</td>
<td>daylight</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>modern</td>
<td>outdated</td>
<td>slowly</td>
<td>tardy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centuries</td>
<td>decade</td>
<td>flash</td>
<td>moments</td>
<td>periodic</td>
<td>speedy</td>
<td>twilight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>continual</td>
<td>dusk</td>
<td>intermittent</td>
<td>noon</td>
<td>punctual</td>
<td>sporadic</td>
<td>whirlwind</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Touch

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>boiling</th>
<th>cool</th>
<th>dusty</th>
<th>frosty</th>
<th>loose</th>
<th>sharp</th>
<th>slushy</th>
<th>uneven</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>breezy</td>
<td>creepy</td>
<td>filthy</td>
<td>grubby</td>
<td>melted</td>
<td>silky</td>
<td>smooth</td>
<td>waxen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bumpy</td>
<td>crisp</td>
<td>fluffy</td>
<td>hard</td>
<td>plastic</td>
<td>slick</td>
<td>stinging</td>
<td>wet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chilly</td>
<td>dirty</td>
<td>flaky</td>
<td>hot</td>
<td>prickly</td>
<td>slimy</td>
<td>tender</td>
<td>wooden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cold</td>
<td>dry</td>
<td>fluttering</td>
<td>icy</td>
<td>shaggy</td>
<td>slippery</td>
<td>tight</td>
<td>yeilding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sight/Appearance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>adorable</th>
<th>chubby</th>
<th>dark</th>
<th>foggy</th>
<th>homely</th>
<th>round</th>
<th>skinny</th>
<th>unusual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>alert</td>
<td>clean</td>
<td>deep</td>
<td>fuzzy</td>
<td>light</td>
<td>rotund</td>
<td>smoggy</td>
<td>weird</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>befuddled</td>
<td>cloudy</td>
<td>dim</td>
<td>glamorous</td>
<td>lithe</td>
<td>pale</td>
<td>sparkling</td>
<td>wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>binding</td>
<td>colorful</td>
<td>distinct</td>
<td>gleaming</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>poised</td>
<td>spotless</td>
<td>willowy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bright</td>
<td>contoured</td>
<td>dull</td>
<td>glowing</td>
<td>misty</td>
<td>quaint</td>
<td>steep</td>
<td>wizened</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brilliant</td>
<td>crinkled</td>
<td>elegant</td>
<td>graceful</td>
<td>motionless</td>
<td>shadowy</td>
<td>stormy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>broad</td>
<td>crooked</td>
<td>fancy</td>
<td>grotesque</td>
<td>muddy</td>
<td>shady</td>
<td>straight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blonde</td>
<td>crowded</td>
<td>filthy</td>
<td>hazy</td>
<td>murky</td>
<td>sheer</td>
<td>strange</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bloody</td>
<td>crystalline</td>
<td>flat</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>nervous</td>
<td>shiny</td>
<td>ubiquitous</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blushing</td>
<td>curved</td>
<td>fluffy</td>
<td>hollow</td>
<td>obtuse</td>
<td>shallow</td>
<td>unsightly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sentence Fluency

Sentence fluency is more than the correct use of varied sentence structures. This trait describes the sound or flow of a piece of writing. Good writers use different types and lengths of sentences to enhance their meaning. They may even use sentence fragments for stylistic effect!

“How do I make my writing sound amazing?”

Have you ever closed your eyes while a good reader is reading a story aloud? How does it sound? Does it flow, drawing you in, mesmerizing you with its music? Are there places where suddenly short, staccato sentences cause you to sit up and pay attention?

Effective writers create music with their writing, whether it is an essay, a poem, or a story.

Strategies to Consider

• **Read your writing aloud.** How does it sound? Does each sentence connect smoothly to the ones before and after?

• **Use clear transition words and phrases** to help your reader follow your meaning. (See page 4.)

  Example: *In addition to solving the crime, the young detective donated his reward money to charity.*

• **Expand** short sentences by adding adjectives, adverbs, phrases, and clauses.

  Example: *The swirling, sinister cumulous clouds nervously chased the setting sun into darkness.*

• **Combine** short sentences into compound or complex sentences.

• **Vary sentence beginnings, middles, and endings.**

Examples

*Original sentences:*

*Bob chased a copperhead through his yard. Bob finally captured the snake under a bush.*

*Revisions:*

1. Bob chased a copperhead through his yard, and he finally captured it under a bush.
2. Bob chased a copperhead through his yard; he finally captured it under a bush.
3. *After he chased a copperhead through his yard, Bob finally captured it under a bush.*
4. *Chasing a copperhead through his yard,* Bob wondered whether he would capture it.
5. Bob, *an adventurous middle school student,* captured a copperhead in his yard.
6. Bob chased a copperhead through his yard, *finally capturing it under a bush.*

“Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style.”

*Common Core Language Standard 6.3.a*
Conventions

Paying attention to conventions while editing your paper carefully helps your reader immensely! Readers do not expect to see spelling or punctuation errors or run-on sentences in a published text.

There are a number of ways you can check your paper for conventions. You can self edit, peer edit, use a dictionary or spell checker, and use a grammar checker or language handbook. Your teacher will help you identify conventions that you need to correct in your paper. The chart below shows standard symbols that your teacher may write on your paper.

A Word About Titles

When referring to titles in your writing, be sure to use the correct form of punctuation.
- Short pieces (stories, poems, songs, essays) are placed in quotation marks.
  
  “Thank you, Ma’am”
- Titles of longer pieces (novels, plays, movies, CDs) are italicized. However, when you handwrite these titles, you must underline them.
  
  Romeo and Juliet OR Romeo and Juliet
- Some titles are not punctuated, such as the Bible or government documents like the Constitution.

There is a standard guide to edit your own or another’s writing. Use the symbols below, the universal language of editing, to highlight conventions that need to be fixed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SYMBOL</th>
<th>MEANING</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
<th>CORRECTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>Insert letters or words</td>
<td>Hemingway was author</td>
<td>Hemingway was an author.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¶</td>
<td>New paragraph</td>
<td>He fell asleep. ¶ The next morning, he jumped out of bed.</td>
<td>He fell asleep. The next morning, he jumped out of bed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sp.</td>
<td>Spelling error</td>
<td>We are we going to leave?</td>
<td>When are we going to leave?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/</td>
<td>Make a capital letter lower case.</td>
<td>My Mom and Dad went shopping.</td>
<td>My mom and dad went shopping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WC</td>
<td>Word Choice</td>
<td>I had a good trip. WC</td>
<td>I enjoyed a fabulous vacation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Capitalize</td>
<td>King’s dominion is awesome.</td>
<td>King’s Dominion is awesome.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delete a space</td>
<td>The sidewalk is awesome.</td>
<td>The sidewalk is cracked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Add punctuation</td>
<td>I’m not going to school,” he remarked.</td>
<td>“I’m not going to school,” he remarked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Switch position of letters or words</td>
<td>She be will ready soon.</td>
<td>She will be ready soon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delete</td>
<td>The hail in Vail . . .</td>
<td>The hail in Vail . . .</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO or ROS</td>
<td>Run on sentence</td>
<td>We took him to the store he picked up cereal and came home. RO</td>
<td>We took him to the store. He picked up cereal, and came home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SF or Frag</td>
<td>Sentence Fragment</td>
<td>Because we had to wash the car. SF</td>
<td>We were late because we had to wash the car.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Not Clear</td>
<td>She found it under the thing. NC</td>
<td>She found her journal under the table.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What should my assignment look like when I hand it in?
Before you submit your work, you must do a final check on the presentation (the form and layout) of your writing. Presentation is the last step before publishing. Below is a sample of Modern Language Association (MLA) Format that is used for formal papers and research papers.

MLA Format for Formal Papers

My Name __________________ double space
My Teacher’s Name

English 6
25 November 2013

Title of Paper

Text begins here.

Typed Assignments

• Use Times or Times New Roman font in 12-point size.
• Set the margins to be one inch all around (top, bottom, left, and right sides).
• Left justify your margins.
• Double space everything within and between paragraphs.
• Indent paragraphs appropriately.

Avoid

• Creases, tears, folds in assignments.
• Texting abbreviations.
• Fonts that do not distinguish between upper and lower case letters.

Remember to take pride in each of your assignments; they are an expression of who you are. What do you want your work to say about YOU?

“Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.”

Common Core Writing Standard 6
“What is research?”

Research is the process of gathering information about a particular topic. We do “research” every time we look for information at the library, in a textbook, or on the Internet. We do “research” every time we ask a knowledgeable person about something they know well.

In school, you are asked to research many different issues. The three major goals of research include the following:

- Establishing facts
- Analyzing information
- Reaching new conclusions

Usually, researchers share their findings with others in a variety of formats. They may write a paper, prepare an audio-visual presentation, give a talk, or design a brochure.

The research process includes a methodical approach to finding and examining a variety of reliable, scholarly resources on a particular topic.

Research Glossary

**Analysis** is the close examination of information in order to understand it better and be able to draw conclusions from it.

**Synthesis** is the process of combining ideas from several sources into a new paper or product.

A **thesis statement** tells the reader the main idea of your paper or product.

A **claim** is a statement that reveals the writer’s opinion on a debatable or controversial topic.

A **counterclaim** is a statement that presents the opposite viewpoint to the claim.

A **Works Cited** page is a list of the sources that the writer actually used to create a paper or other product.

An **Annotated Bibliography** is a list of sources with a brief summary of the information located in each source.

**Primary sources** are artifacts created by someone who experienced events firsthand. Examples: diaries, autobiographies, photographs, works of art, stories, interviews.

**Secondary sources** are created by using primary source material. The information is rewritten or re-packaged by a person who interprets the information. Examples: biographies, magazine articles, textbooks.

**Tertiary sources** are very limited in the information they provide. Tertiary sources are useful when you begin to learn about a topic. Example: almanacs, encyclopedias.
College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Research
Students will be able to:
• Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.
• Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.
• Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Information Literacy Using the Big6™
The Big6™ provides a process for methodically approaching a research task. There are six main steps that are useful to follow whether you are seeking information to answer a question, to solve a problem, or to make a decision.

Key research skills for students to develop are these:
• How to evaluate the quality of information from a variety of sources
• How to recognize information that is relevant to the task
• How to synthesize information from multiple sources into a coherent piece of work

1 TASK DEFINITION
• Define the information problem.
• Identify information needed to solve the problem.

2 INFORMATION SEEKING STRATEGIES
• Determine the range of all possible sources. (brainstorm)
• Evaluate the different possible sources to determine priorities (select the best sources)

3 LOCATION AND ACCESS
• Locate sources (intellectually and physically).
• Find information within sources.

4 USE OF INFORMATION
• Engage (e.g., read, hear, view, touch) the information in a source.
• Extract relevant information from a source.

5 SYNTHESIS
• Organize information from multiple sources.
• Present the information.

6 EVALUATION
• Judge the product (effectiveness).
• Judge the information problem-solving process (efficiency).
There are rules for informing your reader where you found the information used in any paper. In English classes we use the Modern Language Association style in order to standardize the presentation of research papers and the documentation of sources.

“Why should I document my sources?”

- To give credit to the person who did the work
- To show your reader where he or she can go to get more information on the topic
- To justify and support your thesis or claim

“How do I show my documentation?”

- Be sure to include a list of Works Cited (the MLA term for a bibliography) at the end of your paper.
- Be sure to provide credit in the body of your paper by using in-text or parenthetical documentation. If you include the author’s name in your sentence, you would include only the page number in parentheses. Here are some examples:
  - In *Gifted Hands*, Dr. Ben Carson describes an interesting brain phenomenon: “In plasticity, functions once governed by a set of cells in the brain are taken over by another set of cells” (160).
  - An interesting brain phenomenon is called plasticity, in which the brain adapts to surgery by allowing different cells to take over when some cells are removed (Carson 160).

Keep this statement in mind as you begin to develop your skills as a researcher:

“…ideally, writing a research paper is intellectually rewarding: it is a form of exploration that leads to discoveries that are new—at least to you if not to others. The mechanics of the research paper, important though they are, should never override the intellectual challenge of pursuing a question that interests you (and ultimately your reader). This pursuit should guide your research and your writing” (4-5).

MLA Format for Works Cited

Reminders: MLA format requires that you include all information and punctuation exactly as shown. Double space all entries and indent the second line.

Article in a Magazine or Newspaper

Author’s last name, first name. “Title of article.” Title of magazine or newspaper. Day month year: pages. Print.

Website Article (same as above)—See Website Entry for more detailed information.

Book by a Single Author

Author’s last name, first name. Title of book. City of publication: publisher, year of publication. Print.

Book by Two Authors

Author #1 last name, first name, and author #2 first name, last name. Title of book.
City of publication: publisher, year of publication. Print.

Book with an Editor

Editor’s last name, first name, ed. Title of book. City of publication: publisher, year of publication. Print.

[Note: If the city or publication could be confused with other cities of the same name, include the abbreviation of the state after the city.]

Chapter, Poem, Short Story, Essay, or Title Section in a Book

Author’s last name, first name. “Title of chapter, poem, etc.” Title of book.
Editor [if applicable]. City of publication: publisher, year of copyright. Pages. Print.

Diagrams – Maps, Charts, etc.

Author [if known]. Title of Diagram. Type of Diagram. City: Publisher, Year. Print.
MLA Format for Works Cited

**Encyclopedia, Reference Book Entry**

**Film or Video recording**
Director’s last name, first name, dir. Title of Film or video. Perf. lead actors.
   Name of Studio, date of release. Film.

**Interview, published or recorded**
Last name, first name of person interviewed. Interview. Name of show where interview was conducted or publication where interview was printed. Place interview was conducted. Date of interview. Medium.

**Interview, personally conducted**
Last name, first name of person interviewed. Personal Interview. Date of interview.
Moon, Mary. Personal Interview. 22 October 2002.

**Website or Online Publication**
Last name, first name of author(s) [if available]. “Title of document.” Title of website.
   Publisher or sponsor of site, Date of publication. Web. Date of access. <URL network address>.
“Fresco Painting.” Encyclopedia Britannica Online.
“How can I be honorable about using information I have collected for assignments?”

All of us have a responsibility to give credit to a source of information when we use it. If you don’t give credit to the source (whether it is an individual or a group of people), you are presenting the information as if you created it.

This is a form of academic dishonesty with a special name—**PLAGIARISM**.

There are two types of plagiarism:
- accidental
- deliberate

**Accidental plagiarism** is often the result of sloppy work like forgetting to put quotation marks around text taken directly from a source, forgetting to give credit to a source that you summarized or paraphrased, not quoting accurately, or crediting the wrong source.

**Deliberate plagiarism** means that a person has the intention of being dishonest like buying an assignment online, copying work from another student, turning in someone else’s work as his/her own, or cutting-and-pasting parts of ideas and pretending they are original.

**Be sure you understand how to give credit for information before you turn in an assignment.**
- Learn how to **paraphrase**.
- Learn when to use a **direct quotation** and how to embed it within your own words.
- Learn how to **summarize**.
- Learn how to **cite sources**.

Remember: If you copy other people’s work, you are stealing. When you do not do your own work, you do not learn much. The further along you get in school, the harder it will become to write your own papers and express your own thoughts effectively.