

DRHS WRITING HANDBOOK

The purpose of this handbook is to create a common understanding and language across the curriculum. Writing instruction occurs not only in English courses, but also in all subject areas. Upon graduation, students will continue to use this skill in various parts of their adult lives. Therefore, this handbook is a resource for students, parents, and teachers providing supports, guidelines, and expectations for all courses, in accordance with the Dexter Regional High School curriculum. We hope this notebook will be helpful as we work together to support lifelong literacy learning for all of our students.

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Types of Writing

Expository: Non-fiction, fact-based writing; including history essays and lab reports.

Narrative: Tells a story: fiction or non-fiction.

Persuasive: Expresses an opinion and tries to convince the reader to agree by using a variety of information.

Descriptive: Uses imagery and sensory details to present a clear picture of a person, place, thing, or idea.

Foundations of Writing

- Determine the central idea of the writing assignment.
- Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on addressing what is most significant for a specific purpose and audience.
- Use precise language and subject specific vocabulary, telling details, and sensory language to convey a vivid picture of the experiences, events, setting, and/or characters.
- Use appropriate and varied transitions to link the major sections of the text, create connections, and clarify the connections between complex ideas and concepts.

Conventions of Writing

Students will be working toward:

- proper use of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, prepositions, and conjunctions.
- no significant errors in spelling.
- proper use of capitalization (i.e. proper nouns, names, titles.)
- proper use of punctuation including: end punctuation, comma, colon, semicolon, hyphen, dash, apostrophe, and quotation marks.
- use of proper subject-verb agreement.

MLA Format

- Type your paper on a computer and print it out on standard, white 8.5 x 11-inch paper.
- Double-space the text of your paper, and use a legible font (e.g. Times New Roman). Whatever font you choose, MLA recommends that the regular and italics type styles contrast enough that they are recognizable one from another. The font size should be 12 pt.
- Leave only one space after periods or other punctuation marks (unless otherwise instructed by your instructor).
- Set the margins of your document to 1 inch on all sides.

- Indent the first line of paragraphs one half-inch from the left margin. MLA recommends that you use the Tab key as opposed to pushing the Space Bar five times.
- Create a header that numbers all pages consecutively in the upper right-hand corner, one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. (Note: Your instructor may ask that you omit the number on your first page. Always follow your instructor's guidelines.) PERIOD AFTER PARENTHESIS
- Use italics throughout your essay for the titles of longer works and, only when absolutely necessary, providing emphasis.
- If you have any endnotes, include them on a separate page before your Works Cited page. Entitle the section Notes (centered, unformatted).

Formatting the First Page of Your Paper

- Do not make a title page for your paper unless specifically requested.
- In the upper left-hand corner of the first page, list your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Again, be sure to use double-spaced text.
- Double space again and center the title. Do not underline, italicize, or place your title in quotation marks; write the title in Title Case (standard capitalization), not in all capital letters. WHAT IS TITLE CASE?
- Use quotation marks and/or italics when referring to other works in your title, just as you would in your text: *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas* as *Morality Play*; Human Weariness in "After Apple Picking" DO YOU WANT A PERIOD HERE?
- Double space between the title and the first line of the text.
- Create a header in the upper right-hand corner that includes your last name, followed by a space with a page number; number all pages consecutively with Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.), one-half inch from the top and flush with the right margin. (Note: Your instructor or other readers may ask that you omit last name/page number header on your first page. Always follow instructor guidelines.)

Final Draft Guidelines

- Use blue or black pen or word process.
- Work must be neat, readable, and edited for spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing, and grammar/usage.
- Multiple pages must be stapled in upper left hand corner PERIOD?

- If handwritten use white lined paper.
- Prewriting and other drafts may be required, if so, attach these together with final draft on top.
- Teachers may assign or expect other criteria for specific assignments.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is defined as presenting someone else’s work from any media source as your own, or rephrasing and representing someone else’s ideas as your own, without citing the source, either on purpose or through carelessness. This includes copying and pasting any text or picture from the internet into a written document and passing it in as your own words.

Constructing an Essay

All formal essay writing should contain three essential sections: the Introductory Paragraph, the Body or Central Paragraphs, and the Concluding Paragraph.

Introductory Paragraph	*STATING YOUR CASE*
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins with a hook or “grabber” • Introduces the topic, moves from a general to a specific topic (gets more focused) • States <i>thesis</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ A <i>thesis</i> gives the main idea or focus of an essay □ Should be one or two sentences that clearly states an original case, argument, slant or perspective in thought □ Should be the last sentence(s) in the introductory paragraph 	

Body or Central Paragraphs

ORGANIZING YOUR EVIDENCE

- Sustain the thesis with a variety of evidence and supporting details
- Include three components: the Topic Sentence, Supporting Details, and a Concluding Sentence

Topic Sentence

- Connects to and helps support the thesis
- Contains the main idea(s) of a body paragraph

Supporting Details

- Follow the topic sentence and are logically or sequentially presented
- Help prove or explain the topic sentence
- Should be varied
- Can include but are not limited to the following: examples, facts, anecdotes, quotes, statistics, textual evidence, and/or citations

Concluding Sentence

- Summarizes, reaffirms, evaluates or ties back to the topic sentence of the body or central paragraph
- Reinforces the thesis
- May transition to the next paragraph or topic

Concluding Paragraph

DELIVERING YOUR SUMMATION

- Rephrases the thesis or central argument
- Summarizes the main points
- Connects to a larger picture

Suggestions:

- Leave a lasting image for the reader, “a clincher”
- Speculate, evaluate, judge, place an idea in relationship to other ideas
- Link the paper to today and tomorrow: make a historical or literary connection to past, present, and or future events

Writing Process Reference Sheet

Writing Process for Formal Essay Writing

Suggestions

1. Brainstorm/Prewrite
→ *Think about your piece: try mapping, webbing, or using templates.*
2. Identify the Topic/Subject/Thesis
→ *Move your topic to a specific subject, then develop your thesis.*
→ *Verify that your argument satisfies the assignment.*
3. Organize
→ *Carefully arrange your ideas, materials, and notes; make an outline.*
4. Write First Draft
→ *Organize your ideas and draft your essay.*
→ *Confer with teacher, peer, or other reader.*
→ *Review assignment requirements.*
5. Revise (for content)
→ *Evaluate content: identify strengths, target weaknesses, eliminate redundancies.*
→ *Add information: try an anecdote, strengthen with additional supporting details.*
→ *Delete information: is this necessary? Does this support my topic sentence?*
→ *Rearrange information: does this belong here; is there a more appropriate paragraph for this information?*
6. Write Second Draft
→ *Have a writing conference.*
→ *Review assignment requirements.*
7. First Edit (edit for organization and mechanics)
→ *Refer to **Writing Checklist on the back cover** (organization and mechanics section).*
8. Oral Reading check
→ *Read or have someone read your paper aloud to you so that you can hear and recognize the errors in your writing.*
9. Second Edit
(edit for word choice and polishing)
→ *Refer to **Writing Checklist on the back cover** (word choice and polishing sections).*
10. Publish Final polished essay*

Note: reading ALoud throughout the writing process is strongly encouraged.

Writing Checklist

A. Organization

- Did you grab your reader's attention?
- Did you clearly state your topic?
- Did you support your main idea with sufficient details?
- Did you arrange your details in a logical order?
- Did you use effective transitions within and between paragraphs?
- Did you summarize your point?
- Did you leave your reader with something to think about?

B. Mechanics

- Have you spelled all words correctly?
- Have you used all homonyms correctly?
- Have you used proper punctuation?
- Have you checked for proper capitalization?
- Have you used the same verb tense consistently?
- Have you eliminated all run-on sentences and sentence fragments?
- Have you spelled out numbers under 10 and abbreviations?

C. Word Choice

- Have you varied your vocabulary?
- Have you avoided clichés, slang, and casual language?
- Is your word choice appropriate for the assignment?
- Is your word choice specific?

D. Polishing

- Have you proofread your paper by reading it aloud?
- Have you eliminated all awkward and confusing sentences?
- Have you used a variety of sentence structures and lengths?

"The Bromfield School Writing Guide." 1 (2011): 1-45. 29 Sept. 2011. Web. 08 Sept. 2014.

"Welcome to the Purdue OWL." *Purdue OWL: MLA Formatting and Style Guide*. N.p., n.d.
Web. 06 Sept. 2014.