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_________________________________

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook will be your guide to writing in all your classes for your entire career in the high school.

There are five sections:

✓ Research discusses how to conduct research.

✓ Organizing your information provides useful models and templates for different types of assignments.

✓ Documentation provides information on how to access MLA resources.

✓ Writing across the disciplines reveals hints and tips for a variety of genres from literary essays and lab reports to Regents exams.

✓ Revision contains the information that will make you a better writer.

How to use this guide:
This handbook is designed as a handy guide, a faithful companion to follow you as you journey through the writing process. Use the table of contents to find the section with the information you want.
SECTION ONE: RESEARCH

The most effective way to demonstrate your mastery of a subject is to be able to write clearly and convincingly about it. You must do this in many courses. As a writer, you will use facts, statistics, and authoritative opinions gleaned from your research to support your position. This section of the guide will help you in this process.

Gathering Information and Note Taking

We have chosen an excerpt from an article in *Smithsonian* magazine to demonstrate forms of note taking. After reading the article, you will find examples of *paraphrase*, *summary*, and *direct quote* formats. Be sure to take down bibliographic information on any source from which you take notes as we have done in the examples below. Page numbers are essential because you will use them when you cite your sources.


“The areas are so fascinating they just kind of grab you and take you over,” says George Folkerts, an Auburn University zoologist who has studied the ecology of what he calls “pitcher plant bogs” in the Southeast since the early 1970's. Blooming with orchids, lilies and other flowers, the bogs are among the richest plant communities anywhere, with as many as 35 species per square meter. But as many of these soggy sites have been drained and developed, this floral abundance is fading. Compared with the profusion of Bartram's time, only a pittance of pitcher plant habitat remains: probably just 3 percent of the carnivorous kingdom that once covered thousands of acres in places along the Gulf Coast. “If something's not done,” says Folkerts, “there will be, at the turn of the century, very, very few sites left where one can go and see pitcher plants.” In the areas that do remain, overharvesting--including poaching-- threatens the future of the carnivores. North Carolina now levies fines of up to $2,000 for illegal taking of the Venus flytrap.

It is easy to understand the allure of these slightly creepy plants.
“They turn the tables,” explains Leo Song, Jr., manager of the greenhouse complex at California State University, in Fullerton, and coeditor of the quarterly journal of the International Carnivorous Plant Society. “Usually, plants get eaten by insects. And here's a plant that eats insects.”

Equally intriguing are cases where insects turn the tables yet again. In many bogs, a small moth belonging to the genus *Exyra* goes about the tricky business of securing food and shelter from the deadly tubes of pitcher plants. The moth's larva chews a groove around the inside of the pitcher in which it has hatched, causing the upper part of the leaf to wilt and to collapse. The remodeling prevents other insects from entering the tube, thus ending that leaf's ability to capture prey. A wasp, *Isodontia mexicana*, does the same when it lays an egg on alternating layers of grass and paralyzed grasshoppers stuffed into the pitcher leaf.

If you needed to take notes from this passage for a research paper, you would use the three different note-taking techniques: paraphrase, summary, and direct quote.

**Paraphrase:**
To paraphrase is to restate the thought of a selection more simply and clearly, to translate difficult, involved language or concepts into your own words. If you can paraphrase a passage accurately, it is proof that you thoroughly understand the passage. Your paraphrase is often as long as or even longer than the original statement.

**Paraphrase of the last sentence in the last paragraph of the excerpt:**

A wasp (*Isodontia mexicana*) makes a nest in the pitcher plant leaf. It puts down a layer of paralyzed grasshoppers and grass and lays an egg. Then it repeats the layers (Lipske 51).
Summarize:
To summarize is to shorten a rather long section of writing into your own words, taking only the key facts and ideas. You do not change the meaning, make an interpretation of your own, leave out parts of the meaning, or insert your own opinion.

Summary of the first paragraph of the excerpt:
- Today: just 3% pitcher plant bogs—the habitat of carnivorous plants—left in the Southeast U.S.
- Draining for development, overharvesting, and poaching threaten remainder by 2000 if continued (Lipske 50).

Direct quote:
To direct quote is to copy the original exactly in wording, spelling, and punctuation. If you must modify the quote in some manner, follow the rules in this handbook. Direct quote only those statements that are perfectly phrased (the "last word" on the subject) or that express a point of controversy in an especially effective way. Otherwise paraphrase or summarize the information you have found in your research.

“But as many of those soggy sites have been drained and developed, this floral abundance is fading” (Lipske 50).
Academic Honesty

In the process of writing, you may need to quote from the works you are discussing or to use the ideas of another writer to develop your argument. If, for example, you are writing about a novel, you will probably need to quote from the novel or to quote or paraphrase a critic or some other useful source. You must show you have quoted from the novel itself by using quotation marks and following the quotation with its page number in parentheses (see "Documentation" in this handbook). In order to use material from another source, you need bibliographic information: author, title, publisher, date, and page number. Be sure to record this information when you are reading. If you do not cite the source in your paper, you are guilty of plagiarism. This is true both for quoted, for summarized, and for paraphrased material or ideas.

When you use the ideas of others, you must make clear in your paper that these ideas are not your own. When you do not do this, then you are plagiarizing. This is true whether you are quoting directly, paraphrasing, or summarizing the views of another writer.

Computer plagiarism:

With the increasing ease and availability of information online, plagiarism has become tempting. This involves downloading information from websites, online databases, or other networked sources. Be aware that use of undocumented materials from any of these or other similar sources constitutes plagiarism. This is true for text, ideas, or images. Always be sure to document your sources for any material you have used which you found in another source. See the “Documentation” section of this handbook.

Merely being found on the Internet or communicated through electronic media does not guarantee the validity, seriousness, or credibility of information or ideas. You must exercise considerable caution and judgment in using such material. You must also be diligent about citing such sources when you use them. Do not risk plagiarism.

The penalty for plagiarism is an automatic zero for the work and may include other serious consequences (refer to the section entitled "Academic Honesty" in the Brighton High School Parent/Student Handbook).
**Writing assignments and oral presentations for foreign language classes:**
Use of an online translator is permitted for isolated words only. You may use it as you would use a paper dictionary. Translations of blocks of texts are considered a violation of the BHS academic honesty policy. Work is considered incomplete without use of accents or language-specific punctuation.
Interviewing

An important element of research is interviewing people who have specialized knowledge or experience which makes their opinions particularly valuable.

**Preparation:**
For example, if you are writing about a student's right to freedom of expression, it would be useful for you to interview the school principal, who knows education law, in addition to eliciting opinions from students. A little preparation will make your interview useful and productive.

You may wish to record the interview, but be sure you ask permission to do so when you schedule the interview. If you record, be sure the equipment is ready. You should still have paper and pens or pencils even if you record your interview.

**Interviewing Tips:**
- Choose a person who is an expert on the topic you are researching.
- Make an appointment with the person you wish to interview well in advance.
- Be sure that you have done enough research so that you can ask intelligent questions.
- Write a list of questions in advance that will require meaty answers that you can actually quote directly in your paper.
- Be sure you ask permission to record the interview.

If you are interviewing the principal about a student's right to free expression, you should already have a sense of what that right includes. It would be more useful for your paper to ask the principal about specific experiences he or she may have had regarding this issue than to take up the time asking what the law is. Use the interview to fill in gaps in your research. Do not waste your time, or the time of the interviewee, on gathering information you can get from other sources.
Conducting the interview:

- Be on time for the interview.
- Take your time when you are writing down the answers.
- Do not hesitate to ask the interviewee to explain or clarify an idea.
- Do not feel that you must follow the exact order of your questions.
- Good interviewers are good listeners.
- Be sure to thank your interviewee for the interview.
- Transcribe your notes as soon as you leave the interview.
- Be sure that you record the interviewee’s full name (first and last) and title as well as the date of your interview.

Have you ever noticed? How all of your sentences sound like they end in questions?
Evaluating Internet Resources

Most print resources are reviewed for accuracy by editors, peer review, or library selection. On the other hand, information on the Internet rarely benefits from such reviews. As consumers of Internet information, you will need to evaluate the appropriateness of a site. Below is a beginning guide for assessing Internet sites and information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation of Web Documents</th>
<th>How to Interpret the Basics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Accuracy of Web Documents</strong></td>
<td><strong>Accuracy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who wrote the page, and can you contact him or her?</td>
<td>Make sure author provides e-mail or a contact address/phone number.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the purpose of the document, and why was it produced?</td>
<td>Know the distinction between author and webmaster.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is this person qualified to write this document?</td>
<td>Make sure there are no typographical errors, misspellings, or grammatical errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the information been edited?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **2. Authority of Web Documents** | **Authority** |
| Who published the document, and is it separate from the webmaster? | What professional or educational credentials are listed for the author(s)? |
| Check the domain of the document. What institution publishes this document? | Where is the document published? Check URL domain. |
| Does the publisher list his or her qualifications? | |

| **3. Objectivity of Web Documents** | **Objectivity** |
| What goals/objectives does this page meet? | Determine if page is a mask for advertising; if so, information might be biased. |
| How detailed is the information? | View any web page as you would an infomercial on television. Ask yourself why was this written and for whom? |
| What opinions (if any) are expressed by the author? | |
4. Currency of Web Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When was it produced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When was it updated?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How up-to-date are the links (if any)?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Coverage of the Web Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coverage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the links (if any) evaluated, and do they complement the document's theme?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it all images or a balance of text and images?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the information presented cited correctly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this information compare to information available at other sites?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this information compare to print resources?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From:
SECTION TWO: ORGANIZING YOUR INFORMATION

The prince rescues the maiden. Once upon a time. And they lived happily ever after…Wait. Something is definitely wrong here. The story is out of place.

All written work has an order, a flow of logic, a beginning, middle, and an end. Organizing your thoughts and ideas into a coherent and interesting pattern is a vital step in the writing process. There are a variety of ways you can use to organize ideas. Listing, mapping, and outlining are just a few of the methods of putting thoughts together into a clear form. Whatever you are comfortable with, whatever aids in the creation of a logical, engaging, and consistent flow of words, let the content drive your decision-making, and make clarity a constant goal.

In this section, you will find four methods of organizing information:

- Cause and Effect
- Compare and Contrast
- Chronology
- List and Example

Included with these methods are key transitional words, graphic organizers, and hints on how to keep your information organized and clear.
Cause and Effect

When to use:
This method of organization is used when you want to explain or analyze the reason(s) for an action, event, or decision OR the effects or results of an action, event, or decision.

How to use:
Distinguish between cause and effect by asking yourself, "Why did this happen?" (cause) and "What happened because of this?" (effect).

You may focus on the causes:

```
CAUSE 1
CAUSE 2
CAUSE 3
```

or the effects:

```
CAUSE

EFFECT 1
EFFECT 2
EFFECT 3
```
There are several ways to organize this kind of essay:

✓ **Chronological:** Arrange your details in the order in which the events occurred.
✓ **Order of importance:** Arrange your details from least to most important or vice versa.
✓ **Categorical:** Arrange your details by dividing the topic into parts or categories.

**Signal words:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cause and Effect</th>
<th>Degrees of Certainty</th>
<th>Levels of Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as a result</td>
<td>certainly</td>
<td>above all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because</td>
<td>may</td>
<td>equally important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>consequently</td>
<td>necessarily</td>
<td>finally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>due to</td>
<td>perhaps</td>
<td>first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if…then</td>
<td>possibly</td>
<td>initially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leads to</td>
<td>probably</td>
<td>last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>undoubtedly</td>
<td>primarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thus</td>
<td>unquestionably</td>
<td>second</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compare and Contrast

**When to use:**
Use compare and contrast to discuss the similarities and differences between two things, people, concepts, places, etc. Generally, this type of essay can be organized in either of two ways:

- The **opposing or “block-by-block” style**: This is most useful when the two things being discussed are like two sides of a coin.

- The **alternating style**: This is generally more useful in a lengthier paper or when you are discussing a more complicated topic. You still discuss your main points in the same order, as in the opposing style, but you write about the two things or ideas you are exploring each in a separate section.

**How to use opposing or “block-by-block” style:**

![Diagram](image)

**Topic:** Public schools should require students to wear uniforms.

- **Point 1:** Uniforms allow families to save money on clothes.
  - evidence for
  - evidence against

- **Point 2:** Uniforms improve students' academic performance.
  - evidence for
  - evidence against

- **Point 3:** Uniforms decrease disciplinary problems in schools.
  - evidence for
  - evidence against

**Conclusion**
**Alternating style:**

**Topic:** Public schools should require students to wear uniforms.

**Evidence AGAINST**

**Point 1:** Evidence showing that uniforms do not allow families to save money on clothes.

**Point 2:** Evidence showing that uniforms do not improve students' academic performance.

**Point 3:** Evidence showing that uniforms do not decrease disciplinary problems in schools.

**NOTE:** Here, you need to indicate that you are making a transition from one idea or "side" to another.

**Evidence FOR**

**Point 1:** Evidence showing that uniforms allow families to save money on clothes.

**Point 2:** Evidence showing that uniforms improve students' academic performance.

**Point 3:** Evidence showing that uniforms decrease disciplinary problems in schools.

**Conclusion**
Chronology

When to use:
You use chronology when you describe events or the steps in a process in the order they occur in time.

When you write up the results of a lab experiment in science class, describe the events during the Salem Witch Trials for social studies, write about a childhood experience for English class, or e-mail directions for the shortest route to your house to a visitor, you will probably use chronological order. Even complex subjects, such as how AIDS developed or how the Soviet Union collapsed, are best understood when explained as a historical process. Chronological patterns may be used in process essays (which explain how to do something or how something works) as well as in narration.

How to use:
There are several chronological patterns you can use:

- **Natural order** begins with the earliest event and moves to the latest event.
- **Reverse order** begins with the most recent event and moves backward through time.
- **Flashback order** begins with the recent past, moves to an earlier period in time and narrates the events of a story, usually in natural time order, before returning to the present.

To keep readers from being confused, it is important to use paragraph breaks and transitional statements to signal shifts in time.

When using chronology, be sure you have a specific topic and that you have chosen the events or steps in a process carefully. Consider your audience. For instance, if you are describing how to set up a web page on a computer, you don't want to write at such a level as to insult someone's intelligence, but if your readers have little experience with computers, you will have to explain more details than you would for those who are more familiar with computers.

On the other hand, be selective in the events or steps you describe so that you keep your essay interesting. Imagine how tedious The Catcher in the Rye would be if J.D. Salinger had described every single detail of Holden's daily experiences in New York City (He presses the down button to summon the elevator; he waits for it to arrive at his floor; gets into the elevator; he presses the button for the lobby; waits for the doors to close; etc.).
Signal words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>first, second, etc.</th>
<th>finally</th>
<th>before</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>next</td>
<td>the following day</td>
<td>after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>then</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>since</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**List and Example**

**When to use:**
This method of organization uses a series of examples or details to support an idea or prove a point.

These examples might include the following to make a point clearer or more interesting or convincing:

- facts
- events
- statistics
- people
- quotations
- anecdotes (brief stories)

**How to use:**
When you have your topic,

a) List an abundance of examples, then mark the strongest ones.

b) Check them to be sure they are relevant. Ask, "Do these examples relate directly to the point?"

c) Next, ask, "Which of these examples is the most representative?" Use the strongest ones. If they lead to different or opposite conclusions, consider modifying the thesis to be consistent with the new evidence. Make every example work in favor of the purpose, not against it.

d) Although illustrations can be organized in either time or space order, most often, examples are organized in order of importance with the one carrying the most emphasis placed last.

e) Organize the examples in the way that will most help further the point. Some possibilities:

- least to most controversial
- simplest to most difficult
- least extreme to most extreme
- least to most important
**Signal words:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>For instance</th>
<th>A case in point is</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Another instance of</td>
<td>Here are a few examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For example</td>
<td>Some instances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another example of</td>
<td>One such in particular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To illustrate</td>
<td>Yet another</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SECTION THREE: DOCUMENTATION

The documentation style used in the liberal arts and humanities is the Modern Language Association (MLA). Please refer to the seventh edition of the MLA handbook. Please visit the Purdue OWL website for documentation information, including examples. The website is: https://owl.english.purdue.edu/.
SECTION FOUR: WRITING ADVICE

Throughout your tenure at Brighton High School, you will be asked to complete a wide variety of writing assignments across the curriculum. In this section you will find definitions for common writing terms, advice on essay writing applicable to the vast majority of writing assignments, and tips for in-class essay writing and extended assignments. This section can guide you in any writing you do, as good writing is not just expected in English class but is expected in everything you submit.

BASICS FOR WRITERS

Three basic questions for any writer are:
- What is my subject?
- What is my purpose?
- Who is my audience?

The subject is generally a limited topic selected by the writer or determined by a question. The purpose is the aim of the writing: to inform, to explain, to define, to analyze, to present research findings, to express personal thoughts and feelings, to narrate personal experience, to create (stories, poems, plays, songs, etc.). The audience is the intended reader of the work. The writer’s audience determines the language the writer will use (formal, informal, satirical, humorous, etc.).

Most academic writing falls under a general category called expository writing. Expository writing includes writing to explain, writing to define, critical analysis, and research writing. Expository writing turns into argumentative writing when the writer uses information, explanation, definition, analysis, and/or research to take a position on a topic and convince the audience of something about that topic.

Essay talk:

Essays (or compositions) are composed of a series of paragraphs. Paragraphs, especially those that stand alone, usually are organized around one central idea. The central idea is often expressed in a single sentence, the topic sentence, which often appears in the first or second sentence of the paragraph. Supporting details clarify the central idea. The kinds of details depend on the subject. In expository writing, the writer may use facts or statistics, examples, or an anecdote.

A paragraph should have unity. Unity is created when all the sentences support the central idea, whether the central idea is stated in a topic sentence or is implied. A paragraph has coherence when the ideas are clearly connected and arranged in an order that makes sense to the audience (e.g., spatial order, order of importance, chronological order). Similarly, an essay has unity and coherence when the paragraphs are linked in a logical, clear manner.
Thesis statement:  
The thesis statement gives the essay's main, or unifying, idea about a topic. A thesis statement is usually a sentence or two in the first paragraph (the introduction) that announces the limited topic and suggests the direction of the essay's content. Some thesis statements simply identify the topic:

Californians are facing a water shortage resulting from several years of drought.

Most thesis statements identify the central idea that the writer is actually trying to prove to the reader:

Facing a possible fifth year of sustained drought, communities along the California coast are looking to desalinated ocean or bay water as a way to quench their thirst and water their lawns.

Essay shape and length:
Along with the introduction, which catches the reader's interest, sets the tone, and presents the thesis statement, the body of an essay follows the same basic rules of development as writing a paragraph: supporting details, unity, and coherence. The conclusion leaves the audience with a final impression and pushes the idea forward.

The length of the introduction and conclusion of a typical student essay is considerably shorter than each of the body paragraphs. If the essay length runs between 2-6 double-spaced typewritten pages, an effective introduction can be 3-5 sentences. The same is true for the conclusion. In longer papers, the introduction may need to be expanded depending on the paper's topic.

Adapted from The Elements of Writing. Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1998.
6 + 1 TRAITS OF WRITING

The 6+1 Traits of Writing is a tool for both students and teachers of all subject areas. Whether you are composing an essay for social studies, a lab report for science, or a short story for English, applying 6+1 can help you create a quality piece of writing.

**IDEAS**

1. ✓ the content and meaning of what you are writing; your focus  
   ✓ the main ideas and the details; the way you develop your thoughts  
   ✓ your understanding of a topic

**ORGANIZATION**

2. ✓ ideas presented in a logical order  
   ✓ makes sense to the reader  
   ✓ ideas and evidence connected by good transitions

**VOICE**

3. ✓ the point of view and tone of your writing  
   ✓ awareness and respect for your reader  
   ✓ the way you make your writing interesting to read

**WORD CHOICE**

4. ✓ appropriate use of vocabulary  
   ✓ use of precise, varied, descriptive, and natural language  
   ✓ active and specific verbs
SENTENCE FLUENCY

5

- sentences flow smoothly; easy to read
- well-constructed sentences varying in length and design
- beginnings of sentences vary
- creative and purposeful sentences

CONVENTIONS

6

- correct paragraphing, spelling, capitalization, and punctuation
- command of grammar and usage

PRESENTATION

+1

- final document neatly prepared and professional in appearance
- legible handwriting or appropriate use of fonts and font sizes
- correct spacing, margins, and page numbers
- appropriate use of illustrations, charts, graphs, and other visual aids
IN-CLASS ESSAYS/ESSAY TESTS

Most writing assignments allow you to work through the process of reading, thinking, writing, and revising over the course of days, weeks, and even months. Yet, in many situations, both in school and in the career world, you are required to read, think, write, and revise within a required amount of time. You will need to show how quickly and clearly you can write on a given topic. Here are some tips to help you prepare for essay tests and lessen some of the anxiety that often comes when required to write on demand:

Practice: Try to anticipate some of the questions that could appear on the test and practice writing essay responses as part of your preparation for the test. Think of it the same way as warming up your muscles before going for that mile run.

Study the test: When handed the test, don't start writing immediately. Take a few minutes to read through the whole test and think about your response and how you are going to organize your thoughts.

Make a plan: Quickly list key words and ideas on the test paper or scrap paper, or make a simple outline of what you will discuss.

Get writing: Don't fuss over your first sentence. Get to work on expressing your main points. Don't get bogged down with a long introduction. Get to your thesis statement quickly, and support it with specific reasons, details, and examples.

Write only one draft: You don't have time to create a masterpiece. Use your time to add or omit ideas and information instead of recopying and rewriting.

Know the time: Make sure you check the clock as you move through the stages of your essay so you do not run out of time. For example, if you have 45 minutes to compose one essay, allow yourself about five minutes to read and plan, thirty minutes to write, and five to ten minutes to re-read and revise.

Proofread: As suggested, give yourself the last five minutes or so to read over your essay. Ask yourself: Have I answered the entire question? Do my words and sentences mean what I want them to mean? Will my reader understand what I'm trying to say?
Testing **language**: Take time to make sure you understand the meanings of key verbs that are commonly found in essay test questions:

- **Argue**: take a viewpoint on an issue and give reasons to support this opinion
  Example: Argue whether or not your school should require all students to participate in extracurricular activities.

- **Analyze**: take something apart to show how each part works
  Example: Analyze the central character in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart."

- **Compare**: point out likenesses
  Example: Compare George Washington Carver and Thomas Edison as inventors.

- **Contrast**: point out differences
  Example: Contrast the economic conditions in the South and in the North at the end of the Civil War.

- **Define**: give specific details that make something unique
  Example: Define the term colonialism as it applies to America's early history.

- **Demonstrate (or illustrate, present, show)**: provide examples to support a point
  Example: Demonstrate that a line intersecting parallel lines produces equivalent angles.

- **Describe**: give a picture in words
  Example: Describe the eulogy scene in Julius Caesar.

- **Discuss**: examine in detail
  Example: Discuss the term manifest destiny.

- **Explain**: give reasons
  Example: Explain why the United States entered World War II.

- **Identify**: point out specific persons, places, things, or characteristics
  Example: Identify the leaders of the Confederacy and their importance in the Civil War.

- **Interpret**: give the meaning or significance of something
  Example: Interpret the role of Cesar Chavez in organizing the farm labor movement.

- **List (also outline, trace)**: give all steps in order or all details about a subject
  Example: List the events leading up to the Montgomery bus boycott.

- **Summarize**: give a brief overview of the main points
  Example: Summarize the plot of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams."

MODELS FROM SPECIFIC COURSES

Each class has its own requirements. A physics lab will look different on the page than a creative writing assignment, and a DBQ has different goals than an artist's statement. However, all writing has at its core the same purpose: to make a connection between the author and the reader. Certain things are givens; every author should know her audience and have a certain level of mastery and sophistication in terms of language. Other elements of writing change from assignment to assignment and class to class. Your writing sample for French I might focus on basic grammar and vocabulary, while your research paper for economics class might put a stronger emphasis on the content. In any case, we think good writing is good writing: clear, concise, and with a clear voice.

On the pages that follow, you will find rubrics and models of assignments for a number of courses. These examples should give you an idea of what each discipline expects of your writing. Every assignment isn't in here. If it were, the book would be several hundred pages long, and we want you to be able to carry this handbook around with you, after all.

These examples are designed to give you an idea of what each discipline expects out of your writing. As always, check with your teacher to get the inside scoop.
English

Starting is often the hardest part of writing. Below are some examples of introductions.

Basic and straightforward:

James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* follows the development of Stephen Dedalus as he discovers his artistic self. Despite the rigid formality of Catholic Ireland, Stephen is able to break away from the structures of education, family, and religion to pursue his true calling. The fault lines for this break begin to develop during Stephen's early childhood; his fascination with language suggests a latent artistic nature. The first chapter reveals Stephen's early development as an artist and his first experiments with language.

-Brighton High School Graduate, Simran Winkelstern

Poetry analysis:

Using a sustained allusion to the mythical muses, Seamus Heaney explores his own poetical inspiration in the poem "Personal Helicon." The rhyme allows the reader to understand why Heaney writes, and why he chooses to allow the world into his soul. By evoking images of ancient wells and a mythical mountain, Heaney draws parallels to the past, a common technique used in his poems. He chronicles childhood recollections of different wells and fountains, each one having a separate meaning and significance. But the key to understanding the poem is studying its title: "Personal Helicon."

-Brighton High School Alumnus, Adam Blickstein

Comparative literature:

A common element in *The Things They Carried*, by Tim O'Brien, "The Man He Killed," by Thomas Hardy, and chapter nine in *All Quiet on the Western Front*, by Erich Maria Remarque is that the protagonist in each case kills an enemy. All three men discover that the man they kill is similar to themselves. Although soldiers in war, the three men feel sadness, remorse, and guilt after the up-close experience of killing a man. They are uncertain as to why they are fighting the war or who will benefit from the outcome. All of them share a revelation that there is no glory in war but rather senseless death.

-Brighton High School Alumnus, Tony Kingston
Transactional analysis:

Advanced: writer's ability to combine the critical, the creative, and the personal

Comparing novels and films is like comparing a donkey with a submarine; they can both carry a person from one place to the next, but that is the extent of their resemblance. Books and movies both impart information, but they employ completely different techniques to do so, and they appeal to completely different senses. There are ongoing debates about which medium is superior. My opinion is that this debate is completely beside the point. It is not the medium that gives a work its value, but rather it is the content expressed that is essential.

-Brighton High School Graduate, Lucas O'Connor
English: Checklist for writing

Manuscript Rules

✓ All handwritten work should be done in blue or black ink.
✓ All essays (handwritten or typed) should be double-spaced and written on one side of the paper only.
✓ Use 12-point type in a standard font, preferably Times New Roman.
✓ Your full name, teacher’s name, course name, and date should be on the paper.

The Introduction

✓ Your thesis statement must have subject and direction, but you should not cram too many details into your introduction.
✓ Start your essay with a "hook" - something that makes the reader want to read your essay. Avoid cliches such as "The dictionary definition of school is," or "In literature as in life, jealousy can ruin lives."
✓ If you are writing a literary essay, your introduction must include author's name/authors' names and title(s) correctly punctuated:
  o titles of short works require quotation marks (poems; songs; articles in periodicals such as magazines or newspapers; short stories).
  o titles of long works need to be underlined OR italicized (books; plays; films; television series; all periodicals such as magazines and newspapers; CDs).
✓ Be sure to list the literary works in the order in which you discuss them in the essay.

The Body of the Essay

✓ Be sure that your ideas are clearly and fully explained.
✓ Be sure that you give specific examples or details to support your ideas.
✓ If you are writing a literary essay, be sure that you
  o include direct quotations from the literary works you discuss;
  o do not summarize plot. Assume that your reader knows the literary works you are discussing.
✓ Be sure that you have organized your essay in a way that makes sense.
✓ Be sure that you have clear transitions from one paragraph or section of the essay to the next.

Conclusion of the Essay

✓ Avoid merely restating your thesis statement/controlling idea.
✓ Do not introduce new ideas.
✓ Avoid cliches and stuffy "philosophical" comments on the nature of mankind or the state of the world.
✓ Try to ponder an idea in relation to its connection to a real event, people, living, etc.
Odds and Ends

✓ In literary essays, always use present tense consistently.
✓ Do not use slang or colloquialisms in formal writing.
✓ Never use this phrase in an analysis: This is a perfect example of…. (there is no perfect example of anything)!
✓ Do not "editorialize" unless you are writing a review.
✓ Do not use the words "incredible" or "unbelievable" to describe anything that is not literally beyond belief.
✓ Do not make sweeping generalizations.

English: Literary essay

A literary essay is a formal academic exercise. It is your attempt to demonstrate your understanding of a literary work or works and your mastery of the concepts and language used in literary analysis. It requires you to demonstrate your highest level of thinking, organizing, supporting an argument, and writing. Your literary essay, like your research paper, must be developed carefully, with considerable thought, multiple drafts, and attention to detail. You are trying to produce an essay, which shows your very best work.

In order to develop your literary essay most effectively, fulfill the requirements described below:

1. **Develop a strong introduction.**

2. **Adopt a formal, mature, and authoritative voice.**
   a. Never refer to an author by his or her first name alone.
   b. Never write any variation of "In my essay I will . . ." or "In my essay I have . . . ."
   c. Do not refer to yourself. Your name on the paper indicates that the essay is your opinion.
   d. Use full words, not contractions. Write "is not" rather than "isn't," etc. This will make you sound more mature, more scholarly.
   e. Use formal language, not slang or colloquialisms. Write "children," "students," "young people," not "kids." Write "man," not "guy."

3. **Choose details carefully.**
   a. Use quotations to support all major claims.
   b. Quote only as much as is needed to prove/illustrate your point.

4. **Analyze.**
   a. A mere plot summary of the work is not an analysis. You must state a thesis about the work and prove it by providing evidence - details and quotations from the work, which support your thesis.
   b. Always discuss the significance of the literary elements and devices you identify within the work. Do not just point out that the author has used irony or symbolism or a metaphor, etc., but go on to explain HOW that literary element contributes to or helps to reveal the author's meaning.
Fine Arts

Literacy is an integral part of your fine arts education at Brighton High School. Throughout your studies of the fine arts, you will recognize, learn, and apply the following:

- Elements and principles of design descriptions and definitions are depicted visually as well as expressed in written and verbal formats.

- Identify and use fine arts terminology.
  - You will learn content area vocabulary and write terms in your own words.
  - You will apply these terms when describing your work as well as the work of other artists.

- Using verbal and written expression, explanations of techniques will be used throughout the creative process.

- During the critique process, you will describe, analyze, interpret, and develop opinions about your own work and work of peers. Your teachers will help you develop specific feedback focusing on details and helpful advice for peers.

- You will develop artist and philosophy statements.

- You will connect textual literacy with visual literacy by conveying topics accurately in your artwork as well as supporting your claims through verbal and written formative assessments.

- Movements of art will be explored and researched through biographical research procedures and interpreted through personal expression and writing.

- Feedback will be provided to you directly in order to influence the creative process which will enable you to add depth to content and understanding of design.

- You will create new meaning by developing key steps to the process and practicing “what if” scenarios for your art pieces after completion. You will share this feedback in written and verbal formats.

- You will model the creative process through an artistic lens, as well as written lens.
Foreign Languages

When you compose writing pieces for your French, German, Spanish and/or Latin class(es), please keep the following information in mind:

✓ **Purpose/Task**
  - Accomplish and further develop task
  - Consistently use details to support and expand the response with elaborate and relevant content

✓ **Organization**
  - Consistently show clear evidence of organized topic development
  - Provide a clear beginning, middle, and end with smooth transitions

✓ **Vocabulary**
  - Use extensive and level appropriate vocabulary that expands the topic
  - Include idiomatic expressions as appropriate

✓ **Sentence construction**
  - Use complex sentence constructions

✓ **Grammar and tenses**
  - Demonstrate appropriate control of practiced structures, tenses, and word order

✓ **Proofread**
  - Proofread your writing; it is helpful to read what you wrote aloud
  - Ensure that you have accurately used accents and punctuation marks
How do I write a lab report?
The following format is the typical way of structuring a scientific report. This format is used in most universities as well as science journals and is sometimes called IMRaD. What does IMRaD stand for? It is an acronym that stands for Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion. This method of organizing your report answers 4 essential questions:

**Introduction:** What were you trying to do?
- State Purpose of the lab
- Pose Research Question or Hypothesis if relevant
- Include Background Theory/Information (brief explanation of what is known about this topic)
- Include relevant equations, laws, formulas
- You may also be required to write an Abstract – check with your teacher

**Methods:** How did you do it?
- Describe the Experimental Procedure in a way that it could be replicated
  - Write a paragraph of list steps? Ask your teacher
- List Materials/Apparatus used
- Sketch your setup if helpful

**Results:** What did you find?
- DATA
  - Organize Data into data table(s)
  - Data tables should be titled and numbered (ex. Table 1: Temp v. Depth)
  - ALL values must have units
  - Data can include both quantitative and qualitative information
  - Graph data if it helps clarify a relationship – keep it simple
  - Graphs should be titled and numbered (ex. Graph 1: Temp v. Depth)
- CALCULATIONS
  - Show ALL necessary calculations – if relevant
  - Each calculation should be briefly explained
  - Calculations should logically flow
  - Answers should be clearly labeled

**Discussion:** What does it mean? Argue with evidence.
- Restate the findings (if relevant - answer to the research question)
- Argue/conclude what the findings mean using data to support your argument
- Discuss sources of error (connect error specifically to your results)
- Connect your findings to a relevant practical application

A good report clearly and concisely answers these 4 questions using relevant and sufficient data. This format may take slightly different forms depending on the experiment, but will still answer these 4 essential questions.
Social Studies

Sample opening paragraphs for social studies 10:

**Thematic Essay June 2001-Geography**

Geographic features can positively or negatively affect the development of a nation or region.

Select one geographic feature from your study of global history.

Explain how this geographic feature has had an effect on the historical development of two nations or regions.

Be sure to include specific historical examples in your essay.

You may use any geographic feature from your study of global history. Some suggestions you might wish to consider include: river valley, desert, island, rain forest, and climate. Do not use the United States in your answer.

Samples of opening paragraphs arranged from simplest to more advanced:

Geography has affected nations positively or negatively. This essay will discuss how this has happened in history.

Geography is the study of landforms and climate. These elements affect how a nation or region develops. Mountains are a good example of a geographic feature that has played an important role in history.

One of the most deciding factors in the defining of a culture is its geographic setting. Geographic features strongly affect its historical development. The mountainous regions of Greece and India certainly molded these cultures.

In today's world linked by global communication and rapid transportation systems, the effect of geography seems minimal. Yet, this ability to override geography as a significant factor in the historical development of an area is a 20th century phenomenon. For most of history, geography was destiny. The mountainous geography of Greece and India and its accompanying isolation brought protection from invasion and yet contributed to the disunity within the regions and prohibited cultural diffusion.
Ten principles for an effective informational essay in social studies:

1. Informational essays have a sharply focused, limited topic.

2. Informational essays should have a clearly stated argument, controlling idea, or thesis statement.

3. Informational essays should include analysis, connections, insightful interpretations, and go beyond common knowledge.

4. An informational essay conveys the same spirit of a good story and engages or speaks to the intended audience.

5. Informational essays are built, step-by-step, using relevant and specific evidence to support the claims that maintain and develop the argument, controlling idea, or thesis statement.

6. Informational essays exhibit a logical and coherent structure through introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion that maintains and supports the thesis statement.

7. Informational essays always document their sources.

8. Informational essays are written "dispassionately." (formal explicit objective)

9. The last paragraph (conclusion) of an informational essay ties directly to and extends the first paragraph (introduction).

10. Informational essays observe the common conventions of written English.

(Adapted from Marius, Richard and Page, Melvin. A Short Guide to Writing about History.)
Key components to writing a social studies essay:

**Task**
- Read the task carefully
- Make sure you address all aspects of the task in the essay

**Introduction**
- Provide background information to “set the scene”
  - Do NOT copy the background information directly from the task
- Thesis is easily recognized and addresses the task

**Body Paragraphs**
- Clearly organized
- Address all parts of the task
- Contain specific examples
- Incorporate outside information and documents (documents are used when writing Document Based Questions (DBQ) essays)
  - Documents should be weaved into essay
  - Cite the documents that you use
    - When citing the document, refer to the document’s author or title.
    - Do not cite by writing doc. 1.
  - Use as many documents as required (refer to the directions)
- Outside information
  - You must go beyond the information that is provided in the documents (outside information)
- Contain analysis
  - Explain the importance of the facts, events, etc.
  - Tie each fact back to your thesis statement
  - Make connections between facts and events as they pertain to your thesis statement

**Conclusion**
- Reiterate your strongest points
- Synthesize your writing
  - Connect what you are writing about to another historical topic or make a past to present day connection
- Ensure that your argument has been proven
SECTION FIVE: REVISION

After you have written your essay, DBQ, lab report, or other content-specific writing assignment, it is time to revise, edit, and proofread. Too many students are satisfied with their first draft, thinking that it is their final product. They also think that if they read their work once before class, their essay is ready to be submitted. This is not the case! You are often too “close” to your work to be able to look at it objectively and with a fresh eye. That is why it is important to complete written work well ahead of time so that you can get away from your work for a day or so and then come back to revise and edit it. You also need to shift from writer to reader, which means that you have to read what is actually on the page, not what you think you have written and proved.

Revising:
This step may include major re-ordering, removal, or addition of material such as textual support and quotations.

✓ As you reread your work, check whether you have provided enough background information to support your arguments. Would someone other than your teacher or a classmate understand your logic and proof? Ask someone who is not in your class to read your work. Can she understand your ideas, or does she have questions about your conclusions?

✓ Although it is important to provide sufficient background information, you need to ensure that you do not provide too much information. For example, if you are focusing on irony, decide if you really need to point out the symbolism in a piece of work.

✓ Check the assignment and confirm that you have included each of the requirements in your work. For example, if an essay requires you to prove how an author uses irony to demonstrate a theme, make sure that your work discusses both of these aspects.

✓ You must ensure that you discuss events in the order in which they occur. You may choose among several methods of organization, but make sure that you are consistent.
Editing/proofreading:
This step is the polishing stage, the presentation of your work.

Spell check/grammar check:
At the very least, you MUST run a spell check of your work before submitting it. Remember, however, that the spell check does not find homonyms; therefore, if you write “to” instead of “too,” the spell check will not catch it. In addition to spell check, you must also read your work yourself, slowly and carefully, to find spelling errors. Also, do not rely on the computer's grammar check because it is often incorrect. Look at its suggestions and evaluate them yourself before automatically clicking on the change.

Check lists:
Review your instructor’s own checklist for work: line spacing, punctuation of quotations, verb tense, etc.

Reminders about style, manuscript, and proofreading:

✓ When writing about literature/film, use present tense throughout the paper.
✓ Refer to writers by their surnames.
✓ Punctuating titles:
  o underline or italicize full-length works (novels, plays, film titles)
  o place quotation marks around short works (short stories, poems, essays)
✓ Correct form for including quotations
  o Display quotes
  o Quote within quote
  o Use of ellipses
  o Use of interpolation
  o Quoting verse or verse drama
  o Quoting dialogue from drama or film
✓ Correct form for citations
  o Use correct punctuation when citing
  o Include proper information in in-text citations
  o Ensure that everything that you have cited in-text is also included in the works cited page
✓ Proofread! One effective way is to start with the last paragraph and read backwards to the first paragraph. At this stage, you are looking for mechanical errors, not errors in content (which you already did when you edited).
  o Check for sentence errors (run-ons, comma splices, fragments)
  o Ensure that you are using proper subject verb agreement
  o Check your spelling and punctuation