

Basic Rules for Writing

1. Titles must be expressed properly in writing. Big Parts “Little Parts”
Big Parts: titles of books, websites, encyclopedia volumes, newspapers, collections...
Little Parts: titles within a collection or book, chapter, poems, songs, articles...
2. Use consistent verb tense. (*past, present, future*) Reread the prompt and be sure you are following the proper tense based on the question. By switching tenses, you may confuse the reader.
3. When using the following transition words to begin a paragraph or sentence, be sure to use a comma after the transition word: *First, Afterwards, Then, Secondly, Sometimes, Next, Thirdly, Even so, Finally, Usually, Now, Of course, So, etc.*
4. NEVER begin a sentence with *And, But or Because*.
5. Begin each paragraph on the next new line and indent.
6. Attention getters are part of introductions and should not be excluded from the paragraph.
7. Always reread your essay to be sure you did not leave any words out and that your ideas progress in a logical order.
8. Use commas when you are listing items in a sentence.
9. Reread your essay more than twice to check for proper punctuation.
10. Use the thesaurus to find more vivid and precise words to replace the dull words. Do not use words like “things”, “fun”, “a lot”, “junk”, ...
11. Do not repeat words and phrases. Use the thesaurus to find another way to say it.
12. Never use text codes or abbreviations – example: LOL; ☺; capt. NY NJ &
13. Be sure to space your words. Punctuation must be clear and visible. Penmanship means everything to the judges, since they cannot give you a grade if they cannot read it!!
14. When a dependent clause is the head of a complex sentence, always use a comma after the dependent clause. Remember, dependent clauses contain a subordinating conjunction. (A member of AAWWWUUBISS)
15. Generally, when using two independent clauses in a compound sentence, use a comma before the coordinating conjunction. (A member of FANBOYS).
16. A semicolon may be used in compound sentences, when the second independent clause is closely related to the first.
17. Be careful for RUN ON sentences and FRAGMENTS. Follow the rules in working with clauses and sentences to help you create complete sentences. Remember, every sentence must have a complete subject and a complete predicate.
18. Be careful for commonly misspelled words.
a lot probably different does reason because favorite opportunity interested believe experience
19. Use the correct homonym or homophone: *their, there, they're aunt, ant blue, blew break, brake two, to, too buy, by, bye affect, effect close, clothes no, know whole, hole won, one piece, peace right, write your, you're whether, weather*
20. Use the proper form of the contraction. The apostrophe replaces the missing letters. *can't don't won't wasn't isn't wouldn't couldn't haven't let's she'll I'll you'll we've we're they're they'll you've what's where's*
21. Names of people, places and things are proper nouns and must be capitalized, including “I”. Also titles.
22. Always capitalize the beginning of every sentence.
23. Use the proper form of “me” or “I”. Test your sentence. *ex. John and I received an award. He thanked Jen and me.*
24. Use the proper punctuation based on the type of statement you are making.
25. On your final copy: DO NOT SKIP LINES anywhere in your essay.
26. Do not use unnecessary words. Be clear with what you are saying.

Common Spelling Rules

- S-1. i before e except after c ex. *friends, thief, receive, believe*
And not when it makes the long a sound ex. *eight, neighbor, sleigh*
And not when the c makes the sh sound ex. *ancient, species*
And not when the e has a long sound ex. *either, neither,*

S-2 **Plural Nouns** Generally add –s.

Exceptions:

When noun ends in –ch –x or –sh, add –es to end of a word. ex. *benches brushes taxes wishes axes*

When a noun ends in –y and last two letters are cc: drop y; add ies ex. *babies berries*

When last two letters are vc: add –s ex. *toys days trays*

DIALOGUE

D-1. When you write dialogue, start new paragraph when the speaker changes.

D-2. When using dialogue, quotation marks are placed around the words that are spoken. A comma is used to separate the spoken words from the speaker. Be sure to capitalize the first letter of the speaker's words inside the quotations.

Ex. He said, "We'll discuss this fable in one hour."

D-3. When using dialogue, where a question mark or exclamation point is used to express emotion in the speaker's words, this punctuation must be placed within the quotations.

Ex. "Don't be late!" Bill warned.

D-4. When using dialogue where the speaker's actions are in the middle of the spoken words, use quotation marks to separate all spoken words only.

Ex. "This fable," our teacher said, "is a twist of an older story."

D-5. When using dialogue, where there are more than one spoken sentence, use only one set of dialogue marks for ALL the spoken words.

Ex. The conductor shouted to the passengers, "Quickly, we must get off this train. There is a gas leak. We are all in danger!"

D-6. Dialogue can confuse the reader. Do not use dialogue where it is unnecessary. Also, do not overuse dialogue. Use vivid words and actions to describe what is happening, rather than use dialogue. It is less confusing and helps the reader to get a clear picture of what is happening in your essay.

D-7. Do not use dialogue for words that are interjections or forms of onomatopoeia. Only use dialogue where there are words spoken by a character or speaker in your essay.