

# How to Write for Class: A Student's Guide to Grammar, Punctuation, and Style

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**ALSO BY ERICA MELTZER**

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## Introduction

For more than a decade, I tutored writing in one capacity or another. My students ranged from seventh graders to college seniors, but all of them struggled with the same essential question: how to take the mass of thoughts swirling around in their heads and put them down on paper in a comprehensible way. Over time, I came to realize that many students' ability to grapple with complex ideas outpaced their grasp of English usage and mechanics. While their insights could be compelling, their ability to convey their thoughts in writing was at times so compromised that it was hard to understand what they were literally trying to say. More than once, students also announced that they had learned more grammar in a session or two of SAT prep than they had learned in all their years of school. I knew I was a good teacher, but I also wasn't deluded enough to think I was *that* good! Something was very clearly amiss.

When I thought back to my own high school experience, however, this state of affairs wasn't particularly shocking. I will never forget how utterly baffled I was when my freshman English class began studying gerunds and different types of sentences. I'd acquired a general understanding of what nouns and verbs and adjectives were in elementary school, and my eighth-grade class had done a brief unit on prepositions, but otherwise, I received no systematic instruction in grammar at any point in my K-8 career. I did not know what a clause was, or how to identify the subject of anything beyond the simplest sentence, or what the heck was meant by "predicate nominative" (a term that, for the record, does not appear in this book). In addition, I had only the most tenuous grasp of just what sort of information belonged in a formal paper. I was an avid reader and had intuited the rules of written English well enough to compose a reasonably engaging personal narrative, but literary analysis—the only kind of writing I was now assigned—was largely a mystery to me. Alas, I do not have any samples of my ninth-grade writing, but I am sure that much of it was positively cringeworthy. I struggled the entire year, and for my efforts earned a B-.

It was not until I was asked to tutor a high school sophomore for a grammar test more than a decade later that I went back and, armed with a degree in French and several years of foreign-language tutoring, finally figured out what comma splices and compound-complex sentences actually were. And it was not for five more years that I learned enough about the history of the American school system to understand how such an extraordinary curricular gap between my pre-high school and ninth grade experiences could have occurred. I also became aware of the fundamental unfairness of asking students to master advanced concepts when they have never been given a real foundation. There is helpful rigor, and there is unhelpful rigor, and throwing students into the proverbial deep end of a subject without ensuring they know the basics first is a recipe for confusion and frustration. In fact, I only learned grammar at all because of my foreign-language classes, where it was understood that everything needed to be taught logically and sequentially, from the ground up. When I began to teach English, I approached it more or less as I would have approached a foreign language. The success of that method prompted me to write my first book—the original version of *The Ultimate Guide to SAT Grammar*, on which this guide is based.

A few key points I'd like to emphasize:

First, my goal here is not to present a set of dry, abstract principles (or a set of ironclad regulations handed down from the grammar gods on high), but rather to show how the various concepts can be applied to improve the clarity and effectiveness of your writing. While grammatical terminology is used insofar as it is necessary to explain particular concepts, it is not treated as an end in itself. Knowing about compound and complex sentences is not really about learning to label clauses on a worksheet; rather it's about knowing how to construct long sentences that are grammatically coherent vs. ones that are—not to put too fine a spin on it—a big, honking mess. As much as possible, I have sought to strike a balance between prescriptiveness and flexibility. I have also done my best to indicate exceptions when appropriate, and to present errors in contexts in which they often appear. For the sake of authenticity, I have also adapted

numerous examples from actual student papers. If you have used other grammar books, you may find some of the sentences in the examples and exercises significantly more challenging. This was a deliberate choice on my part: statements such as *Tom and his cousin moved the sofa* or *The sun is shining brightly today* may be useful for learning fundamentals, but most students cannot automatically apply what they've learned studying simple sentences to the project of composing vastly more complex statements about literature, history, biology, etc. If you can't understand how high-level sentences dealing with these types of topics are put together, there's a good chance you won't be able to construct solid ones of your own. This book is designed in part to bridge that gap.

Next, a key theme of this book is that grammar is about logic, not just memorization. (Note that it is, for the most part, unconcerned with the sort of "artificial," persnickety rules, e.g., the prohibition against splitting infinitives or ending sentences with prepositions, that are commonly trotted out to give the study of grammar a bad name.) One common misconception is that studying grammar is primarily about learning to correct errors. In reality, however, learning about grammar means learning about the underlying structures that govern language—and in turn, thought. In fact, good writing is not really separable from good thinking; grammar informs meaning and vice-versa. Knowing how the building blocks of language can be combined in different ways, to produce different effects in different situations, will help you form more complex—and more interesting—statements, without getting lost in them.

About those readers... remember that you're writing for *them*. When people speak, they have access to a broad range of communication strategies: gestures, movements, intonation, and facial expressions can all be used to convey meaning when words fall short. Statements can be fragmentary and disjointed in ways that would render them incomprehensible on paper. In writing, however, none of those supporting strategies are available; the reader is entirely reliant on the text. As a result, you must explain your ideas as clearly and precisely as possible, and grammar plays a central role in your ability to do so. For example, pronoun errors should be avoided not because someone made the arbitrary decision that they were "bad," but rather because they can make it difficult for readers to figure out what the heck you're talking about! Ideally, grammar and meaning should work together seamlessly, allowing readers to focus on what you are saying as opposed to worrying about how you are saying it. However, the fact that good writing often gives the *appearance* of being effortless should not be taken as evidence that learning to write well actually *is* effortless. No one would watch an accomplished athlete perform a hair-raising move without breaking a sweat and believe that a beginner could quickly learn to do the same. Mastery requires effort and practice, and that is as true for writing as it is for anything else.

While reasonably comprehensive, this book is best treated as a jumping-off point rather than a permanent solution to anyone's grammar woes. Although the exercises are designed to make you continually apply concepts in slightly new ways rather than merely plug in the same thing ten times by rote (a common pitfall that makes so much grammar study ineffective), the reality is that answering a single set of questions is probably not sufficient to imprint a new way of thinking on your brain for good, regardless of how well you understand it in the moment. Skills must be applied on a regular basis if they are to become automatic—and if the majority of the writing you do involves texting or posting on social media, you might have to make more of an effort to switch into school mode than you realize. It's one thing to know how you're *expected* to write in a paper; it's another thing to actually do it. The good news is that mastering the skills in this book can make you immeasurably more secure as a writer. Really understanding how English works, as opposed to just doing what you think sounds right, is the difference between being in control of your writing and being at its mercy. And it's a big difference.

-Erica Meltzer

## Chapter One

# Parts of Speech and Basic Conventions

## 1. Noun

Nouns indicate people, places, objects, and ideas.

**Common nouns** refer to **general categories**, e.g., *girl, city, house, father, doctor, author, school*, and are **not capitalized**.

**Proper nouns** refer to **specific** people, places, and things, e.g., *Jake, Hawaii, Toyota*.

**Collective nouns** refer to groups and organizations, e.g., *family, team, country, school, society, company*.

**Concrete nouns** refer to objects that can be touched and felt, e.g., *book, table, dog*. These nouns are often derived from Germanic (Anglo-Saxon) words, and they tend to be associated with everyday language.

**Abstract nouns** refer to ideas and things that cannot be touched. These nouns are usually derived from Greek, Latin, or French and are associated with more formal language. They often have the following endings:

- -ISM, e.g., *realism*
- -ITY, e.g., *unity*
- -LOGY, e.g., *ideology*
- -MENT, e.g., *movement*
- -TUDE, e.g., *solitude*
- -SION, e.g., *exclusion*
- -NESS, e.g., *happiness*
- -TION, e.g., *notion*
- -TUDE, e.g., *solitude*

With the exception of some proper nouns, most nouns can be preceded by **articles**. The **definite article** *the* refers to specific nouns, and the **indefinite articles** *a* and *an* are used to refer to nouns in general.

- Nouns beginning with consonants should be preceded by *a*.
- Nouns beginning with vowels or vowel sounds should be preceded by *an*.

Consonant	Vowel
A pencil	An object
A leader	An idea
A reaction	An hour

As a general rule, if you are not sure whether a word can be a noun, try placing *a(n)* or *the* before it. For example, *report* can be a noun because you can say *a report* or *the report*, but *relate* cannot be a noun because it is incorrect to say *a relate* or *the relate*.

## 2. Pronoun

Pronouns replace nouns.

Examples: *it, they, them, which, s/he, this, that*

- Samantha loves basketball. **She** plays **it** every day after school.
- Marco walks to school with Sherri and Ann. **He** meets **them** at the corner.

**Personal pronouns** refer to people. They are often referred to in the following way:

	Singular	Plural
1 <sup>st</sup> Person	I	We
2 <sup>nd</sup> Person	You	You (pl.)
3 <sup>rd</sup> Person	S/he, It, One	They

**Indefinite pronouns** refer to unspecified quantities.

(N)either	One	Some
No one	Each	Something
None	Everybody	Several
Any	Everyone	Many
Anybody	Few	Others
Anyone	Both	All

### 3. Verb

There are two main types of verbs:

#### 1) Action verbs

Action verbs indicate specific activities, although not necessarily physical actions.

**Examples:** *talk, write, travel, speak, jump, go, believe, think*

#### 2) Being verbs

Being verbs, also known as **linking verbs**, indicate states of being, seeming, and feeling.

**Examples:** *be, become, seem, appear, feel, stay, remain, taste*

The “to” form of a verb is known as the **infinitive**. If you are uncertain whether a word can be used as a verb, try placing *to* in front of it to form an infinitive. For example, *clean* can be a verb because you can say *to clean*, but *sheet* cannot be a verb because you cannot say *to sheet*.

Verbs are not always used as infinitives, however. In order to indicate who is performing an action, it is necessary to **conjugate** the verb and provide its **subject** (noun or pronoun).

Most conjugations simply involve removing the *to* from the infinitive (e.g., *to read* → *I read*); however, third-person singular verbs add an *-s* at the end (e.g., *to work* → *it works*).

*To be* and *to have*, the most common English verbs, are **irregular**: their conjugated forms differ from their infinitives.

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>To Be</b>	I am	We are
	You are	You (pl.) are
	S/he, It is	They* are

	<b>Singular</b>	<b>Plural</b>
<b>To Have</b>	I have	We have
	You have	You (pl.) have
	S/he, It has	They have

\*Note that *they* can also be used as a singular pronoun, when an individual’s gender is not specified. This construction tends to be more common in informal writing, so you may want to check with your instructor before using it in a paper.

The **tense** of a verb indicates when an action occurred.

It is = Present	It would be = Conditional
It has been = Present Perfect	It would have been = Past Conditional
It was = Simple Past	It will be = Future
It had been = Past Perfect	It will have been = Future Perfect

## 4. Preposition

Prepositions are **location** and **time** words: they indicate where things are, where they're going, or when they occurred. They are usually followed by nouns.

**Example:** The dog ran **under** the fence and jumped **into** the neighboring yard **in** only a matter **of** seconds.

Common prepositions include the following:

About	Along	Behind	Beyond	From	Off	To
Above	Among	Below	By	In(side)	On	Toward
Across	Around	Beneath	Despite	Near	Over	Underneath
After	At	Beside	During	Next to	Since	Until
Against	Before	Between	For	Of	Through(out)	With(out)

## 5. Adjective

Adjectives modify nouns, pronouns, and other adjectives.

**Examples:** *large, pretty, interesting, solid, wide, exceptional, smart, complicated, blue*

- The class was so **boring** that I thought I would fall asleep.
- The **beautiful** view left them at a loss for words.
- We agreed to meet in front of the **light blue** house.

## 6. Adverb

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and clauses. They often—but not always—end in *-ly*.

**Examples:** *rapidly, calmly, strikingly, mildly, boldly, sharply, well, fast, very*

- She smiled **warmly** at him when he entered the room.
- He did **exceedingly** well on the test.
- The professors spoke so **rapidly** that I could **hardly** keep up.

A number of common adverbs involve **time**. Note that the majority of them do not end in *-ly*.

Almost	Before	Just	Next	Soon
Already	Even	Last	Now	Still
Also	First	Later	Often	Tomorrow
Always	Forever	Never	Sometimes	Yesterday

**Conjunctive adverbs** are transition words: they indicate relationships between clauses.

**Examples:** *however, therefore, thus, moreover, consequently, nevertheless, indeed, instead, otherwise*

- The game was canceled because of the rain; it was, **however**, rescheduled for Tuesday.
- I overslept by an hour this morning. **Therefore**, I was late for my first class.

## 7. Conjunction

Conjunctions are **transition words** that indicate relationships between words, phrases, and clauses. There are two main types of conjunctions:

### 1) Coordinating conjunctions

These conjunctions join two independent clauses (complete sentences). There are seven coordinating conjunctions, known by the acronym FANBOYS: For, **And**, Nor, **But**, **Or**, Yet, So.

- Emma went to the dentist, **but** she later went to the candy store.
- We watched the movie until midnight, **and** then we went to bed.

Note that some coordinating conjunctions can also be placed between nouns or adjectives.

- Wolves **and** dogs are closely related. (Between nouns)
- Silk is a delicate **yet** strong material. (Between adjectives)

## 2) Subordinating conjunctions

These conjunctions join dependent clauses (fragments) and independent clauses.

After	Before	Though	Whenever
Although	Despite	Unless	Whereas
As	If	Until	Whether
Because	Since	When	While

- **Because** I stayed up too late, I overslept this morning.
- The book is interesting, **although** it is also very challenging to read.

## 8. Interjection

Interjections are exclamation words and are often punctuated with exclamation points. They are associated with informal writing and should generally be avoided in academic work.

- Right!
- Crazy!
- LOL!

## Multipurpose Parts of Speech

Some words can act as more than one part of speech.

### Nouns vs. Verbs

Nouns are typically preceded by *a(n)* or *the*; verbs are preceded by subjects (nouns or pronouns).

Noun: The waiter handed me **the drink**.

Verb: **I drink** at least 16 oz. of water every day.

### Nouns vs. Adjectives

Some nouns can also act as modifiers (adjectives), in which case they are known as **adjectival nouns**. Often, these words involve nationalities and/or professions. They are placed **right before proper names**.

Noun: Frank Gehry **is an American** and **an architect** who has designed some of the most famous buildings in the world.

Adjective: **American architect** Frank Gehry has designed some of the most famous buildings in the world.

## Verbs vs. Adjectives

Certain phrasal verbs (verbs followed by specific prepositions) also have noun or adjective forms.

As a rule, these **verbs** are written as **two words**, whereas these **nouns** are written as **one word**.

Verb	Noun/Adjective
To work out	A workout
To sign up	A signup sheet
To log in	A login

Incorrect: Students can **signup** for a variety of clubs at the activities fair this afternoon.

Correct: Students can **sign up** for a variety of clubs at the activities fair this afternoon.

Incorrect: Students who want to join a club should write their names on the **sign up** sheet.

Correct: Students who want to join a club should write their names on the **signup** sheet.

## Prepositions vs. Conjunctions

“Time” words such as *before*, *after*, and *until* can act as either prepositions or conjunctions.

When these words act as prepositions, they precede nouns.

Preposition: We stopped for dinner **before** the movie.

When these words act as conjunctions, they precede subjects and verbs.

Conjunction: **Before** we went to the movie, we stopped for dinner.

## Exercise: Identifying Parts of Speech

For each underlined word below, identify the part of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, or conjunction. (Answers p. 269)

### Example:

Although cheerleading is the fastest growing form of  
 A B  
 physical activity for girls, more than half of Americans do  
 C D  
 not believe that it should be considered a sport.  
 E

- A. **Conjunction** \_\_\_\_\_
- B. **Noun** \_\_\_\_\_
- C. **Preposition** \_\_\_\_\_
- D. **Verb** \_\_\_\_\_
- E. **Pronoun** \_\_\_\_\_

1. A large stash of books that once belonged to Thomas  
 A B C

Jefferson was recently discovered.  
 D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

2. Although the center of Los Angeles has long been  
 A

famous for its traffic jams, the city's center is becoming  
 B C

increasingly accessible to pedestrians.  
 D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

3. The presence of the Olympic stadium has transformed  
 A B

the formerly run-down area of the city.  
 C D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

4. The author's first novel has received generally  
A  
favorable reviews, but it has thus far failed to become  
B C D  
an overwhelming success.  
E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

5. The increasing emphasis on test scores has some  
A B C  
education experts concerned that young children's ability  
to learn through play is being compromised.  
D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

6. The discovery that both Lewis Carroll and Chopin had  
A B  
epilepsy is threatening to redefine the concept of genius.  
C D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

7. Drum languages, once common throughout Africa as a  
A  
means of sending messages, began to disappear almost as  
B C  
soon as they were documented.  
D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

8. British scientist J.D. Bernal believed that people would  
A B  
eventually be replaced by creatures that were half-human  
C D E  
and half-machine.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

9. New research shows that those who live on islands are  
A B C  
far more likely to suffer from obesity than those who live  
D  
in other environments.  
E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

10. The book *Cane*, written by poet and author Jean  
A B  
Toomer, contains a mix of fiction, poetry, and drama.  
C D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

11. Protests against the country's government have been  
A B  
growing in recent days, and observers fear that they may  
C D  
explode into utter chaos.  
E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

12. Painted by Paul Cézanne, *The Card Players* depicts  
A  
three men seated around a table, with a fourth gazing  
B C  
watchfully in the background.  
D E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

13. It is arguable whether Mark Augustus Landis,  
A  
responsible for perpetrating one of the largest art-forgery  
B C D  
sprees, ever actually broke the law.  
E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

14. Activities such as bird-watching evolved from people's  
A B  
desire to observe the natural world without actively  
C D  
participating in it.  
E

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

15. Australian geography is remarkably varied; although  
A B  
Australia is the world's smallest continent, it is the sixth  
C D E  
largest country.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

# Basic Conventions: Capitalization and Punctuation

Please note: although the rules laid out in this book are generally consistent with MLA style, this book is not intended to be strictly aligned with any particular style guide. If your instructor requires you to adhere to a specific set of punctuation and/or citation formats, those should obviously take precedence.

## Capitalization

The first letter of the first word of a sentence is always capitalized.

Incorrect: **more** than ever, companies are looking to expand internationally.

Correct: **More** than ever, companies are looking to expand internationally.

The word *I* is always capitalized.

Incorrect: The company where **i** worked last summer is looking to expand internationally.

Correct: The company where **I** worked last summer is looking to expand internationally.

Proper nouns – names of specific people, places, and things – are always capitalized.

Incorrect: More than ever, companies in the **united states** are looking to expand internationally.

Correct: More than ever, companies in the **United States** are looking to expand internationally.

Proper nouns include:

- Names of individuals and organizations, e.g., *Jane Austen*, *Microsoft*, *Harvard University*, *Labour*
- Titles of books, movies, paintings, e.g., *Pride and Prejudice*, *Gone with the Wind*, *The Mona Lisa*
- Political figures and heads of state, e.g., *Queen Elizabeth II*, *The Prime Minister of India*
- States, cities, provinces, countries, and languages, e.g., *Los Angeles*, *Nebraska*, *Thailand*, *Spanish*
- Days, months, time periods, e.g., *Friday*, *July 4<sup>th</sup>*, *The Renaissance*
- Holidays, e.g., *Thanksgiving*, *Bastille Day*, *Diwali*
- Acronyms and initialisms, e.g., *NASA*, *CEO*, *USA*, *SAT*

## Capitalization and Titles

As a general rule, the first word of a title and any nouns, verbs, adjectives, or pronouns are capitalized.

Internal articles (e.g., *the, an*) and prepositions (e.g., *in, of, with*) are lower case.

Incorrect: When it was published in 1859, Charles Darwin's *On The Origin Of The Species* quickly became an immensely controversial work.

Correct: When it was published in 1859, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of the Species* quickly became an immensely controversial work.

### Do NOT capitalize:

#### Non-proper nouns

Incorrect: The **Company** where I worked last summer is expanding internationally.

Correct: The **company** where I worked last summer is expanding internationally.

#### Seasons

Incorrect: The company where I worked last **Summer** is expanding internationally.

Correct: The company where I worked last **summer** is expanding internationally.

#### Occupations and political offices when not part of a specific individual's title

Incorrect: The sole avenue to becoming a fully licensed **Doctor** in the United States involves submitting to what is known as "the match."

Correct: The sole avenue to becoming a fully licensed **doctor** in the United States involves submitting to what is known as "the match."

Incorrect: Although **Kings and Queens** were once true heads of state across Europe, today their roles are largely symbolic.

Correct: Although **kings and queens** were once true heads of state across Europe, today their roles are largely symbolic.

Correct: **Queen Victoria**, who sat on the British throne from 1837 to 1901, was England's longest-reigning monarch.

## Family members

Incorrect: When I worked in New York, my **Dad** came to visit me for a week.

Correct: When I worked in New York, my **dad** came to visit me for a week.

**Note:** when the title of a family member is treated as a proper name—that is, when it is not preceded by a pronoun—then it should be capitalized, e.g., *I went out to lunch with Dad last week.*

## Academic subjects

Incorrect: I'm looking forward to taking an **Economics** class next semester.

Correct: I'm looking forward to taking an **economics** class next semester.

If a subject is included as part of a course title, however, it should be capitalized.

Correct: With over 600 students typically enrolled, **Economics 101** is among the university's most popular undergraduate classes.

**Note:** the exception to this rule is *English*, which, as a language, is always capitalized.

## Punctuation

A period is always placed at the end of a sentence.

Incorrect: More than ever, companies are looking to grow **internationally**

Correct: More than ever, companies are looking to grow **internationally.**

A question mark is always placed at the end of a question.

Incorrect: When is the company's new office in China expected to **open**.

Correct: When is the company's new office in China expected to **open?**

When parentheses are attached to a sentence, place ending punctuation outside the close parenthesis.

Incorrect: More than ever, companies are looking to grow internationally (particularly in **Asia**.)

Correct: More than ever, companies are looking to grow internationally (particularly in **Asia**).

When a full sentence is enclosed in parentheses, place ending punctuation inside the close parenthesis.

Incorrect: More than ever, companies are looking to grow internationally. (Asia, particularly China, is an increasingly popular **location**.)

Correct: More than ever, companies are looking to grow internationally. (Asia, particularly China, is an increasingly popular **location**.)

Punctuation marks are placed immediately after a word. They are followed by a single space.\*

Correct: With the development of many forms of technology and the improvement of **transportation, globalization** is occurring faster than ever.

Correct: More than ever, companies are looking to grow **internationally. Therefore,** foreign-languages play a critical role in the ever-expanding global market.

### **DO NOT:**

Leave a space between the word and the punctuation mark.

Incorrect: With the development of many forms of technology and the improvement of **transportation , globalization** is occurring faster than ever.

Omit the space after the punctuation mark.

Incorrect: With the development of many forms of technology and the improvement of **transportation,globalization** is occurring faster than ever.

Place the punctuation mark next to the following word, without a space.

Incorrect: With the development of many forms of technology and the improvement of **transportation ,globalization** is occurring faster than ever.

### **Numbers**

Numbers 1-9 are typically written out; numbers 10 and above are written as numerals.

Correct: Throughout history there have been many senatorial bodies, **two** of which were the Spartan Gerousia and the Roman Senate.

The primary exception is when different numbers are used to refer to different categories of things. In such cases, one category can be written as words and the other in numerals.

Acceptable: Despite not publishing her first novel until she was **forty**, Edith Wharton wrote **15** novels as well as **85** short stories.

### **Ampersands**

An ampersand (“&” sign) may be used in titles and names of organizations, but the word *and* should always be written out in the body of a text.

Incorrect: Despite not publishing her first novel until she was **forty**, Edith Wharton wrote 15 novels **&** 85 short stories.

Correct: Despite not publishing her first novel until she was **forty**, Edith Wharton wrote 15 novels **and** 85 short stories.

\*During the typewriter era, two spaces were commonly used after a period. Today, however, one space is standard.

## Citing Works

Use **quotation marks** to set off titles of **songs, poems, essays, chapters, articles, and short stories**.

Correct: One of Sylvia Plath's earliest works, "Tulips" is a study in poetic tension.

Correct: Jonathan Swift's essay "A Modest Proposal" is often held up as a model of satire.

**Italicize or underline** titles of **books, epic poems, plays, films, albums, aircraft, ships, and foreign words**.

Correct: One of the many theatrical devices in Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* is that each of the eight main actors has one or several other minor roles in the play.

Correct: The filming of *Gone with the Wind* was delayed for two years while 1,400 women were screened for the role of Scarlett O'Hara.

Correct: *Sfumato* is a painting technique for softening the transition between colors, mimicking an area beyond what the viewer is focusing on.

## Miscellaneous Points

Always refer to an author by his or her **last name**.

Incorrect: The progress of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* reflects several key themes of the novel. Through the relationship of these two characters, **Jane** explores class expectations, social status, and marriage.

Correct: The progress of Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* reflects several key themes of the novel. Through the relationship of these two characters, **Austen** explores class expectations, social status, and marriage.

**A novel is a long work of narrative fiction** – plays, memoirs, and short stories are not novels.

Incorrect: Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is a **novel** that centers on the assassination of an ancient Roman general by a group of conspirators.

Correct: Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* is a **play** that centers on the assassination of an ancient Roman general by a group of conspirators.

In general, **the first person (I) is not used in academic papers**; it is understood that the ideas you are presenting are your own. **Unless your instructor explicitly permits this construction, you should err on the side of caution and avoid it.** Note that while very advanced writers sometimes break with this convention, most high school and beginning college writers do not yet have a compelling reason to do so.

Avoid: The two characters **that I think strive** for beauty most strongly in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* are Pauline and Pecola.

Better: The two characters **that strive** for beauty most strongly in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* are Pauline and Pecola.

## Exercise: Capitalization

In the following sentences, capitalize the first letter of any word incorrectly written in lower case. Some of the sentences may not contain an error. (Answers p. 269)

**Example:** At the end of <sup>W</sup>world <sup>W</sup>war I, the music industry was already on its way to becoming big business in the <sup>U</sup>united <sup>S</sup>states, exerting a strong influence on <sup>A</sup>american culture.

1. While competing at the olympics in beijing, the japanese sprinter Shingo Suetsugu set a record for the 200-meter dash on august 22, 2008.
2. In Charles Beard's analysis, the constitution is a Document that was created primarily to protect the rights of wealthy landowners.
3. Throughout the anglo-saxon epic poem *beowulf*, vengeance plays a central role in the actions of many of the characters.
4. Many early childhood experts have argued that watching too much tv is dangerous for young children because they have difficulty distinguishing between fantasy and Reality.
5. Civics was once a required class for students in many High Schools, but since the 1960s, the number of students required to study how the united states government works has declined dramatically.
6. As Odysseus and his crew journey home to the island of ithaka, they overcome many obstacles with the help of the mythological greek gods, yet they also lose a number of crew members along the way.
7. In september of 2015, *Harper's* magazine published William Deresiewicz's Essay "The Neoliberal Arts: How colleges have sold their soul to the market."
8. After burberry experienced a series of losses in the early 1980s, the ceo, Rosemary Bravo, took steps to modernize the brand, and soon its popularity began to grow among celebrities.
9. According to Cowell, the court showdown between galileo and the catholic church is quite possibly the greatest standoff between faith and science that History has ever seen.
10. Modern Communication features such as caller id, call waiting, and voice mail help both companies and customers to save valuable time and calling charges.

## Exercise: Punctuating Titles

In the following sentences, correct any missing or incorrect punctuation. Some of the sentences may not contain an error. (Answers p. 270)

**Example:** Based on the life of Gypsy Rose Lee, the musical Gypsy is set in Depression-era Seattle during the last days of the vaudeville era.

1. In his essay Why We Crave Horror Movies, Steven King suggests that viewing paranormal acts on a screen can help people keep their own fears at bay.
2. Multiple readings of Oscar Wilde's novel The Picture of Dorian Gray reveal that the image of the painting referenced in the title can always be interpreted in new ways.
3. Rolled out on September 17, 1976, as the first orbiter in the Space Shuttle system, Endeavor was built to perform atmospheric test flights for NASA.
4. Chris Berg's article The Weight of the Word presents the argument that the United States government's attempts to close WikiLeaks were a fundamental breach of both free speech and freedom of the press.
5. Among Ike and Tina Turner's final joint hits were the cover version of Proud Mary (1971) and Nutbush City Limits (1973), with the former becoming one of Turner's most recognizable songs.
6. Set in sixteenth century Venice, Shakespeare's play Othello was adapted from the Italian author Cinthio's short story "A Moorish Captain" (1565).
7. The narrator of Robert Browning's poem The Last Duchess recounts to a visitor that he keeps a painting of his former wife hidden behind a curtain that only he is allowed to draw back.
8. In the article Stuff is Not Salvation, Anna Quindlen examines the American fixation with material possessions and offers a critique of consumer culture.
9. The director Nora Ephron, best known for her romantic comedy films, received an Academy Award nomination for Silkwood (1983), When Harry Met Sally... (1989), and Sleepless in Seattle (1993).
10. George Orwell's novel 1984 depicts a totalitarian society in which citizens are subject to constant surveillance from a leader known only as "Big Brother."