

Sharon Public Schools  
Grades 6 – 12  
Research and Writing Guide  
*Based on MLA Format*

Compiled and Written  
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Welcome to the MLA Style writing guide created for students in grades 6 – 12. This document is a manual for writing research papers that include outside sources for middle and high school students. The citation guidelines are useful for almost any type of outside resource that a student may use to help him or her create a project or paper. Refer back to this document often during the writing process as it includes many good suggestions that will help write a winning paper. Make sure to ask your teacher if you do not understand an example or require a source that is not listed below.

### What is MLA Style?

MLA stands for the Modern Language Association. The members of this organization have put together a set of guidelines that should be used when writing research papers, essays, and manuscripts. In their book, MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, the association outlines rules for mechanics of writing and documentation of sources.

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## EVALUATING SOURCES

When doing research it is important for you to learn to think critically about the information you find. Never assume whatever you read in print is true and accurate just because it has been published.

When you choose a source make sure that the source fits the following criteria:

- Credibility
  - Is it a trustworthy source?
  - Does it give author's credentials? Is the author qualified to write this document?
  - Is the document published?
- Accuracy
  - Is the source up to date?
  - Is it factual?
  - Is it detailed?
  - Is it comprehensive?
  - Does the source give the whole truth? Is it unbiased?
- Fairness
  - Is it balanced?
  - Is it objective?
  - Does it engage the subject thoughtfully and reasonably?
  - Is it concerned with the truth?
  - Is the author trying to support a particular point of view?
  - Does the author benefit by his/her report?
- Support
  - Is there a works cited/bibliography at the end of the source?
  - Is there contact information?
  - Are the claims supported?
  - Is documentation supplied?
  - Can the information be verified?
  - Are the basic facts the same in more than one source?

## WRITING EXPECTATIONS

### **Topic:**

Choose a topic that is appropriate to the given assignment.

### **Introduction to the Paper:**

The introduction must present a clear path into your paper. It should be interesting to the reader and make him or her want to continue reading. It should include an attention getter which may be:

- a pertinent quotation
- a shocking statistic
- an anecdote
- a joke or story
- a case study
- analogy
- a question or a series of questions
- a keyword or phrase defined
- an allusion to another area of study such as art, science, religion etc,
- a historical background
- a combination of two or more of the ideas listed

The introduction should include a thesis statement. The thesis statement is one or two sentences that will be the main idea or point of view that you will support in your paper.

The introduction should also include a brief statement that addresses the issues that will support your thesis. These issues will be discussed in more detail in the body of your paper.

The introduction is typically one to three paragraphs in length.

### **Body of the Paper:**

The body of the paper must present the specific examples that support your thesis. This should include:

## **Conclusion:**

The conclusion ties all of the examples made in the body of the paper. This paragraph should make both the writer and the reader understand the point of the paper and the purpose of the thesis statement. The following are possible types of conclusions:

- an analogy
- a parting question
- a call to action
- a prediction, plan or warning
- a personal opinion

## **Writing:**

Here are some key points that you will want to remember when writing your paper:

- Use transitions or bridges that connect paragraphs.
- Write clear sentences.
- Use proper punctuation.
- Write in third person point of view. Do not use personal pronouns.
- Write in a formal, objective style.
- Avoid ordinary language, slang or jargon.
- Use proper grammar and mechanics.
- Avoid run-on sentences and/or fragments.
- Use clear ideas.
- Make sure paragraphs support your thesis.
- Make sure you document all sources. No plagiarism!
- Keep verb tense consistent.
  - When writing about literature, write in the present tense.
  - When writing about history, write in the past tense.
- Make sure that subjects and verbs agree.
- Use descriptive verbs and nouns.
- Vary sentences and lengths.
- Use active verbs rather than passive verbs.
- Lead into quotations. Do not input random quotes.
- Make sure all terms and concepts are explained throughout the paper.

## **Editing:**

Here are some key points that you will want to remember when editing your paper:

- Stick to the assignment and the teacher's expectations. Note the length and specifics required.
- Proofread paper.
- Check spelling and punctuation.
- Make sure that your paragraphs are in logical order according to your introduction.
- Make sure in-text citations are done correctly and consistently.
- Read your paper out loud to make sure that what you wrote is what you want to say.
- Keep it neat.
- Type using double spaces.
- Use Times New Roman in 12 point font.
- Use proper margins.

# PLAGIARISM

## What is Plagiarism?

- Plagiarism is using someone else's ideas without giving them credit.
- Plagiarism can include copying an entire paper (even another student's paper!).
- Plagiarism is also using just a few words or sentences taken from another work.
- Any information that is not common knowledge needs to be cited. (As a good rule, if you find the exact same information in all the sources you read, it can be considered common knowledge. For example, you do not need to cite a source for the date of American independence.)
- Plagiarism is also paraphrasing and summarizing by changing only a few words.
- Using charts, pictures, and data without telling your reader where that information came from is also plagiarism.

## Why Do You Need to Avoid Plagiarism?

- It is dishonest.
- It is unfair to the original author to have his/her work stolen.
- People who plagiarize lose credibility with teachers and peers. There are students every year at SHS who cannot find teachers to write college recommendation letters because of earlier incidents of plagiarism.
- There are severe penalties for plagiarism – F on the paper (and if it is a large paper, that may mean an F for the term), expulsion from National Honor Society, suspension from school. In college, students are sometimes asked to leave for a year or semester. Adults have been fired from jobs and lost careers because of plagiarism.

## How Do You Avoid Plagiarism?

- Cite your sources.
- Always use quotation marks to note that you are using exact words.
- Do not let another student borrow your papers, homework, etc.

## EXAMPLES OF PROPER CITATIONS AND PLAGIARIZED SAMPLES

### Proper Use Of A Quote

#### When to quote:

- When the author's words are distinctive and cannot be paraphrased.
- If you plan to disagree with a source or contrast two different opinions use direct quotes.
- Be careful not to use too many quotations.

#### Original text

(from American Decades 1900 – 1909 by Vincent Tompkins)

Of the sports that were popular during the century's first decade, only basketball was originally American. James Naismith, a physical education instructor in Springfield, Massachusetts, developed basketball in the winter of 1891 to replace the gymnastics and calisthenics routinely practiced during the months between the end of football and the beginning of baseball (Tompkins 493).

#### Plagiarism:

James Naismith, a physical education instructor in Springfield, Massachusetts, started his students playing basketball during the winter months. He thought this was better exercise than gymnastics and calisthenics to keep his students active between football and basketball seasons (Tompkins 493).

#### Why is this plagiarism?

The underlined phrase needs to be in quotes because it is the author's exact words.

#### Proper use of quotation marks:

“James Naismith, a physical education instructor in Springfield, Massachusetts” (Tompkins 493), started his students playing basketball during the winter months. He thought this was better exercise than gymnastics and calisthenics to keep his students active between football and basketball seasons.



## **Proper Summarization**

### What is a summary?

A summary condenses information from a source into a few sentences or short paragraph.

How to properly summarize according to Kirszner and Mandell (128 – 129):

- Read the entire selection first.
- List the key idea.
- Set the book aside and then rewrite the ideas in your own words.
- Add appropriate documentation by including an in-text citation of the author and page number or within the sentence.

### Original text

(from American Immigrant Cultures by Levinson and Ember):

The Amish are known for their self-imposed limitation of technology. They may not own or drive an automobile, though they can hire a car and driver. They may not use high-line electricity in the home, primarily because it brings with it modern appliances. However, they may modify machinery to run by gasoline or diesel engines and they use air-powered equipment and batteries. The Old Order Amish may not have a telephone in their home, lightning rods on their barns, tractor-drawn field equipment, or central heating. The windmill and hand pump are still widely used, although all except the strictest Amish now allow indoor plumbing (Levinson and Ember 36).

### Plagiarism:

The Amish are known for their lack of use of modern technology. They may not drive an automobile, they may not use electricity in their homes, they may not have telephones, lightning rods, or central heating. They may hire a car and driver or modify machines to use gas or diesel fuel. They still use windmills and hand pumps (Levinson and Ember 36).

### Why is this plagiarism?

This summary is too close to the original text. It follows the same format, the ideas are in the same order, and many of the same words are used.

### Proper summarization:

## **Proper Paraphrasing**

### What is a paraphrase?

A paraphrase is a detailed restatement of a source in your own words. A paraphrase includes most of the ideas stated in the original source.

How to properly paraphrase according to Kirszner and Mandell (130):

- Read the entire selection first.
- List the key points in order of importance.
- Set the book aside and then rewrite the ideas in your own words.
- Add appropriate documentation by including an in-text citation of the author and page number or within the sentence.

### Original text

(from Milestones of Science by Curt Suplee)

Perhaps no other inventions, however, had the catastrophic impact of gunpowder and cannon. Chemical agents had been used in warfare for centuries, from the incendiary “Greek fire” used against wooden ships in the seventh century B.C. to the gunpowder devised by the Chinese in the tenth century (Suplee 52).

### Plagiarism:

No other inventions had the catastrophic effect of cannon and gunpowder. Chemicals have been used in war for hundreds of years. “Greek fire” was used to fight wooden ships during the seventh century B.C. and the Chinese invented gunpowder in the tenth century.

### Why is this plagiarism?

Changing a few words and reordering words is not paraphrasing. This is still obviously the author’s ideas and words. In addition, there is no author citation.

### Plagiarism:

However, no invention had the disastrous effect of gunpowder and cannons. Chemicals were used in war since the seventh century B.C. Gunpowder was created by the Chinese in the tenth century (Suplee 52).

### Why is this plagiarism?

## **A Comparison of a Summary and a Paraphrase**

### Original text

(from Novels for Students Volume 2 by Telgen):

Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird depicts the life of its young narrator, Jean Louise "Scout" Finch, in the small town of Maycomb, Alabama, in the mid-1930s. Scout opens the novel as a grown woman reflecting back on key events in her childhood. The novel covers a two-year period, beginning when Scout is six and ending when she is eight. She lives with her father, Atticus, a widowed lawyer, and her older brother, Jem (short for Jeremy). Their black housekeeper, Calpurnia, tends to the children. Scout and Jem's summer playmate, Dill Harris, shares the Finch children's adventures and adds imagination and intrigue to their game playing. In the novel, we see Scout grow in awareness and come to new understandings about her town, her family, and herself (Telgen 296).

### Summary:

To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee, is about the life of the main character, Jean Louise Finch, known as "Scout." Scout grew up in a small town in Alabama with her father, Atticus, her brother Jem, and their housekeeper Calpurnia. The book traces two years of her life and details her growth throughout that time period (Telgen 296).

### Paraphrase:

To Kill a Mockingbird, by Harper Lee, is about the life of the main character, Jean Louise Finch, known as "Scout." In the book, she is an adult looking back on two years of her life. Scout grew up in Alabama with her father, Atticus, her brother Jem, and their housekeeper Calpurnia. Their friend, Dill is also an important character in the book. The story takes place when Scout is six to eight years old and the reader learns about the characters through their many escapades. It clear that Scout learns a lot about herself and her community as she grows up (Telgen 296).

## Proper Citation Of Data

### Original:

AP Knitting scores, 2003-2004

A.P. score	Frequency
5	7
4	7
3	1
2	0
1	0

### Plagiarism:

As the table shows, students did extremely well in A.P. Knitting in 2003-2004.

AP Knitting scores, 2003-2004

A.P. score	Frequency
5	7
4	7
3	1

### Why is this plagiarism?

The example copied only part of the table and did not credit the author. You cannot cut and paste charts, pictures, or tables without citing the original source.

### Proper use of a table:

According to data provided by E.T.S., students did very well on the A.P. Knitting exam in 2003-2004. Fourteen of 15 students earned either a 4 or 5 on the exam.

## IN-TEXT CITATIONS

As you write your research paper, you will include quotations and/or ideas that you have taken from your sources and input them in the body of your paper. When you quote from a source, you must give credit to that source. Your sources will be briefly identified in the body of the paper. This is called an in-text citation. Below are examples:

### **With author's name in Text:**

In Jackie Rose's book The Green Rabbit, she states, "Green rabbits should never be cooked over an open flame" (24).

### **Without author's name in Text:**

While camping, it is important that one remembers that, "Green rabbits should never be cooked over an open flame" (Rose 24).

### **Long Quotations:**

Quotations of more than four typed lines should be separated from the rest of the writing by indenting each line ten spaces and double spacing the material. Do not use quotation marks. The source is cited at the end of the long quote. Below is an example.

By no means did the planter aristocrat of colonial Virginia live a leisurely life. In managing Mount Vernon, George Washington faced numerous frustrations and a rigorous work routine. From a diary written by George comes this following account:

In January, of course, little could be done on the farm

## WORKS CITED PAGE

This is the last page of your paper and will include all the sources you cited in your paper. Alphabetize your sources by the author's last name. If there is no author, use the title of the work. Begin each entry at the left hand margin and indent each line that follows in that entry. Double-space every line. Below is an example of what your Works Cited page will look like.

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### Works Cited

Connors, Robert. "Anxiety Over Writing the Research Paper." Newsweek. 15 May 1994: 22.

Finch, Christopher. Introduction. The Art of Jim Henson. By H. Belafonte. New York: Random House, 1993. ix-xi.

Gabriel, Peter. Xplora. New York: Random House, 1994.

Jungle Cats! home page. 28 Mar. 2002. 15 May 2002 <<http://www.chaussie.com>>.

Levy, Steven. "Great Minds, Great Ideas." Newsweek. 27 May 2002. 20 Sept. 2003 <<http://www.msnbc.com/news>>.

--. Great Thinkers of the Modern World. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Earlbaum, 2004.

The Star Wars Menace. New York: Darth Maul, 1999.

Yankovic, "Weird Al." Apalooza. Scotti Brothers Records. 1993.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Sometimes the teacher will ask you to submit an annotated bibliography instead of a simple works cited or bibliography.

An annotated bibliography is a regular bibliography that includes 1-3 sentences that describe or explain the source cited. In essence, you are showing that the source is relevant to your topic.

If you use a direct quote from the source to describe the citation just use quotes. You do not have to include an in-text citation.

See the examples below:

The topic is African American Folktales and their influences on contemporary folktales.

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### Annotated Bibliography

Dorson, Richard M. Folktales Told Around the World. New York: Random House, 1994.

This is a collection of folktales that not only includes the story itself but it also gives critical commentary about the symbols and imagery used by the authors.

There are many African American folktales included.

Hamilton, Virginia. The People Could Fly. New York: Random House, 1994. Ms.

Hamilton has collected over 25 American Black folktales from the South. Before each story, she has included the information about the source, theme, and symbolism. "The illustrations included, further depict the struggle of the black

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A.P. U.S. History

10 January 1999

Chinese Immigrants in the Nineteenth Century West: The People Who Advanced the  
Industrialization and Development of a Land That Scorned Them

During the 1870s, a period of recession, native Americans were angry at being jobless while Chinese immigrants continued to work for low wages and under poor conditions. “Angry Americans began banning Chinese-made products, and in 1879, an article was added to the California state constitution forbidding the employment of Chinese men by any factory or business” (Hoyt 26). However, instead of opening jobs to the white men, many capitalists moved to other areas where they would not be denied the good labor of the Chinese. In other cases, factories simply died out in the absence of Chinese labor. Industries were unable to thrive with the more expensive and often not as efficient labor of the Americans. The cigar, shoe, and wool factories suffered an especially serious decline in production after losing the Chinese-Americans (Chan 132). As predicted, the West lost an integral step to manufacturing greatness when it drove the Chinese from its factories.