

Write On!

A Reference Manual for Student Research and Writing

Department of Political Science

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Foreword to the student

In most political science courses, you will be asked to submit one or more pieces of written work based on research done outside of class. This is the equivalent of laboratory or field research in the natural sciences, and is a very important part of your education. It not only deepens your knowledge of political science, it also helps you develop skills in research and writing that will be useful in any numbers of careers that you might enter after graduation.¹

Write On! is part of an attempt by the Political Science Department of the University of Calgary to help you expand your abilities in research and writing. Assignments based on specific sections of Write On! will be given in the classes and tutorials of some of the introductory courses. You should also retain this handbook for reference in higher-level courses. Your instructors in such courses will teach you how to do more difficult and specialized forms of research, but they will assume that you already know how to do the basic things described here. Keep the book so you can refresh your memory when you need to.

The Department regards research and writing as complementary skills, equally important to producing the final result. It would not do for an engineer to produce only rough sketches of a bridge and hope that the "general idea" gets across. The "idea" is only as good as the precision of the language in which it is expressed. Your prose is to your research what mathematics is to the engineer's bridge. Thus your work will be

¹ There is a wide variety of careers available to political science students. For a report on the career paths of our graduates, see Keith Archer, "Political Science B. A. Graduates from the University of Calgary: Education and Career Paths," The Canadian Journal of Higher Education, 16 (1986), 65-76. Copies of this article are available at nominal cost at the Political Science Department office.

assessed not only on what you say, but also on how well you say it. Instructors may vary in the emphasis they put on English style and correctness, but all will lay some weight on it. They cannot avoid doing so, because your meaning only comes into existence through the words you use; and if the words are not appropriate, the meaning will be impaired.

If you are particularly interested in research and writing, you might want to give serious consideration to the Honours programme in our Department. Individual instruction in research and writing is given in Poli 499 and Poli 500, which are required courses for Honours students. Poli 500, the Honours thesis, is particularly challenging and beneficial. This is a year-long piece of research on a topic of your choice, carried out under the personal supervision of a professor, for which you will receive full-course credit. This is a unique opportunity to do independent work in exploring a subject that has sparked your curiosity.

1. Choosing a topic

In some lower-level political science courses, there may not be much choice of paper topics. You may simply be given a topic and asked to write about it. This is not because we are trying to stifle creativity; it is because enrolments in these courses are very large, and assignments have to be designed so as not to put an intolerable burden on the library's holdings. But in some 300 and most 400 courses, you will be asked to choose your own topic for research, with or without a list of suggestions. The following advice will be helpful when you make this choice:

- Try to find something in which you have at least a spark of interest. You will find the work more enjoyable and will do a better job if you are sustained by genuine curiosity. Do not pick a subject simply because you think it might be easy; it will not turn out to be easy if it is boring to you.
- It is usually worthwhile to discuss the topic with the instructor, particularly in higher-level courses, and indeed many instructors require or recommend this. All instructors set aside at least two hours a week to meet with students individually. This is your time, and you should take advantage of it. The instructor can often give precision and focus to a general interest that you may have because he will know what has been published in the field. He can put this together with some information about your background to tailor a recommendation to your particular situation.
- Another reason for discussing the topic with the instructor is that you often have to make a choice relatively early in the term before you are acquainted with the material to be covered in the latter part of the course. If you limit yourself to things that have already been covered in class, you may be missing a topic that is ideal for you.

•A good topic is neither too broad nor too narrow, but somewhere in the middle. If it is too broad, you will be swamped with information; if it is too narrow, you will not be able to find much about it. For example, "John Stuart Mill" is much too broad, while "John Stuart Mill's Boyhood Trip to France" is probably too narrow, at least for a course in political theory that addresses philosophical themes. "The Influence of Alexis de Tocqueville on John Stuart Mill" might be manageable.

Whatever topic you choose, you should try to start work several weeks in advance of the due date. But in addition to the normal human tendency to procrastinate, there are many reasons why you may find it hard to act on this advice. You are trying to juggle multiple courses, you may not feel confident yet of your understanding of the material, and so on. But it is essential to take the plunge. The library is heavily used, which makes it very possible, indeed probable, that the books you want will be checked out and you will have to recall them. Even if you don't encounter this sort of problem, it takes time to organize an argument and then draft, rewrite, type, and proof-read the paper. Above all, it takes time to think about your topic to develop something worth saying. A policy of starting early in your research assignments will be most helpful to the quality of the final result, including the grade you receive.

2. Use of libraries

These remarks are directed chiefly to the use of the main university library, that is, the collection housed in the MacKimmie Tower and Block. A few courses may also require you to use the law library, and you may occasionally want to consult something in the small management library in Scurfield Hall. It is unlikely that you will ever need to use the geology or medical libraries for research in political science courses.

It should also be noted that the University of Calgary does not have the only good library in the city. You may find what you are looking for at SAIT, Mount Royal College,

or the Calgary Public Libraries, particularly the W. R. Castell Central Library at 616 Macleod Trail S. E. You should also be aware of the library of the Glenbow-Alberta Institute at 130 9th Av. S. E. The Glenbow has an enormous collection of materials on Western Canadian history, including much on politics. You cannot check materials out, but you can use whatever you need on site.

A political scientist might use the library in three ways, which are discussed separately below:

a. to find information

If you familiarize yourself with the reference section of the main university library on the second floor of the MacKimmie Block, you will find it to be an amazing source of information. Here we can only mention a few of the resources that have a direct bearing on Canadian politics; but similar material is also available on the United States, Great Britain, and other major countries. Learn to use the Canadian resources first. Once you have an idea of what can be done, you will find it easy to gather information on other countries.

You should understand how the library shelves these reference materials, many of which are updated monthly, quarterly, or annually. The library has tried to locate the most recent volumes of the most commonly used publications near the reference desk. Older and less heavily used volumes are shelved further away. The result is that some of the titles mentioned here may be divided among two locations in the reference area. If you have any trouble finding what you want, do not hesitate to ask the reference staff. Their job is to be helpful, and they are good at it.

All books and periodicals in the library, including those in the reference section, are classified under the Library of Congress system. On the spine of each volume is a combination of letters and numbers that gives it a unique identification. A minor complication affecting the reference materials is that some, but not all, of them carry the letter "Z" at the beginning of their code. This stems back to an earlier system, now

abandoned, in which all reference materials were coded with "Z." Unless the letter "Z" stands alone at the beginning of the code, you can ignore it. If you are confused, the best thing is to ask the staff for assistance.

For current biographies of prominent people, turn first to the annual volumes of Canadian Who's Who (CT 280/ C 2). For historical figures, the most authoritative source is the still incomplete Dictionary of Canadian Biography (CT 283/ D 52). Numerous other biographical guides are also shelved near these two. You can also consult The Canadian Encyclopedia (FC 23/ C 33) or the older Encyclopedia Canadiana (AE 5/ E 68). In general, it is not hard to get a short biography of anyone who will ever be mentioned in a Canadian politics course.

For events, you can consult the Canadian Annual Review of Politics and Public Affairs (FC 2/ C 22). The annual volumes of this series contain essays about the most important happenings on the federal scene, as well as summaries of what took place in each province. For current events, look at Canadian News Facts (FC 1/ C 215). This indexed digest of Canadian news resembles a newspaper in format and appears every two weeks. Using it, you can quickly track down some event that you may vaguely remember having heard about on the radio or television.

Yearbooks and almanacs contain answers to almost every conceivable question about Canadian politics, government, history, geography, economics, and culture. The Canada Year Book (HA 774/ C 34) is authoritative but often a couple years behind. Since 1987, there has been a Canadian World Almanac and Book of Facts (AY 414/ C 22), which is a Canadianized version of a well known international reference book.

Finally, an invaluable general reference on Canadian government and politics, also updated annually, is the Canadian Parliamentary Guide (JL 5/ C 3). It contains biographies of Senators, MPs, and members of provincial legislators; historical lists of prime ministers, provincial premiers, and cabinet members; summaries of election returns since Confederation; overviews of the executive, the courts, foreign embassies; and much more.

If you become familiar with the nine titles mentioned above, you will quickly be able to find

- the biography of any significant Canadian politician, civil servant, judge, general, journalist, author, businessman--living or dead
- the results of any federal or provincial election or by-election held since Confederation
- the date and nature of any important political event
- the title and mission of any government department, agency, or commission
- statistical data about population, natural resources, economic trends, and government spending

b. to search the literature

Like other scholars, political scientists refer to the aggregate of what has been published in their field as "the literature." Professional researchers begin by reviewing the published literature on a particular subject, hoping to contribute to it later by publishing new information or interpretations. In an advanced course, you may get a chance to do research that is genuinely original; but most of the time your work will consist of discovering what has already been done on a subject and relating it to the concerns of the course you are taking. It is, therefore, necessary for you to learn how to search the literature of political science.

You will quickly learn that the library's computerized DOBIS system can sort books by subject. Using the subject classification, you can get a list of the library's book holdings on a particular subject. But DOBIS is only the beginning, not the end, because it has several important limitations. First, it is not complete in that it does not list all books acquired before 1974. For older materials, check the card catalogue on the second floor of the MacKimmie Tower. Second, the DOBIS subject index covers only book titles. Much of the literature you want may be in the form of journals; their titles are given alphabetically

in the DOBIS serials list, but there is no DOBIS subject index for the contents of journals. Third, no system of classification and cross-reference is perfect, and books often touch upon many subjects that do not get included in the computer listing. For all these reasons, you should regard the output of DOBIS as no more than a starting point.

Two common sense measures can readily lead to more titles. When you go to pick up a book whose title you have found in DOBIS, inspect the neighbouring shelves. The Library of Congress classification system used by our library tries to put books together according to topic; so if you find one useful book, you are likely to find others nearby. Second, check the notes and bibliography in any book you locate. Scholarly works generally list the sources on which their authors have relied. You can quickly put together a substantial bibliography in this way, particularly if you can find a recently published book to work from.

Books, however, will not be enough to allow you to do a good paper on most topics in political science, so you should also consult the periodical or journal literature. There are a number of indexes that will help you find articles on the subject of your choice. All have much the same format. Published annually with quarterly or monthly updates in the current year, they list articles by author as well as by subject. The main differences among them have to do with the type and number of journals included in their data base.

For Canadian subjects, turn first to the Canadian Periodical Index (AI 3/ C 3). It references both popular magazines and scholarly journals published in Canada. For nonCanadian subjects, the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature (AI 3/ R 44) covers a large assortment of popular periodicals, including news magazines such as Time and the Economist. For scholarly journals, see the Social Sciences Index (AI 3/ S 56). Another useful index is the Public Affairs Information Service Bulletin (ZH 83/ P 82), which includes both popular and scholarly periodicals, as well as some books.

A more complex reference source is the Social Sciences Citation Index (H 83/ S 64), which includes books and book reviews as well as journal articles. The main feature

of this index is that you can trace lines of research forward. Assume, for example, that you are doing a paper on the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and you know that Peter Russell is considered the leading authority on that subject among Canadian political scientists. You can check the annual volumes of the Social Sciences Citation Index to find the titles of articles, books, and reviews in which Russell's work has been mentioned. In this way, you can trace not only the progress of Russell's work but the reaction to it by other writers. This index is more complex than most but not really difficult to consult. A chart illustrating its usage is attached to the table where it is shelved in the library.

Another resource you should be aware of is International Political Science Abstracts (JA 36/ I 5). An abstract is a short summary of an article. The annual volumes of the IPSA contain abstracts for literally thousands of articles published that year, indexed by author and subject. Reading the abstract will often tell you whether it is worth your time to find and read the article itself. Similar series of abstracts exist for the other social sciences and humanities. You may also wish to consult them from time to time, since any particular topic in political science will probably overlap in some way with history, sociology, philosophy, economics, etc. For example, if you are doing research in political theory, you will want to be aware of the Philosopher's Index (ZB 1/ P 49), which indexes and abstracts books as well as articles in philosophy. All the abstracts series are prominently displayed in the reference section on the second floor of the Mackimmie Block.

For some topics, either current or historical, you may also wish to consult newspaper accounts. The library holds microfilmed backsets of a large number of newspapers, both Canadian and foreign. This is a formidable source of information about politics, but how do you find what you want? For Canadian topics, consult the Canadian News Index (AI 21/ A 1 C 34), based on seven metropolitan newspapers including the Calgary Herald and the Toronto Globe and Mail. For American and international topics, see the New York Times Index (AI 21/ N 47); for British and international subjects, see the (London) Times Index (AI 21/T 52). Each of these papers, as a "newspaper of record,"

tries to cover the world's news fully. A daily issue of either is almost a diary of the world's events for that day. The indexes are comprehensive and in some cases contain short summaries of the articles. Using these resources, you will find it possible to make your research absolutely current.

c. to find government records

The literature described in the preceding section consists of studies of government and politics written by political scientists and other observers. The original sources on which such writers base their research are found, to a considerable degree, in the category of "government documents," which fill the third floor of McKimmie Tower. Using government documents is a complicated job, and your professor will give you specialized instruction if you are asked to do this in a particular course. Here are a few general comments that may be helpful.

Government records are arranged by jurisdiction. That is, all the Canadian federal documents are shelved together, as are the records of each of the provinces and foreign nations. Within jurisdictions, records are grouped according to governmental structure. Thus the various publications of Parliament are in one place, while the records of, say, the Canadian Human Rights Commission are in another. All the annual reports and miscellaneous publications will be located in one group. Our library will have annual reports and other publications of all major Canadian (federal) and Alberta departments and agencies of government, plus a selection from other provinces. It is not hard to locate the material in bulk simply by walking through the stacks.

You should also be aware of certain types of public records that are relevant to a wide variety of government activities. One of the most comprehensive is the Debates of the Senate (CA 1/ Y1 D 26) and of the House of Commons (CA 1/ X 1 H 51), often referred to by the British term Hansard. These are word-for-word transcripts of what was said on the floor, including question period. The annual volumes of the Debates are thoroughly

indexed by subject and speaker. If you were writing, for example, on the Free Trade debate of 1988, consulting the index would enable you to discover what was said about that issue in either the Senate or the House of Commons.

Also useful are the "statute books." Each jurisdiction publishes volumes containing the text of all laws passed in that session of Parliament or of the provincial legislature. If you know the year a law was passed, it is simple to find the text. The Statutes of Canada (CA 1/ YX S 75) and of all the provinces are in the government documents section of McKimmie Library as well as in the Law Library.

Every fifteen or twenty years, each jurisdiction publishes a set of volumes entitled Revised or Consolidated Statutes of (X). The revised statutes are a systematic arrangement by topic rather than chronology. All amendments are inserted into the original laws, and repealed legislation is deleted. If you want to know what the current federal law on unemployment insurance is, but you have no idea when it was passed, consult the index of the latest version of the Revised Statutes of Canada. The revised statutes are always shelved together with the serial statute books of the same jurisdiction.

Another general source for political scientists is the vast body of law reports produced by the superior courts of Canada and other countries. You will learn to use these reports if you take Poli 343 and/or Poli 442, and you will receive special instruction in the use of the Law Library at that time. In the meantime, it is not difficult to locate a court's decision in a particular case if you have seen the citation somewhere. Suppose you are writing on aboriginal rights in Canada, and your reading tells you that Calder v. Attorney General of British Columbia, [1973] S. C. R. 313 is the leading modern case on the subject. "S. C. R." means "Supreme Court Reports," "[1973]" means "for the year 1973," and "313" means "beginning on p. 313 of that volume." If you have this information, finding the Supreme Court's opinion in this case is no harder than locating a journal article.

Most of the research you do as an undergraduate will probably take place in the library. You should be aware, however, that the research done by political scientists involves many sources other than library books and journal articles. Examples of other methods and sources include

- content analysis of radio and television broadcasts
- statistical analysis of census or other aggregate data, such as economic indicators, and correlation with political data, such as election results
- surveys of public opinion involving either oral interviews or written questionnaires
- participant observation of leadership conventions and other political phenomena
- reconstruction of past events based on unpublished manuscripts collected in archives

Members of this Department have used all of these approaches in their research at one time or another. You will get the opportunity to learn statistical analysis of public opinion and voting data if you take Poli 399, as is strongly recommended. You may also encounter some of the other methods in advanced electives.

3. Taking notes

Particularly in introductory courses, some of your writing assignments may involve materials that are sold or distributed to all students in the class. In that instance, you may not have to take notes at all. It may be quite sufficient to underline important passages in the readings and make jottings in the margin.

Other assignments will require you to use library sources. Now you will have to change your technique because journals and some books, especially reference works, cannot be checked out, and you should not mark the pages of books that you can take home. Photocopying is fast and cheap, and you will often find it convenient to xerox the

important pages of a work you have consulted. You then own the copy and can mark it up as much as you please. To facilitate such copying, you might want to purchase credit cards from the copy centre on the second floor of the library tower. These give you a modest discount on the price; and, more importantly, they insure that you can make copies whenever you need to, without worrying whether you have the right coins to operate the machine.

Sometimes, however, you will find that photocopying is impractical because of the number of pages and expense involved, because the material is fragile, or because of copyright restrictions. You will then have to take written notes. For the most part, this is a common-sense procedure; but a few tips may help you avoid wasted time and confusion.

- Some researchers prefer to take notes on cards, others use looseleaf paper.

You can use whichever you prefer. The important thing is to record the full source of information on all note cards or sheets of paper that you accumulate. If you forget to do this when you take the notes, you may find that the book has been checked out by someone else when you go back to the stacks to find the missing information.

- It is best not to put notes from more than one source on the same card or sheet of paper. Doing so is an easy way to get confused about the sources of your information.

- If you copy the exact words of a work you consult, be sure to put them in quotation marks and write down the page number(s). If you do not do this, you may later think the author's words are yours, and you may stumble into plagiarism (discussed below) by using the words in your paper.

- Keep the notes for each project in a separate folder or section of a binder if you use paper, or in a separate section of a box if you use cards. It is easy to lose notes as you rush around campus, going back and forth from classrooms to the library.

- Retain your notes until your instructor has marked your assignment and returned it to you. Your notes may be useful if your instructor has questions about the sources you consulted in doing your research.

4. Scholarly objectivity

On rare occasions, you may be asked to write something that only represents your personal opinions; but generally you will be dealing with facts and with the views of others. You will be asked to develop your own opinions by seeing what others have thought about the question. Your instructors will be interested in seeing whether you have understood what you have read, whether you can analyze it critically, and whether you can offer your own view based on evidence.

Politics is inevitably a partisan affair, and you may sometimes be asked to write on subjects that move you deeply, such as nuclear strategy, war, abortion, affirmative action, and many other controversial topics. Remember that these are questions on which reasonable people can hold opposing views. Unless you are instructed to develop a single point of view, you should assume that your primary task is not to take sides but to understand the logic and evidence behind the positions that people take.

When you write a paper in a political science course, be careful not to argue like a lawyer in a courtroom or a politician in an election campaign. These are special situations in which words are used to win an elaborate game. Each side of an argument is represented by an advocate to make the best possible case. But these special situations are not typical of research and writing in political science. There you will be expected to look at more than one aspect of an issue; sometimes you may even be asked to develop arguments with which you fundamentally disagree, as a way of coming to understand a perspective.

At its best, politics is the process by which human beings reach agreement, or at least agree to disagree, and thus manage to live in peace with one another. The

achievement of this goal demands moderation and willingness to look impartially at the views of others.

5. Critical analysis of sources

In the world of research, “critical” does not mean “hostile” or “antagonistic.” It means a questioning, open-minded attitude that does not take things at face value. The essence of scholarly research lies in this questioning attitude towards sources of information. What is published is not necessarily accurate, correct, or even honest. Research means not just reading, but assessing the value of what you read.

Scholars distinguish between “primary” and “secondary” sources. Primary sources are those created by the participants in events, while secondary sources are those created by observers who write or speak about events. Examples of primary sources would be speeches in Parliament as recorded in Hansard; statutes; judicial opinions; the correspondence and personal papers of politicians, civil servants, and other participants in the political process; and autobiographies and books of memoirs. Examples of secondary sources would be newspaper accounts of events, or books and articles written by political scientists. Note that the library contains both primary and secondary sources in proximity to each other. The Collected Writings of Louis Riel, for example, is a primary source, whereas George Stanley’s authoritative biography, Louis Riel, is a secondary source.

Having a critical attitude towards primary sources means asking questions such as the following: What was the person’s role in events? Did he have a record of accomplishment to defend? Was he a government official defending the system or a revolutionary attacking it? Primary sources are the best evidence of how the participants in events see the world, but in themselves they are not always trustworthy accounts of what actually happens. A statute legislating wage and price controls, for example, shows the intention of the legislature; but it does not prove that the controls are effective in practice.

To investigate that point, you would want evidence other than the statements of those who drafted and passed the legislation.

Analyzing secondary sources is even more complex. Here you have to ask whether the author has any obvious biases. Is he, for example, a Communist seeing the world through the eyes of Marxist ideology, or a capitalist committed to the market system of economics? Once you have investigated the possibilities of bias, you have to look at the use of sources. Is the work merely a summary of existing secondary literature, or is it based on an independent investigation of the primary sources? Don't just read the text, look at the notes. You will see, for example, that almost every note in George Stanley's Louis Riel is to a letter, diary, or other primary source, whereas the notes in many other, more popular biographies of Louis Riel are to the works of George Stanley or other secondary sources. Generally speaking, you should regard works based on primary sources as more authoritative than those that merely recycle the secondary literature.

Although you should always make an attempt to evaluate the secondary sources you use, you may not always find it easy to do so. Particularly in the early years of university, all scholarly research may seem equally valid (or invalid) to you. In the case of books, one way out of this state of affairs is to consult published book reviews. Scholarly books are often reviewed in academic journals, and sometimes in popular magazines and newspapers.

For Canadian books, consult the Canadian Book Review Annual (Z 1035/ A 1 C 33). This series tries to provide at least one review of every important Canadian book published that year. For other books, the Book Review Digest Annual (A 1219/ B 6) provides short excerpts from reviews that will give a quick idea of the character of a book. The Book Review Index (Z 1035/ A 1 B 64) does not print the actual reviews, but it gives you bibliographical references for finding reviews in the back files of journals. The Social Sciences Citation Index (H 83/ S 64) is particularly valuable. You can use it not only to locate book reviews but also to follow debates in the periodical literature. If you have

found an article that seems insightful, and you would like to know what other researchers think of it, track the references forward in SSCI.

The general theme of this section is that, when you write your paper, you should not merely report what you have read, but you should explicitly assess the value and reliability of the sources you have used, drawing attention to possible biases and information gaps. You will seldom be in a position to resolve such problems definitively, but you should at least mention the difficulties as they appear to you.

6. Comparison of Sources

Except in special cases such as book reviews or commentaries on a single article, research at the university level always implies use of several sources. The point is not just to list them in your bibliography but to compare their viewpoints, the evidence they offer, and the conclusions they reach. In a field as controversial as politics, there is never a single TRUTH to be discovered if only you could find the right book in the library. There are always diverging points of view, conflicting bodies of evidence, and contrasting schools of thought. Your job is to analyze the disagreements and to understand why they occur.

Students normally realize their obligation to consult multiple sources, so it is rare to receive a term paper that does not mention several sources in the notes and bibliography. But the effect is sometimes more apparent than real. It is easy for an instructor who knows the literature to tell that a student is relying substantially on one source and is merely referring to others from time to time to make the research look thorough.

You should not only try to weave together an account of your topic from multiple sources, you should try to be explicit in your comparison of them. This is an extension of the "critical analysis of sources" discussed in the preceding section. Let us say that you are writing an assessment of Ronald Reagan's presidency. Two of the books you are using are Martin Anderson, Revolution, and Donald Regan, For the Record: From Wall Street to Washington. You cannot help but notice that the first book is highly laudatory, while the

second is much less so. You should also notice that while both authors were close personal advisers of President Reagan, Anderson left his position voluntarily and remained friendly with the President, whereas Regan left after intense disagreements with the President's wife and members of his staff. By themselves, these facts do not mean that either book is reliable or unreliable; but they should alert you to the presence of a certain outlook. In writing your paper, you should comment explicitly on such facts in order to assess the value of the sources on which you draw. Instead of trying to pass absolute judgments about Reagan's presidency--judgments that you are not really in a position to make--report how he was seen by Anderson, who remained loyal, and by Regan, who became disenchanted.

Another aspect of the task is to sort out facts from opinions in your sources. For our purposes, you can think of facts as opinions on which there is wide agreement. Anderson, Regan, and other authors will agree on a great many things done by President Reagan--whom he appointed to office, what legislation he introduced or vetoed, which treaties he signed, and so forth. Yet they will disagree on the wisdom and impact of many of these actions. Your job is to relate their judgments of President Reagan to the overall outlook evidenced in their books. Try to see how the two authors' views were influenced by their experiences in the President's administration. Comparison of the differences will help you towards an evaluation that is "impartial"--not in the sense that it is beyond dispute, for that never happens in political science, but in the sense that it takes account of different opinions and is not just your personal reaction.

This is all part of scholarly objectivity. Our natural instinct is to see the world through our own biases and preconceptions. Developing an educated mind means, among other things, learning to look at the world as others do. You may not accept the views of others, but you should try to see as they do, and to discover the reasons that cause you to agree or disagree with them. Your goal should be to arrive at a personal judgment based on knowledge of evidence and awareness of contrary views.

7. Organizing and outlining an argument

Everything you write in a political science course will be expected to develop a thesis or an argument. Do not let the word “argument” mislead you. In academic usage, an “argument” means a train of reasoning supported by evidence; it does not mean a debate or a shouting match. If the argument is good, assumptions will be stated or at least clearly implied, the evidence will be objective in the sense that it can be verified by others, the conclusions will be logically derived from the assumptions and evidence, and objections and conflicting evidence will be considered.

Ideally, you will wait to begin writing until the overall shape of the argument is clear in your mind. You do not have to plan everything in advance, but you have to know where you are starting, where you are going, and how you are going to get there.

Many good writers proceed to develop their argument in two stages. First they list the few main steps that will take them from beginning to end, then they go back over each section to outline the internal steps within it.

Let us take a concrete example. Suppose you have been asked to write a paper on the Progressive Conservative campaign strategy in the federal election of 1988. Your research has convinced you it was vital to the PCs' success that they were able to change their strategy in the middle of the campaign. In the first stage, you might outline your paper as follows:

- introduction/statement of the topic
- the first weeks of the campaign
- the television debates and the PC slide in the polls
- the change in strategy and recovery in the polls
- the election results
- conclusion, summarizing the thesis or argument you have made

In following this outline, you are going to appeal to polling data to show that when the Conservatives followed their original strategy, they were susceptible to Liberal attacks over free trade that hurt them in the polls, whereas their standing in the polls rose when they counterattacked vigorously against the Liberals and against the integrity of the Liberal leader. For the purposes of this paper, you have to assume that polling results are a good predictor of election results. This is highly plausible, but it would take another paper to prove in detail, so you should state it as an assumption and admit that you can't prove it in this context. Your conclusion is persuasive in the case of the 1988 campaign, but it does not mean that every mid-term change of campaign strategy will be effective for a political party. You should state this qualification in your conclusion so you will not appear to assert too much.

You are now ready to repeat the process in finer detail in each stage of your outline. Assuming that the introduction will only be a single paragraph, let us look at "the first few weeks of the campaign." An outline of this topic might be something like the following:

- PC campaign strategy as exemplified in a typical speech by Prime Minister Mulroney
- PC campaign strategy as assessed by contemporary observers, e. g., Jeffrey Simpson writing in The Globe & Mail
- poll results reported before the television debates

You are now ready to write this section because you know what you want to cover and how it fits into the argument of the whole paper.

If your paper is more than five or six pages long, it is usually advisable to break it into sections and supply subheadings that correspond to the major stages of your argument. This device helps the instructor to grasp your train of thought quickly. If you find it hard to divide your paper into sections and devise subheadings, that is a sign that you have not proceeded systematically to develop an argument.

The above description fits the ideal case where you know quite clearly what you want to say and can develop it systematically. But research does not always progress so smoothly. There may be times when you have to use writing as a process to discover what you want to say. You will find that ideas come to you in the course of writing, and you ought to take advantage of them. An outline is a preliminary sketch, not a straitjacket. Writing is often a recursive process, in which you revise your overall conception as ideas come to you.

But no matter how you get there, the end result should be logical. That is, even if you changed your plans along the way, you should be able to produce a well organized outline that would represent the paper in its final form. "Stream of consciousness" prose may have a place in certain kinds of modern fiction, but not in scientific or scholarly writing.

8. Quoting and paraphrasing

Rules govern the way in which writers may use the words of other writers. Within universities, the normal term for violation of these rules is plagiarism. If you want to know more about the university's procedures for dealing with all forms of cheating, including plagiarism, consult the appropriate section in the Calendar.

Our Department's concern, however, is not so much to punish plagiarism as to help you avoid it. We believe that students sometimes plagiarize either because they are not clear about the rules or because they fear that their research and writing skills are inadequate. With the aid of this manual and instruction in our courses, we hope you will take sufficient pride in the competence of your research that the question of copying the work of others and passing it off as your own will not arise, nor will you stumble into plagiarism accidentally.

The essential rules of quotation and paraphrase are given below. There are further complexities of punctuation that you must be aware of and can find in any manual of style, but observance of these simple rules will guarantee intellectual honesty.

1. **If you use more than four words from any source, put them in quotation marks and identify the source with a note or reference. Example:**

It has been said of the great famine in the Ukraine that "Stalin looms over the whole human tragedy of 1930-33." (Conquest, 1986: 7)

2. **If your direct quotation is more than three lines long, put it in block form, that is, indented on the left, single-spaced, and without quotation marks. Example:**

It is remarkable how the famine in the Ukraine took place without much attention being paid in the Western world. Of course, the Soviet authorities tried to conceal the facts; and as one writer has noted,

they were abetted by many Westerners who for one reason or another wished to deceive or be deceived. And even when the facts, or some of them percolated in a general way into the Western mind, there were Soviet formulae which tended to justify or at least excuse them. (Conquest, 1986: 5)

3. **To paraphrase the work of another means to present the same train of thought and evidence, but in your own words. Any time you paraphrase, you must include a note or reference to the source. A common mistake is to break up an author's words and rearrange them slightly, passing them off as your own. This is wrong, even if you include a note or reference to the source. To do this for more than a few words is to commit plagiarism.**

Below are three passages. The first is an excerpt from Robert Conquest, The Harvest of Sorrows: Soviet Collectivization and the Terror-Famine (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986), p. 5. The second is an improper paraphrase of the passage that would be considered plagiarism by your instructors. The third is a proper paraphrase which is a perfectly legitimate way of reporting what you have read.

Source

The Ukraine, too, does not declare itself as a nation in Western consciousness as Poland or Hungary or even Lithuania do. In modern times it had a precarious and interrupted independence for only a few years. It has appeared on our maps for two centuries as merely part of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. (Conquest, 1986: 5)

Plagiarism

The Ukraine does not declare itself to be a nation in the Western mind like Poland, Hungary, or Lithuania. In modern times it was independent for just a few years. It was visible on maps for two hundred years as part of the Russian Empire or Soviet Union. (Conquest, 1986: 5)

Paraphrase

The Western world has never seen the Ukraine as a true nation like Poland. The Ukraine was only briefly independent at the end of World War I, and we are not used to seeing it indicated on maps as a sovereign state. (Conquest, 1986: 5)

If you look carefully at the improper paraphrase, you will see that it never takes more than four words in a row from the original source. Nonetheless, it amounts to plagiarism because it is a copy in all important respects, not just of the thought, but of the words of the original. The plagiarist has tinkered with the wording, but he has not written something of his own. The proper paraphrase is also dependent on Conquest's book for the thought it expresses, but that thought has been expressed in the second writer's own words. This would be an acceptable piece of student writing as long as you provide a note or reference to the source.

To avoid plagiarism by improper paraphrase, do not compose with your sources in front of your eyes, unless you are making a direct quotation. The words of another author have an almost hypnotic effect on our thought, making it hard for us to express ourselves in our own way. Read the source, mark it up, take notes, whatever--then put these materials aside and find your own way to say what you mean.

Why should we be so concerned about this subject? For one thing, writing is hard work, and authors have invested a great deal of time and effort in their publications. To pass off their work as yours is certainly unfair to them. But there is another reason of perhaps more personal importance to you. Like skating and skiing, research and writing are skills that you can acquire only by doing. You cannot learn to ski by reading magazines, even if you cut out pictures and paste them in a scrapbook. You have to get on the slopes, fall down, get up, and try again. Similarly, if you are going to learn the art of research and writing, you have to do your own work, make your own mistakes, and learn from experience. Like a ski instructor, your political science professor can help you learn faster, but only if you are trying.

9. Drafting

We deliberately entitled this section "drafting" rather than "writing" to emphasize that writing is something to be done in stages. Drafting is an essential stage, but far from

the whole job. It will not produce good results unless it is preceded by thought and organization and followed by rewriting and proof-reading.

If you follow this multi-stage method, you should find drafting much easier. The words will flow faster because you have already done the important thinking when you made your outline, and you don't have to worry about style or grammar because you will correct these things when you rewrite. The purpose of drafting is to get a rough formulation of your ideas on paper, and you should approach it in that spirit. Don't worry about getting it just right; that only produces writer's block. There will be time for polishing it later.

One thing to remember about drafting is that the introduction to a paper is often the hardest part to write because you are not yet sure of what you are going to say. You don't have to write the introduction first; in fact, you don't have to write the sections of your paper in any particular order. After doing your outline, some sections of the paper may be clearer in your mind than others. You can start wherever you like.

The important thing is to get going. Nothing is more demoralizing than staring at a blank sheet of paper. Start writing a section about which you feel fairly confident and let the ideas spill out. Getting something, anything, on paper will give you confidence that you can finish the job. This is particularly important if you are having trouble with your overall outline.

We strongly recommend that you use a word processor if at all possible. Some of you may own one or at least have easy access to one owned by a member of your family. If not, the university offers many inexpensive possibilities. You can use the microcomputer labs on the fifth floor of the Social Sciences Tower or in Scurfield Hall, or you can learn to use the university's mainframe system. Hundreds of terminals tied to it are available at many points on campus.¹

¹At the time of writing, Academic Computing Services (ACS) charges students a flat fee of \$25 per term for a text-editing account using the mainframe computer. The microcomputer lab on the fifth floor of Social

Using a word processor has the potential to improve your writing many times over. Revisions and corrections, instead of being a nightmare of retyping, become simple to do. You can go over your material repeatedly until you are satisfied with it. The system takes care of margins, notes, and other tricky aspects of typing, leaving you free to concentrate on what you want to say.

Quite apart from these immediate benefits, word-processing is now an essential skill for anyone expecting a professional or managerial career, and you may as well acquire it as early as possible.

10. Rewriting and presentation

It has been said that "there is no such thing as good writing; only good rewriting," and that "what is written without effort . . . is read without pleasure." Yet students generally do not do enough rewriting, probably because they do not leave enough time. If you can schedule your work so as to leave time for rewriting, you will give yourself a big advantage.

If you have followed our advice on drafting, you will have written fairly quickly and will have made some errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. You can correct these at the same time as you rewrite to improve your style. Here are a few things to remember about rewriting.

- Strive for a simple, direct, and natural style. It is a curious fact that many students write better on exams, when they are pressed for time, than they do on papers prepared at home. You can ruin your style by trying too hard to make it impressive. Avoid being pretentious, that is, showing off. Do not use unusual words unless you are certain you know what they mean and how to spell them.

- It is essential to have a dictionary and a manual of style, and to consult them when you are unsure of usage; but a thesaurus, or dictionary of synonyms, is dangerous unless you already have a large vocabulary. Very few words are completely synonymous. Substituting freely out of a thesaurus can make your writing appear ridiculous.
- You will probably do more cutting than adding of words. Most of us use too many words, particularly adjectives and adverbs, when we first try to express something. Cut out the unnecessary words when you edit. Ask yourself if each word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph contributes anything to the meaning of the paper. If not, delete it.
- Keep your sentences short. Modern English usage increasingly favours clarity and directness of expression. As a rule of thumb, you should write few sentences that are more than three lines long. Think of the heading in the ads section of the Gauntlet: "Three lines free."
- It is all right to ask someone else to read over your work and make suggestions for improvement, as long as you do the rewriting yourself. Another reader can often see problems that are invisible to you because you are too close to the draft.
- Reading your work aloud to yourself can also be useful. If it sounds awkward to your ear, or is hard to follow, it needs further revision.
- Each assignment should carry a separate title page containing your name and ID number, the title of the essay, the course number, and the date. A table of contents is not necessary except in longer works, such as an honours thesis.
- You will find rewriting much easier if you are able to work at a word processor. If not, you should at least finish off your rewriting by typing the paper. University rules allow you to submit assignments in longhand, but

you will obtain a more professional appearance by typing. Penmanship is not stressed in today's educational system, and many people have handwriting that is not easy to read. Picture yourself as an instructor trying to read thirty or forty handwritten essays under pressure of time.

- Whether you type or write longhand, use only one side of the page, double-space between lines, and leave margins of at least an inch on all sides of the page. There must be space for the instructor to write comments.
- Ensure that all pages are numbered. This makes it much easier for the instructor to make specific comments about the paper. Remember that most word-processing systems require a special pagination command at the end of composition.

11. Citations

An essential part of scholarship in all fields is to cite the sources where you found your information. The discovery of knowledge is a collective enterprise, to which countless researchers make a contribution. None of us can do worthwhile work without relying on the efforts of others. Thus all serious writers bear the responsibility for indicating the intellectual terrain they have traversed.

Although there are a number of ways of doing this, two approaches are common in the social sciences, including political science. Unless the instructor gives explicit directions about how citations are to be done, you may use either of the systems described here.

The first method, known as the APA (American Psychological Association) system, uses parenthetical references incorporated into the text. The parentheses contain only the author's(s') last name(s), date of publication, and page number(s); the rest of the bibliographical information is given in the list of references at the end of the paper. Page

numbers are included only if you are referencing a direct quotation or paraphrase; they are omitted if you are merely referring to a work in its entirety. Below is an example:

According to a recent study, patronage is less openly discussed in Canada now than it was a hundred years ago. (Simpson, 1988: 16)

If you mention the author's name and/or the date of publication in your text, you should omit that information from the parenthetical reference. E. g.,

Jeffrey Simpson argues that Pierre Trudeau came to use patronage without restraint, even though he had severely criticized patronage before entering politics. (1988: 331-354)

Jeffrey Simpson wrote in 1988: "There is probably less frank discussion of patronage today than fifty or a hundred years ago." (16)

The APA system works smoothly when your sources consist of books and articles, but it works less well when you are citing a variety of materials such as statutes, law reports, newspapers, archival documents, interviews, etc. You should also be able to use the other main method of citation, known as the MLA (Modern Languages Association) system.

It depends on numbered notes, placed either at the bottom of each page (footnotes) or gathered at the end of the paper (endnotes). Either footnotes or endnotes are acceptable in our Department. Endnotes are definitely easier if you are using a typewriter, but most word-processing software will produce footnotes without effort, and they are a little easier for the reader to consult. If you wish to use footnotes rather than endnotes, it is better to number them consecutively throughout the paper than to start again from 1 on each page.

Below are footnote formats for typical situations. Follow the models as closely as you can.

Book

1. Jeffrey Simpson, Spoils of Power: The Politics of Patronage (Toronto: Collins, 1988), p. 16.

Journal Article

2. Richard Simeon and David Elkins, "Regional Political Cultures," Canadian Journal of Political Science, 7 (1974), p. 3.

Essay in an Edited Book

3. Leslie A. Pal, "Hands at the Helm? Leadership and Public Policy," in Leslie A. Pal and David Taras, eds., Prime Ministers and Premiers: Political Leadership and Public Policy in Canada (Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1988), pp. 19-29.

Newspaper

4. Claudia Cattaneo, "Centre's OK may spark tussle," The Calgary Herald, February 23, 1989, p. B1. [Many newspaper stories do not print the writer's name or "byline". In such cases, you should give the title or headline of the piece you wish to cite.]

Source Cited in Another Source

5. Letter of Louis Riel to Bishop J. V. Grandin, September 7, 1884, cited in Thomas Flanagan, Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983), p. 90.

Thesis

6. Dennis Groh, The Political Thought of Ernest Manning (M. A. thesis, University of Calgary, Political Science, 1971), p. 32.

The above represent the main types of notes that you will have to write. Any good manual of style will contain examples of less frequent types. Statutes, law reports, government documents, and unpublished manuscripts present special problems that will be explained in any course where you are expected to use these materials.

12. Bibliography

Unless you have been directed to use only one source, as in writing a book review, everything you submit should contain a bibliography, that is, a list of sources at the end of the paper. This can be either a list of all sources cited in the paper or a list of all sources consulted during the research. You can specify the nature of your bibliography in the heading, e. g., "Bibliography of Works Consulted," or "List of Works Cited."

In presenting a bibliography of works consulted, students are sometimes tempted to pad the list by adding titles of works they have not actually read but have only seen mentioned in their reading. This is not only dishonest, it is likely to be self-defeating. An instructor who sees this impressive list at the back of your paper will naturally wonder why these works are not cited in the text. Also, instructors, since they are familiar with the literature of the fields they teach, will notice if your paper shows no intellectual influence of the books and articles you claim to have read.

A bibliography should always be put in the alphabetical order of the authors' last names. Beyond that, there are slightly different formats to follow depending on whether you use APA or MLA style for references in the paper. The chief difference is that the APA style, because it gives prominence to publication date in the citations, demands that

the date be featured prominently in the bibliography entry. Below are examples of the two formats. Note that it is customary to use “hanging indents” in a bibliography; i. e., all lines except the first are indented.

APA Style

Simeon, Richard, and Elkins, David. (1974). Regional Political Cultures. Canadian Journal of Political Science, 7, 1-25.

Simpson, Jeffrey. (1988). Spoils of Power: The Politics of Patronage. Toronto: Collins.

MLA Style

Simeon, Richard, and Elkins, David. “Regional Political Cultures.” Canadian Journal of Political Science, 7 (1974), 1-25.

Simpson, Jeffrey. Spoils of Power: The Politics of Patronage. Toronto: Collins, 1988.

As an undergraduate student, most of your term papers will be based on books and articles, and your bibliography will consist of such items. If, in a particular course, you use other kinds of sources, such as newspapers, statutes, or law reports, ask your instructor how to cite them. It is common to segregate such materials in a bibliography under headings such “Newspapers Consulted” or “Table of Cases.”

13. Proof-reading

This final stage of writing a paper is often overlooked by students, probably from lack of time. But it is very important, and it can have a pronounced effect on the grades you receive for your work. Any writer has a responsibility to look over his work for mistakes of spelling, punctuation, and grammar, as well as pure typographical errors. Papers that have not been checked in this way are irritating to read, sometimes even difficult to comprehend. Instructors often have to work through large numbers of student

assignments in a short period of time. Anything that annoys and makes the reader think the student does not care about his own work is likely to have a negative influence on the mark.

Think about it this way. Term papers can demand a lot of work. You can easily spend 30 or 40 hours researching and writing a major paper, and the grade on this paper may make up as much as 50% of your grade for the course. To proof-read it carefully and make corrections should not take more than about two hours. No two-hour period of time will ever have as much beneficial impact on your mark as the time you spend proof-reading.

- Proof-reading is your responsibility. Even if you hire a professional typist, you cannot assume that everything will be done for you. The typist may have trouble reading your handwriting and will probably not know the correct spelling of proper names and technical terms.
- You must leave time for proof-reading. A lapse of even a couple of days between typing and proof-reading will help enormously in allowing you to spot errors. If you are up late typing your paper the night before it is due, you will not be able to correct it effectively.
- It is legitimate to ask someone else to read your work for you, to point out stylistic, grammatical, and typographical errors. Professional authors routinely ask others to read drafts of what they write. There is nothing wrong with this as long as you make your own decisions about how to correct and improve your text.
- Use a word processor if at all possible. Corrections that would take hours of retyping can be done in a few minutes on a word processor. As noted earlier, the University of Calgary offers students the opportunity to do word-processing inexpensively on the mainframe system as well as in

several microcomputer labs on campus. A bonus is that most word processing systems offer a spelling-check capability.

- Keep a copy of your paper after you hand it in. Although it does not happen often, instructors occasionally lose or misplace assignments during the process of grading. Retaining a copy will dispel any suspicion that you might have failed to hand in a paper that has gone missing.

14. Post mortem

Instructors in the Political Science Department, together with the teaching assistants and markers who are assigned to help them, try to read your papers carefully and to make helpful written comments. Sometimes the assignments are returned while the course is still in session, but other times the marking cannot be completed until classes are over. In such cases, the graded papers will be placed in the general Department office for you to pick up. No matter when you get your paper back, we hope you will study the comments carefully and try to act on them in future assignments, in the same course or in others. You should never hesitate to see an instructor to discuss your paper. One of the most rewarding parts of our job is to help students who are making an extra effort to improve their performance, and we are glad to spend whatever time it takes.

At the back of this handbook is a copy of the "Detailed Writing Code" used by the Effective Writing Service of the University of Calgary. This document contains examples of the most common errors of English style together with advice on how to avoid them. Most of your political science instructors will not follow the marking code exactly (it is too detailed to remember unless one uses it all the time, as the instructors in Effective Writing do); but with a little effort, you will normally be able to translate their comments about your writing style into the terms of the marking code. Use this document as a quick way to interpret comments that you may not understand at first glance.

Behind the "Detailed Writing Code" is a whimsical list of common writing errors. If you can figure out what is wrong with each sentence, you will be well on your way to writing grammatically correct English. Of course, neither appendix can replace a book-length manual of English style. You should acquire one and keep it for reference, just as you would a dictionary.

The University Bookstore stocks a large variety of style manuals. Two short and inexpensive books that might be particularly useful to you as a university student are

Canada, Department of the Secretary of State. The Canadian Style: A Guide to Writing and Editing. Toronto: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1985.

Turabian, Kate L. A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. 5th ed.

If you have special problems with spelling, grammar, or punctuation, you may want to invest in one of the inexpensive self-teaching manuals that target these aspects of style. Again, the Bookstore carries a wide selection.

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C (Content)
ST (Structure/Organization)
PA (Paragraphing)
SE (Sentences)

GR (Grammar)
W (Word Use)
SP (Spelling)
PU (Punctuation)

To The Student:

This document is designed to provide you with a basic guide to understanding problems that may appear in your written assignments. You don't need to read it from start to finish; rather, your instructor will place the codes on your assignments as specific problems occur and you can look up only the explanations you need.

The explanations are not designed to be comprehensive; they merely point out the most obvious features of the problems they describe. If you are not sure how a particular explanation applies to your work, or how to revise your work to eliminate the problem, please don't just guess. Get more detailed information, either by looking up the problem in a more comprehensive textbook or by asking an instructor.

CONTENT (C)

- C-1. **INSUFFICIENT LENGTH.** Be sure that your essay is as long as requested: an essay that is a great deal shorter than the suggested length may not demonstrate an ability to build a sustained argument. See also C-2 below.
- C-2. **LACK OF SUBSTANCE.**
- C-2a. **Thin Content.** Be sure that your essay is not only as long as requested, but also adequately developed, not just padded. Add supporting details and specific examples. Answer implied questions such as "how" and "why." Define terms where necessary (see PA-3). Remember that you can develop and rewrite paragraphs at the beginning and in the middle of your essay; resist the urge to tack material onto the end in an attempt to stretch an essay to the required length.
- C-2b. **Repetition.** Do not introduce material that needlessly repeats material you've already introduced. When revising your first draft, don't confine yourself to tinkering with minor details; be prepared to move or eliminate large blocks of material to correct such problems as repetition.
- C-3. **LOGIC.** In general, be sure that you think through all statements to be sure that they are logically sound given the facts available to you.
- C-3a. **Inappropriate Generalization.** Avoid making unsupported (or unsupportable) statements such as Children who watch violent television programs become criminals. If you cannot produce facts and figures to support your statements, at least provide a carefully thought-out argument. Consider using qualifiers such as many, most, some, possibly, and maybe.
- C-3b. **Unsuitable Method of Argument.** Do not substitute shrill name-calling or emotionalism for reasoned argument. Be particularly careful not to try to prove a point simply by using the emotional connotations of loaded words such as freedom, democracy, communism and fascist. Negative Example: This plan is bad because it is fascist.
- C-3c. **False Analogy.** Analogy can be a useful way to illustrate a point, but it usually cannot be used to prove it. Beware of assuming that because two things are alike in some ways they are alike in all. Negative Example: You must have a license to drive a car, so you should have to have one to drink alcohol.

- C-3d. Self Contradiction. Proofread carefully for statements that contradict, or appear to contradict, earlier statements. Negative Example: Educational freedom is essential. However, curriculum must be carefully controlled. Often such apparent contradictions can be resolved by explaining further. (What precisely is meant by "educational freedom" in the previous example?)
- C-3e. Circular Argument. Be careful not to prove a point by using as evidence the point that you are still trying to prove. Negative Example: Capital punishment is bad because it is a detriment to society.
- C-4. OFF TOPIC. Isolated passages whose relevance is not clear may be classed as structural errors (ST-4). However, if your entire essay, or a significant portion of it, does not relate clearly to the topic assigned, the content of the essay can be faulted. Re-read the assigned topic carefully before re-reading your first draft.
- C-5. INADEQUATE OR INAPPROPRIATE SENSE OF AUDIENCE.
- C-5a. Inappropriate Writing Strategy. Be sure that the approach you take is appropriate to the situation. If asked for an analytical report, do not provide large stretches of personal narrative or vice versa. When in doubt, ask for guidance from the person who assigned the essay.
- C-5b. Inappropriate Tone. An essay certainly need not be stuffy and pedantic; however, you should normally avoid being extremely breezy and chatty in an essay unless an informal or personal essay is appropriate to a specific assignment. You should also avoid writing an extremely technical or specialized essay for a general audience. Especially to be avoided are abrupt and jarring shifts in tone.

STRUCTURE/ORGANIZATION (ST)

- ST-1. NO OR UNCLEAR THESIS. It is not always necessary to state your thesis at the beginning of your essay, but an essay must have a point that the reader can discern.
- ST-2. POOR INTRODUCTION.
- ST-2a. Misleading Introduction. Avoid constructing an introduction that leads the reader to expect an essay quite different from the one you have written.

- ST-2b. Underdeveloped Introduction. An introduction may be very brief, and may suggest ideas that are not developed until later in the essay. However, it should not mystify the reader by making statements that do not make sense until he has read substantially further.
- ST-2c. Introduction Not Self-Explanatory. Your essay should be understandable by itself, without reference, for example, to a test question or your title. Do not, for instance, begin with a statement such as Yes, I agree, or Everyone is against it. Such statements force the reader to look outside your essay for an explanation.
- ST-2d. Poorly Focussed Introduction. Make certain that the reader can see that the material in your introduction is more than a random collection of facts. It should be clear that all of the material is relevant, not just to a general topic, but also to a specific argument.
- ST-2e. "Overture" Introduction. One type of introduction mentions, in order, each of the points that will be developed in succeeding paragraphs. Unskillfully used, such an introduction may lead to an extremely repetitious essay, especially if the essay is short. In general, avoid repeating sentences from the introduction word-for-word in the body. Instead, refer briefly to the concepts established in the introduction and develop from there.
- ST-3. POOR MIDDLE DEVELOPMENT. Use a clear pattern of organization. Consider such strategies as stating a thesis and then giving a number of supporting arguments; stating a problem and then examining one or more possible solutions to it; stating a course of action and weighing its advantages and disadvantages; or stating and then refuting a series of arguments against your thesis. There are many acceptable patterns; just be sure that the one you choose suits your material, groups related ideas together, and gives your readers the information they need to understand every point as they come to it.
- ST-4. PASSAGE NOT CLEARLY RELATED TO THESIS. It is not enough that all your ideas are relevant to your general subject. The reader must understand how they clarify and support your argument.
- ST-5. POOR TRANSITIONS BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS. The connections between paragraphs are often obvious simply because the ideas are clearly connected. However, if you go to a completely new aspect of your topic or change direction (for instance, from the "advantages" to the "disadvantages" side of an argument), you may need to give your reader signals. (See also PA-5c)
- ST-6. POOR OR NO CONCLUSION. Your conclusion does not necessarily have to summarize your entire essay; rather, it should reinforce the point you are making in your essay. If you have trouble concluding without repeating yourself, perhaps you have said too much in the introduction. Don't strive too hard for a dramatic closing unless one suggests itself obviously: too often such "clinchers" add little to the essay. Also, beware of introducing at the end of your essay a totally new point that will confuse or irritate readers if it is not developed.

PARAGRAPHING (PA)

- PA-1. NO NEW PARAGRAPH NEEDED. Avoid breaking paragraphs where there is no natural division in the thought. Successions of extremely short paragraphs tend to fragment ideas more than is usually desirable in formal essays; one-sentence paragraphs in particular should be avoided except for special rhetorical effects such as transition or emphasis.

PA-2. NEW PARAGRAPH NEEDED. There is no rule determining how long a paragraph should be; however, in a short paper you should normally divide your argument into fairly small units (a good general guideline is three to seven sentences).

PA-3. POORLY DEVELOPED PARAGRAPH.

PA-3a. Underdeveloped Ideas. Avoid making vague or abstract statements without supporting details. A well-developed paragraph provides enough details and illustrations to enable the reader to clearly understand and accept the paragraph's central point. Negative Example: People are the only ones who know what is right for them. As a result, individual initiative and free enterprise are taking on some of their former meaning, at least for some people. This passage is vague and underdeveloped in a number of ways. Who are the "people" referred to in the first sentence? Are they the same "people" as those referred to in the second sentence? What does "right" mean? Does it mean morally right, economically right, or just that something is the right size? How is the second sentence a "result" of the first? What was the "former meaning" of initiative and free enterprise? And so on.

PA-3b. Elliptical Paragraph (Omission of Logical Steps). Do not omit steps in your argument that seem obvious to you but which may not to your reader. Negative Example: Television should be closely regulated. After all, it is more popular than radio. Such statements may appear to be total nonsense unless you explain the connections between the ideas.

PA-3c. Extended Definition Needed. It is sometimes necessary or useful to discuss terms which are not difficult to understand in general, but which mean different things to different people. By expanding on what meaning you intend by such terms as basic education, democracy, justice, or social adjustment, you can often clarify what might otherwise be a confusing or insubstantial paragraph. For example, in the following passage from The American Myth of Success, Richard Weiss specifies what he means by myth:

I do not use the word "myth" to imply something entirely false. Rather, I mean it to connote a complex of profoundly held attitudes and values which condition the way men view the world and understand their experience.

PA-4. POOR UNITY OR ORDER.

PA-4a. Poor Unity. A paragraph should have a topic or organizing idea (whether or not it is expressed in an explicit topic sentence), and should contain no material that is not relevant to that topic.

PA-4b. "Hook" Structure. In general, resist the temptation to declare a new topic at the end of one paragraph and develop it in the next; this way of connecting paragraphs ("hook" structure) can destroy paragraph unity if not used expertly. Instead, you should generally declare a new topic at the beginning of the paragraph in which it will be developed.

PA-4c. Poor Order of Sentences. Make sure your sentences are in a logical order. Do not bury a general statement in the middle of a series of more specific statements that amplify it: place it first or last. Remember the reader's needs: what does he need to know next to understand what you're saying?

PA-5. POOR COHERENCE.

PA-5a. Poor Coherence (In General). It is not enough that every sentence in a paragraph bears in some way or

other on the topic or organizing idea (see PA-4a). It must be clear to the reader how each sentence follows from the one before it in a line of argument.

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PA-5b. Shifts. Avoid unnecessary shifts of person, number, tense, mood and voice not only within sentences (see SE-9 and SE-10) but also from one sentence to another: such shifts can impair coherence.

PA-5c. Transitions. You can help your reader follow your train of thought by using transitional signals such as furthermore, in addition, therefore, for example, likewise, on the other hand, and however. Make sure, however, that you use these transitions to signal relationships that really do exist. Don't for instance, use therefore to introduce a contrasting statement; for this job you need however.

SENTENCES (SE)

SE-1. SENTENCE FRAGMENT. Make sure that any group of words that is punctuated as a sentence contains an independent clause--a subject and a finite verb.

SE-1a. Misplaced Period. Avoid creating a sentence fragment by inserting a period in the middle of what would otherwise be a complete sentence. Negative Examples: This is a difficult problem. Although it is not impossible to solve. Capital punishment should be abolished. The reason being that it is ineffective. To correct such fragments, simply link the sentences, using an appropriate punctuation mark as necessary. (See Comma, Colon, Dash).

SE-1b. Incomplete Sentence. Some incomplete sentences cannot be combined with adjoining sentences. Negative Example: An underdeveloped country, in which many are uneducated. We must help such countries as much as we can. Such incomplete sentences must be completely re-thought and re-written.

SE-2. COMMA SPLICE. (Also known as Comma Fault or Run-on). Do not use a comma to join two independent clauses (clauses which could stand as separate sentences). Negative Example: We could make better use of our land, parks and recreation areas could be set aside. Correct by changing the comma to a period, colon or semicolon (see Punctuation) or by adding a co-ordinating conjunction. Note: Even if a conjunctive adverb such as however, therefore, or likewise is placed between the clauses, a comma is still insufficient punctuation. (See Pu-2b.)

SE-3. FUSED SENTENCES. Do not run two independent clauses together. Negative Example: He had forgotten how empty the prairies are after two years in Toronto he had grown used to skyscrapers. Like a comma splice, a fused sentence should be corrected by adding a period, colon, semicolon or co-ordinating conjunction.

SE-4. OVERLOADED SENTENCE.

SE-4a. Overloaded Grammatical Structure. If well-constructed, a sentence may be quite long without being overloaded. However, if a long series of clauses and phrases is clumsily strung together, the result can be almost unreadable. Negative Example: Meanwhile the poor student, who couldn't keep up the grades (possibly because of the way courses are taught) drops out (because of this and the money [or lack of] for tuition), and gets a job in a trade he learns through the knowledge passed to him on the job, or goes on welfare.

SE-4b. Too Many Ideas. A fairly short sentence may be

overloaded if it contains more ideas than can be clearly expressed in the space of a few words. Often the ideas need expanding. A sentence such as the one that that follows should probably be made into two or three sentences. Negative Example: Students should realize that they are unique, each starting from a different point, and that they may end up with a career that wasn't pre-planned.

SE-5. MIXED CONSTRUCTION.

SE-5a. General Mixed Constructions. Avoid shifting from one sentence pattern to another in mid-sentence; that is, don't tack on the hind end of a dog to the front end of a cat. For example, the sentence By exercising makes you fit needs to be rewritten as By exercising, you can become fit or Exercising makes you fit.

SE-5b. The "This-is-when" Construction. When used as a linking verb, "is" must join two nouns, not a noun and a "when" clause. Negative Example: A good day is when you get more money back from the coffee machine than you put in. Here the writer could say A good day is one on which...

SE-5c. The "Reason-is-because" Construction. Though common in speech, the reason is because is not grammatically correct. In this construction is is a verb of definition, and nouns must be defined in terms of other nouns. In other words, the reason, a noun, must be defined by another word or group of words that functions as a noun. A because clause doesn't work as a noun. The problem can usually be solved by deleting the reason is or changing the because clause to a that clause. For example, The reason I am living at home is because I want to save money could be rewritten as I am living at home because I want to save money or as The reason I am living at home is that I want to save money.

Another way to think about such sentences is in terms of meaning. The reason is and because have very similar meanings; therefore, it is redundant to use both terms in the same sentence.

SE-5d. Doubled Preposition. Don't use a construction such as in which or to whom and then let the preposition reappear at the end of the sentence. Negative Examples: To whom do I talk to? In which country was he born in? Eliminate one or the other preposition.

SE-6. FAULTY PARALLELISM. Words, phrases or clauses that form a series and are alike in function should be stated in the same grammatical form. Negative Example: She likes swimming, cooking, and to play squash. Instead, say She likes swimming, cooking and playing squash. Sometimes this fault can be very confusing. Negative Example: Britain is in economic trouble because it is no longer a major power and the changed values of the young people. (Correction: ...because it is no longer a major power and because the values of the young people have changed.)

SE-7. DANGLING MODIFIER. Modifying words and phrases should modify a word that is directly stated in the sentence; otherwise the sentence can read as nonsense. Negative Example: Swimming across the lake, the sun set. Modifiers also dangle when the implied subject of one part of the sentence is different from the subject of the other part. Negative Example: Denied this love, the reaction of the dog can be harmful. (Who would deny love to a reaction? The intended subject of denied is dog, but that word is buried in a phrase.)

SE-8. MISPLACEMENT OF SENTENCE ELEMENTS.

SE-8a. Misplaced Modifier. Do not place modifiers in positions that make them seem to modify something

other than what you intend. Negative Example: Jones became seriously ill after he married and died. (It is difficult to become ill after you are dead.)
Correction: After he married, Jones became seriously ill and died. Adverbs can be particularly tricky. Try inserting only in each of the indicated places in this sentence: "The vicar gave the monkey a banana."

SE-8b. Misplaced Example. Don't tack examples onto the end of a sentence when the idea being illustrated is elsewhere. Negative Example: Economic problems are difficult to cope with such as inflation and unemployment. (Correction: Economic problems such as inflation and unemployment are difficult to cope with.)

SE-9. SHIFT OF NUMBER OR PERSON.

SE-9a. Shift of Number. Unless required by context, avoid shifting from singular to plural or vice versa. Negative Example: A student often feels confused on his first day of class. But by the end of September, most students know their way around.

SE-9b. Shift of Person. Unless required by context, avoid shifting between first person (I, we), second person (you) and third person (one, he or she, they, etc.). Negative Example: When one has good health, you shouldn't worry about being poor.

SE-10. SHIFT OF TENSE, MOOD OR VOICE.

SE-10a Shift of Tense. Unless required by context, do not shift between past, present, and future tenses. Negative Example: Housing prices will skyrocket and many people are left without places to stay.

SE-10b Shift of Mood. As a grammatical term, "mood" refers to changes in verb form that indicate how the action is viewed by the speaker: as a statement (indicative), a command (imperative), or a hypothetical condition or wish (subjunctive, example: If I were you.) Avoid unnecessary shifts in mood. Negative Example: Review your notes thoroughly (command), and then you should get a good sleep (statement).

SE-10c Shift of Voice. "Active voice" expresses action directly (example: The cat ate the rat); "passive voice" reverses the sentence order without changing the meaning (example: The rat was eaten by the cat). Avoid unnecessary shifts in voice. Negative Example: The committee members disliked each other heartily (active), and their time was wasted in wrangling (passive).

SE-11. OMISSIONS.

SE-11a Omitted Connectives. Connectives, especially that, are often omitted in speech: I thought [that] she had left. In writing, however, such omissions can cause confusion. Negative Example: An advantage to taking part in athletic activities is a person's attitudes and awareness will improve. By placing a that after the is, you can make sure that the reader will not expect that the sentence will read, An advantage to taking part in athletic activities is a person's attitude and awareness.

SE-11b Incomplete Compound Constructions. You can omit duplicated words in compound constructions such as He likes to ski and [to] fish. You cannot do so, however, if different prepositions are required. Negative Example: She was more interested, and in fact better at, skiing than her friend was. (interested at is implied but is incorrect; write more interested in, and in fact better at).

- SE-11c Incomplete Comparisons. Complete all comparisons that are not clearly implied. Negative Examples: The University of Alberta has a better Engineering program. (Better than what?) Our program is like the University of Lethbridge. (A program is like a university? Correct to The University of Lethbridge's).
- SE-12. LACK OF VARIETY. Try to vary your sentence structure to prevent your writing from being repetitious and dull. A series of short, choppy sentences in primer style is particularly offensive, but any sentence structure when used repeatedly will lull the reader to sleep.
- SE-13. ILLOGICAL SENTENCE.
- SE-13a Unclear Logical Connections. Ideas joined by connectives should have a clear and logical relationship. Words such as with, regarding and involves are often particularly vague. Negative Examples: With continued funding, people could be diverted toward the arts. (With does not make clear what is being funded.) The shortage involved a loss of consumer confidence. (Did the shortage cause a loss of consumer confidence or did the loss of consumer confidence cause the shortage?)
- SE-13b No Apparent Logical Connection. Think through your sentences carefully to make sure they make sense as well as satisfy grammatical rules. Negative Examples: Material goods can be the sign of a healthy mind. The opinions of politics, which are actually messages, vary from financial and physical aid through to threats and declarations of war. To correct such sentences you will usually have to rethink what you are trying to say and start again from scratch.
- SE-13c Co-ordination of Logical Unequals. When constructing co-ordinate series ("and" series), avoid introducing items that are subcategories or which simply don't belong. Negative Examples: He studied mathematics, science, chemistry and biology. (chemistry and biology are both sciences). Overcrowding, declining standards, inflation and unemployment are major problems faced by universities. (Inflation and unemployment are not specifically problems of the university; they do not belong in the same series as overcrowding and declining standards).
- SE-13d Illogical Predication. Make sure that the subject of your sentence can be combined appropriately with the verb; the subject must be able to do what the predicate (taken literally) says it does. Negative Examples: Strikes and riots seemingly took the day off. America was founded by the moral fibres of devoted Christians.
- SE-13e Ambiguity. Be careful that you do not construct sentences that can be understood more than one way. Negative Example: As he was driving down a slippery road, he had an accident. (Does as mean while or because?)
- SE-13f Faulty Co-ordination. When you co-ordinate clauses, that is, when you join clauses with and, or, or but, for example, you signal to the reader that the ideas in the clauses are related and of relatively equal importance. Example: Mary likes pistachios, but John hates them. Do not co-ordinate clauses that are unrelated or use a co-ordinating conjunction that signals the wrong relationship. Negative Examples: The Blacksville Theatre Co. has had international respect for years, but Smith was a major figure in this success and took the company on a world tour. It was a sad occasion but everyone looked mournful. (In both examples, what is meant by but is not clear.)

SE-13g Faulty Subordination. The most important information in a sentence should be put in the main clause, less important ideas in subordinate clauses. If you say The road was slippery and we went into the ditch you suggest that the two ideas are equally important. If you say, however, Because the road was slippery, we went into the ditch you tell the reader that your going into the ditch is the more important information--as it no doubt is.

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Subordinate conjunctions--because, although, unless, while, where, and so on--express a great many relationships. Be sure that the one you choose expresses the relationship you want it to. Negative Examples: Susan studied hard for her final exams although it was very important that she do well on them. Here you need the subordinating conjunction because or as.

GRAMMAR (GR)

GR-1. IDIOMATIC GRAMMATICAL CONSTRUCTIONS. Some aspects of grammar either are not governed by rules, or are governed by rules so complex that they seem not to exist. Such features of the language must simply be memorized. Most handbooks, especially those aimed at speakers of English as a second language, contain lists that can be very helpful.

GR-1a. Articles. Make sure that all nouns are accompanied by the appropriate articles, or no article, as required. Many non-count nouns (nouns you cannot enumerate one-by-one) are not preceded by articles. Example: Do I have permission to leave early? I'm cooking beef tonight, and I want to get started right away. When the precedes a non-count noun, it usually signifies that the noun is specified in some way. Example: He has the maturity that is required for the job, but does he have the energy? Count nouns (those you can count), however, are more often preceded by articles. Example: There is a big dog, a cat, and a budgie in the pet store. I would like to buy the dog, but I don't think the neighbours would like it. I'll buy the budgie. (Again, the is used when the person or thing is specified in some way.)

GR-1b. Prepositions. Make sure that you use prepositions (to, for, at, in, into, etc.) appropriately. Example: He walked out of his house, down the street, and into the building. He went into his office, sat down at his desk, and began to work on his paper.

GR-1c. Plurals. Pluralize nouns when, and only when, required by the sense of the sentence. When used in certain senses, many nouns cannot be pluralized. Non-count nouns are usually not pluralized. Examples: water, beef, art, information, evidence, courage, determination, coal, gold, silver.

GR-1d. Other Idiomatic Constructions. Many other grammatical constructions are idiomatic. If they are used wrongly, the error is not a violation of a simple rule; the only useful comment that can usually be made is simply that "English speakers don't say it that way." Negative Example: Neither side will make an initiative. (Correction: take the initiative.)

GR-2. SYNTAX. Make sure that the word order in your sentences is correct and not unnecessarily awkward. Negative Example: What means this word? (Correction: What does this word mean?)

GR-3. USAGE. Some constructions may be common in informal usage but not acceptable in formal written English. Negative Example: There are less cars on the road than there were yesterday. (Less should refer to uncountable nouns such as air or money. Fewer should be used for countable nouns such as cars.) Usage

guides (often found in composition texts) will help you avoid such common but not strictly acceptable constructions.

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GR-4. CASE

GR-4a. Subjective and Objective Case. Some personal pronouns change form depending on whether they are used as subjects or objects. I, he, she, we, they, and who are used only as subjects; me, him, her, us, them, and whom are used only as objects of a verb or objects of a preposition. Negative Example: He gave the money to Martin and I. Eliminate Martin and you will hear that "I" is not the pronoun you want. You wouldn't say He gave the money to I. Avoid the false correctness of phrases such as between you and I; it is conventional to say between you and me. Note: In informal English, who is often used as either subject or object.

GR-4b. Possessive Case. Don't forget to add 's to a noun when forming the possessive case. Negative Example: his friends address. (Correction: friend's). (See SP-2a.)

GR-5. VERB FORM.

GR-5a. Context. Do not use a verb form that is not appropriate to the context. Negative Example: She is in Calgary since June. (Correction: has been). If she would have gone, she would have seen him. (Correction: If she had gone...).

GR-5b. Correctness. Do not use a verb that is not a correct English form. Be particularly careful with unstressed verb endings and irregular verbs. Negative Examples: He was suppose to come at ten. (Correction: supposed to). She could have came earlier. (Correction: could have come).

GR-6. FAULTY REFERENCE.

GR-6a. Faulty or Absent Back Reference. If you use a word that appears to refer back to an idea introduced earlier in your essay, be sure that the earlier idea is clearly expressed and not simply implied. Negative Example: The National Parks are used for recreation. These facilities are destroying the parks' natural beauty. (If these facilities is to make sense, it must refer to an earlier phrase such as recreational facilities.)

GR-6b. Pronoun Reference. Avoid using a pronoun which does not refer clearly to a specific noun, either because there is more than one noun it can refer to or because the noun it refers to (called the antecedent) is too far back in your essay. Negative Example: The last time John saw his father he was sick. NOTE: Do not go to the opposite extreme and avoid using pronouns altogether. This practice can cause repetitious diction (see W-4). Simply reword to make sure that your pronoun references are clear.

GR-6c. Vague "this" or "which". Be especially careful not to use this and which to refer vaguely to an idea that is not precisely stated. Negative Example: When learning at home, one can be interrupted. This is an essential part of learning because of the need for complete concentration. (Not being interrupted is an essential part of learning but this idea does not appear in the first sentence.)

GR-6d. Agreement of Demonstratives. Don't use a plural demonstrative adjective such as these or those to refer to a singular noun. Negative Examples: these kind of cars, those type of shoes. Either make the demonstrative singular or make the noun plural.

GR-6e. Pronoun Agreement. Don't use a plural pronoun to refer to a singular antecedent or vice versa.

Negative Example: A student should study their timetable carefully. Note: To get around the apparent sexism of his and the awkwardness of his or her, their is often used as if it were a neuter singular pronoun, especially in informal writing or speech. Since this strategy is still not fully accepted in formal writing, it is often better to avoid the problem altogether by using the plural throughout. Instead of Everyone put down their books, try All students put down their books.

GR-7. SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT. Don't use a plural verb with a singular subject or vice-versa. Negative Example: The size of these books make them hard to read. (The subject is size, not books, so the verb should be makes.) Note: Two subjects joined by and are treated as plural; joined by or, they are treated as singular. If one subject is plural and the other singular, make the verb agree with the nearest one. Example: Either the manager or the employees are wrong.

GR-8. WRONG PART OF SPEECH.

GR-8a. Adverb/Adjective Confusions. Use an adverb to modify a verb, an adjective or another adverb. Adverbs almost always end in ly; don't omit this ending when required. Examples: a really good show, not a real good show; the cost increased quickly, not the cost increased quick.

GR-8b. Other Confusions Between Parts of Speech. Changes in the endings of words can transform them from one part of speech to another. Make sure you use the part of speech required. Negative Examples: capitalism societies (Correction: capitalist societies); a popular believe (Correction: a popular belief).

GR-8c. Infinitive/Gerund Confusions. In some constructions the infinitive form (the to form) of a verb is required and in others the gerund (-ing) form is required. Take care not to confuse these forms. Negative Examples: We wanted going. (Correction: We wanted to go.) He dislikes to travel. (Correction: He dislikes travelling.)

WORD USE (W)

W-1. WRONG WORD.

W-1a. Wrong Word. Be sure that you know the exact definitions of the words you use. If you can't find a word that exactly fits a context, don't use one that almost fits; recast the sentence entirely to express your meaning without the word you cannot find.

W-1b. Synonyms. Remember that synonyms (words that have similar meanings) often do not have the same connotations. Examples: ignorant/uneducated, skinny/slim.

W-1c. Invented Words. Be certain that the word you use indeed exists. A mistake of this kind often occurs when you use an incorrect prefix (unsimilar instead of dissimilar) or the wrong suffix (understandment instead of understanding). A grossly misspelled word will also appear as an invented word if the reader cannot recognize the intended word.

W-1d. Omnibus Words. Words such as factor, aspect, situation and concept have legitimate uses, but don't use them as all-purpose words to be jammed into a sentence when you can't find the word you really need. Negative Examples: Women should resist concepts they are not responsible for. Another gripe I have against beauty pageants is the beauty aspect.

W-2. TOO MANY WORDS.

W-2a. Padding. Words and phrases such as the use of, in the case of, and in my opinion can often be simply eliminated. Others can be reduced; instead of at this present point in time, for instance, try now.

W-2b. Redundancy. Don't say the same thing two or three times. Examples: each and every; ideas, beliefs and convictions; red in color.

W-2c. Unnecessary Complexity. Sometimes an entire passage should be simplified. Negative Example: He prefers books of a fictional nature, particularly those which deal with science fiction. Correction: He prefers fiction, particularly science fiction.

W-2d. Artificial Variation. Don't use synonyms simply to dress up or add variety to a piece of writing. At best, it looks artificial; at worst, because synonyms have different connotations, it destroys the sense of your sentence. Negative Example: Dogs should be kept in the country. Rural areas give canines the space they need for exercise. Our four-legged cur friends are much happier in provincial situations than they are in the city.

W-3. EXCESSIVE COMPRESSION.

W-3a. Over-Compressed Meaning. Sometimes an obscure sentence can be clarified by adding just a word or two (as opposed to large amounts of information, which is covered under PA-3). Negative Example: There is also the safety factor of keeping guns out of the homes of ex-cons. (Try: There is the increase in public safety that would result from keeping guns out of the homes of ex-cons.)

W-3b. Headline English. Use caution when modifying a noun by a string of other nouns. Used carefully, this device can lead to economy and conciseness; abused, it can lead to awkwardness or obscurity. Negative Example: A large vehicle operator mileage reduction could mean a reduction in the mileage allowed to operators of large fleets of vehicles or a large reduction in the mileage allowed to operators of vehicle fleets.

W-4. REPETITIOUS DICTION. The repetition of a word or phrase can be effective, but be careful: unchecked repetition can suggest a limited vocabulary or carelessness. Negative Example: If I improve my writing skills, I'm sure my marks will improve. Therefore, my overall average will show an improvement.

W-5. INAPPROPRIATE DICTION.

W-5a. Slang. Avoid slang (Negative Examples: ticked off, out to lunch, screwed up) in formal essays. It is often inexact, it becomes outdated quickly, and it is not always easily understood by everyone.

W-5b. Trite Expressions. Avoid using clichés--expressions which have become stale from over-use. Negative Examples: pretty as a picture, hard as nails, a rolling stone gathers no moss.

W-5c. Jargon. Every discipline has its technical language or idiom. Because a general audience may not understand the terms you use, avoid or define jargon. For example, composition teachers should avoid terms such as heuristic, tropes and gerundive when speaking to most students.

W-5d. Pretentious Diction. Write to express, not to impress. There is no need to use big words when small, ordinary words convey your meaning precisely.

For example, has the capability of means the same thing as can. Similarly, of great theoretical and practical importance usually means simply useful.

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- W-5e. Mixed or Inappropriate Metaphor. Metaphors can make your writing more vivid and interesting. However, don't make your writing ludicrous by using metaphors which are too extreme or which clash with other metaphors. Negative Example: There aren't enough flies in the ointment to justify throwing out the baby with the bathwater.
- W-6. IMMATURE DICTION. Avoid using a large number of words and phrases which are too juvenile. Bunnies and puppies and twinkly stars usually have no place in a formal essay, nor do such phrases as he was a really wonderful composer. (See also SE-12 and C-5).

SPELLING (SP)

- SP-1. COMMONLY CONFUSED PAIRS. Be particularly careful when using commonly confused words such as effect and affect, their, there and they're, than and then, etc. Look carefully at such words when proofreading; they are easy to interchange accidentally. Its is especially confusing; write it's only as a contraction for it is. There is no context in which its can be used.
- SP-2. APOSTROPHES.
- SP-2a. Possessives. Add 's to a singular possessive noun, even if the noun is an abstraction. Example: today's society. Add s' to a plural possessive noun. Example: two dogs' tails; both nations' governments. Exception: When a word is made plural by a change in spelling other than the addition of an s, form the plural possessive by adding 's. Example: many people's ideas; both men's coats.
- SP-2b. Simple Plurals (in error). Don't use an apostrophe in simple plurals. Example: two cars collided, not two car's collided.
- SP-2c. Possessive Personal Pronouns. Don't use apostrophes in the possessive pronouns his, hers, theirs, ours, yours, whose, and its.
- SP-3. SPELLING ERRORS.
- SP-3a. Spelling Errors (In General). Keep a list of all the words you misspell. There may be fewer than you think, and memorizing your list will be easier than memorizing the dictionary.
- SP-3b. Capitalization. Use capitals only when required, such as in names, days, months, holidays, book titles, and words of religious significance. Depending on your religious beliefs, you may also capitalize pronouns referring to God or Christ. Example: Hallowed be Thy name. Note that the names of languages (English, French) are capitalized.
- SP-3c. Spacing. Use a dictionary if necessary to determine which words are conventionally spelled as one (examples: cannot, whereby, already) and which are spelled as two (examples: a lot, a few, all right).
- SP-3d. Syllabication. When using a hyphen to indicate that a word continues on the next line, divide the word only between syllables. Consult a dictionary if you are not sure of the syllabication of a word.
- SP-3e. Rules. Many English words follow spelling rules. Consult any English handbook for the rules for doubling consonants, dropping mute e's, reversing i and e ("i before e except after c...") etc.

SP-3d. **Abbreviations.** Consult a handbook or dictionary for standard abbreviations. Use them sparingly in formal writing, and never use a private shorthand (for example w. for with) or symbols (for example & for and) just because you are in a hurry.

SP-4. **PROOFREADING.** When proofreading, resist the urge to skim. Place a ruler under each line to slow yourself down, or even read the last sentence first, then the second-last, etc. Look for the slips you know you often make.

PUNCTUATION (PU)

PU-1. COMMA

PU-1a. Use a comma after introductory phrases, clauses or words. Example: When I first arrived in Calgary, I thought that the city was too big.

PU-1b. Use a comma to separate three or more words, phrases or clauses in a list. A ~~comma~~ before the conjunction is optional. Example: He is tall, thin, and blue-eyed. He is intelligent, he is witty, and he is educated. (See also PU-11).

PU-1c. Use a comma before and after a non-restrictive element (a word or phrase that is not essential to the meaning of the sentence), before and after an appositive (a word or phrase which renames in different words a nearby noun), and before and after other interruptive elements. Examples: Robert Allen, who is the city's mayor, will be speaking at the library tonight. Ottawa, the country's capital city, is beautiful. The teacher, however, did not agree. Note: In all such cases two commas are required; do not forget the second one. (See also PU-11a).

PU-1d. Use a comma before a final clause or phrase when the final clause or phrase is not essential to the meaning of the first; that is, when it explains, amplifies or contrasts. Example: Jason is still fat, although I'm sure that going to Weight Watchers will help. However, don't use a comma between a main clause and a final subordinate clause when the meaning of the first clause depends on the second. Example: You won't win the lottery unless you buy a ticket.

PU-1e. In rare cases, it may be necessary to use a comma to prevent misreading even when it is not specifically required by one of the above rules.

PU-2. SEMICOLON.

PU-2a. Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses whose ideas are closely related. Used in this fashion, the semicolon has the same grammatical function as a period. Example: The semicolon has a number of uses; one is to separate independent clauses. Note: A semicolon can be used to correct a comma splice (See SE-2).

PU-2b. Use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb (however, moreover, therefore, nevertheless, etc.) Example: The team practiced every day; however, it still lost the championship.

PU-2c. Use semicolons to separate long items in a list when the items themselves contain commas. Example: John Adams, the doctor; Susan Brown, the lawyer; and Ed Olson, the dentist all came to the conference. (Without the semicolons it would not be clear whether three people came or six.)

PU-3a. Use a colon to set off lists that follow a main clause or lists that are introduced by phrases such as "the following" or "as follows." Examples: He has three favorite pastimes: reading, jogging and dancing. Our itinerary was as follows: Montreal on Monday, Fredericton on Wednesday, and St. John's on Friday. Do not use a colon if the list is linked to the main clause by "such as." (See also PU-11h).

PU-3b. Use a colon between two independent clauses when the second clause amplifies or explains the first. Example: She is a very talented and energetic woman: she teaches full-time and also writes at least four book reviews a year.

PU-4. DASH. Note: A dash is not the same as a hyphen. In handwriting it is longer than a hyphen; on the typewriter it is made by pressing the hyphen key twice, with no space before or after.

PU-4a. Use the dash in a sentence before and after phrases or clauses which interrupt the sentence and provide additional information. Example: Because I am a psychology major, The Manticore--the second novel in Davies' trilogy--interests me a great deal. Note: In all such cases a pair of dashes is required. Don't forget the second one.

PU-4b. Use the single dash before a short appositive at the end of a sentence. Example: Success means just one thing to him--money.

PU-5. PARENTHESES. Use parentheses to enclose words or phrases which provide additional information of minor importance. Example: The novel (his second in twenty years) is receiving many favorable reviews. Note: Use parentheses sparingly; if an essay contains a large number of parenthetical insertions, it may appear cluttered.

PU-6. QUOTED MATERIAL.

PU-6a. Use quotation marks when quoting directly. Example: The critic says, "That's the best Canadian novel we've seen in years." The prime minister argues that "something can be learned from the opposition party's policies."

PU-6b. For quotations within quotations, use single marks. Example: She turned to her daughter and said "Remember that Bill always says, 'The only people who are worth anything are the people who take chances.'"

PU-6c. Use quotation marks to indicate that you are using a word or words in a special sense. Example: What does "freedom" really mean? Note: Do not use quotation marks for stress. Use italics or underlining for this function.

PU-6d. Italics and Underlining. In a handwritten or typed essay, underlining has the same function as italics in a printed book. Underline titles of books (as opposed to shorter works such as poems and essays, which should be placed in quotation marks), foreign words, and words that you wish to stress. Don't use quotation marks for emphasis. (See also PU-6c).

PU-7. HYPHEN.

PU-7a. Use the hyphen to indicate the division of a word at the end of a line. Divide only between syllables. Consult a dictionary when you're unsure of the correct division. Example:

The song is time-
less.

PU-7b. Use the hyphen to join words serving as a single adjective before a noun. Example: a well-deserved raise.

PU-8. QUESTION MARK. Use the question mark to indicate an interrogative sentence, even if it is a rhetorical question. Example: What kind of world would that be? Do not use a question mark after an indirect question. Negative Example: My parents asked me if I planned to attend university[?]

PU-9. EXCLAMATION MARK. The exclamation mark is used to indicate strong emotion. Be careful, however: the exclamation mark rarely appears in formal writing. Use it very sparingly.

PU-10. PERIOD. Use a period to end a complete sentence. (See SE-1 for a discussion of fragments.)

PU-11. NO PUNCTUATION NEEDED. Note: In this section, punctuation marks enclosed in square brackets are incorrect and should be omitted.

PU-11a Do not use a comma between the subject and the verb unless there are non-restrictive modifiers, appositives, or other interruptive elements between them. See also PU-1a. Negative Example: The boy in the car that's parked on the corner[,] is my brother.

PU-11b Do not separate a final adjective from its noun. Negative Example: She is a tall, pretty[,] blonde.

PU-11c A series of adjectives is co-ordinate if each modifies the noun separately. Example: You are a foolish, insecure, unprincipled person. Such adjectives can be rearranged without affecting the meaning of the sentence, and should be separated by commas. However, some adjectives are not co-ordinate, and cannot be rearranged because each modifies the entire concept that follows it. Example: It was a pretty little yellow house. Do not separate such adjectives with commas.

PU-11d In general, do not separate two words or phrases joined by a co-ordinating conjunction. Negative Example: They are hard-working[,] and trustworthy.

PU-11e Use a comma between a direct quotation and the tag that introduces it. Example: She said, "Hurry up!" However, no comma is needed when an indirect quotation is blended into a larger sentence. Negative Example: He said[,] that he was in a hurry.

PU-11f In general, do not use a comma after a co-ordinating conjunction such as and or but. Negative Example: He was in a hurry but[,] he couldn't find a taxi.

PU-11g Do not use a comma between a main clause and a final subordinate clause when the meaning of the first clause depends on the second. Negative Example: You won't win the lottery[,] unless you buy a ticket.

PU-11h Do not use a comma or a colon after a phrase which is grammatically linked to the sentence by such as. Negative Example: I like exotic fruit such as [:] mangoes and kiwis. Use a colon to introduce a series that has been separated from the sentence by an expression like the following. See PU-3a.

GUIDE TO CORRECTIONS

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?	unclear, difficult to understand	ST1-6, PA3-4, SE13
??	impossible to understand	ST1-6, PA3-4, SE13
G	grammar error	GR1-6
S	spelling error	SP1-4
D	diction, incorrect use of word	W1-5
P	punctuation error	P1-11
CS	comma splice	SE2
¶	new paragraph	PA1-5
~¶	no new paragraph	PA1-5
L	logic error	SE13
F	sentence fragment	SE1
W	wordy	W2
CO	coherency (Lack of)	ST1-6, PA4-5
U	unity (Lack of)	ST1-6, PA4-5
V	vague	..
CAP	fault in capitalization	
COL	colloquialism	W5
K	awkward	W1-5
MS	illegible handwriting	
R	repetitious	W4
RO	run-on sentence	SE2-4
FN	footnote	
BS	no explanation necessary	
X	mistake	
✓	good point, bravo, etc.	

For explanations of codes, see Effective Writing Service publications:
"Marking Code" and "Detailed Marking Code."

For further guides to effective writing, see:

Kate Turabian, Student's Guide for Writing College Papers

" " A Manual for Writing Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations

E. B. White, Elements of Style

APPENDIX B

1. Avoid run-on sentences they are are hard to read.
2. Don't use no double negatives.
3. Use the semicolon properly, always use it where it is appropriate; and never where it isn't.
4. Reserve the apostrophe for it's proper use and omit it when its not needed.
5. Do not put statements in the negative form.
6. Verbs has to agree with their subjects.
7. No sentence fragments.
8. Proofread carefully to see if you any words out.
9. Avoid commas, that are not necessary.
10. If you reread your work, you will find on rereading that a great deal of repetition can be avoided by rereading and editing.
11. A writer must not shift your point of view.
12. Eschew dialect, irregardless.
13. And don't start a sentence with a conjunction.
14. Don't overuse exclamation marks!!!
15. Place pronouns as close as possible, especially in long sentences, as of 10 or more words, to their antecedents.
16. Hyphenate between syllables and avoid un-necessary hyphens.
17. Write all adverbial forms correct.
18. Don't use contractions in formal writing.
19. Writing carefully, dangling participles must be avoided.
20. It is incumbent on us to avoid archaisms.
21. If any word is improper at the end of a sentence, a linking verb is.
22. Steer clear of incorrect forms of verbs that have snuck in the language.
23. Take the bull by the hand and avoid mixed metaphors.
24. Avoid trendy locutions that sound flaky.

25. Never, ever use repetitive redundancies.
26. Everyone should be careful to use a singular pronoun with singular nouns in their writing.
27. If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times, resist hyperbole.
28. Also, avoid awkward or affected alliteration.
29. Don't string too many prepositional phrases together unless you are walking through the valley of the shadow of death.
30. Always pick on the correct idiom.
31. "Avoid overuse of 'quotation marks' ' ' "
32. The adverb always follows the verb.
33. Last but not least, avoid clichés like the plague; seek viable alternatives.
34. Always chek your speling.