

SCHOOL OF ENGLISH
University of St Andrews

ESSAY STYLE SHEET
AND GUIDELINES

CONTENTS

- 1. Presentation**
 - 2. Bibliography, Referencing and Quotations**
 - 3. Essays: some general advice**
 - 4. Trouble-shooting guidelines**
 - 5. Confusing words**
 - 6. E-mails**
 - 7. Appendix on plagiarism**
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1. Presentation

Pre-honours students may submit essays clearly hand-written in ink, though word-processing or typing is preferred. If your writing is very large or very small you should use broad-lined paper. Honours students *must* submit essays in word-processed or typed form. The main body of a typed or word-processed essay should be set out in either ‘one and a half’ or double spacing. Indented quotations, however, may be single-spaced.

It is your responsibility to proof-read your essay. Your final fair copy should be free from all save the most minor corrections or alterations or revisions.

Your essay should be correctly spelled and punctuated. For spelling, and in order to discriminate meanings carefully, you should consult a good dictionary (such as *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*; for further suggestions, see below). You ought not to rely upon your word-processor’s spelling facility. It is recommended that British students follow British spelling conventions.

Write or type on one side of the paper only.

Leave a margin of at least 1.5 inches on the left-hand side of each page. This is to permit marginal comments by your tutor.

Number your pages in the top right-hand corner.

Fasten your pages together at the top left-hand corner with a strong paperclip. Please do not staple your essays as the School is obliged to copy samples of written work for External Examiners, Academic Audit, and Teaching Quality Assessment.

Put your module number and your tutor's name at the top of page 1 of your essay.

Write the essay question below your tutor's name. Do not abbreviate or amend the question. (This is particularly important for students from North America, where conventions may be different).

Anonymous marking

Students should fill out the anonymization cover-sheets (green) provided by module co-ordinators before delivery to the module Essay Box. Spare cover sheets can be found beside the essay boxes. Do **NOT** fold back and seal the anonymization strip: this will be done by the School Office before the essays are passed on to co-ordinators/tutors for marking. Markers may add individualized comments once essays have been de-anonymized.

2. Bibliography, Referencing and Quotations

i. Bibliography

A bibliography is a list of all material consulted during the preparation of an essay, even if debts to items of such material are of the most general kind and you do not cite the work directly in your essay. Note that it should not be assumed that length is necessarily a merit in a bibliography; every item included should either be referred to within the essay or else be clearly relevant to it.

The bibliography should be provided at the end of an essay, starting on a new page. Items on the list should be organised alphabetically by author's surname. The first line of each entry should be flush-left while any subsequent lines should be indented five spaces. There is no need for numbering or bullet points.

The purpose of giving bibliographical references is to enable the reader to follow up your references and to demonstrate that you are paying attention to detail. It is therefore important that all pieces of information are given completely and in the right order.

If you are unsure about the publication details of a book, try looking it up in the on-line University Library catalogue (SAULCAT), where all details will be listed. (Do make sure you are using exactly the same edition as the one in the catalogue though, as page numbers can vary.)

The standard formatting for the type of sources you will most commonly cite is presented below. Note that in these examples the author's surname is not listed first but it should be in the bibliography (see sample bibliography below). Note that in the titles of works written in English the first word and all subsequent words (other than articles and pronouns) should have initial capitals.

Book

Author, *Title* (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year).

e.g.

Ken Sofa, *How To Be Idle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

V.V. Late and O. Drat, eds., *Procrastination* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).

Book Chapter

Author of Chapter, 'Title of the Chapter', in *Title of Book*, author/editor of the book (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year), page numbers of chapter.

e.g.

S. Presso, 'Caffeine and the Single Girl', in *Staying Up Late*, ed. I. Stare (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 12-32.

Journal Article

Author, 'Title of Article', *Title of Journal*, Vol No: Part No (Year): page number(s) of article.

e.g.

L. Plate, 'Wonderful Women Drivers', *Automotive Journal*, 3:2 (1997): 112-21.

Article in an Online Journal:

Author, 'Title of Article', *Title of Journal*, volume number: issue number (year), <web address> [date accessed].

e.g.

Michael O'Rourke, 'The Roguish Future of Queer Studies', *SQS – Journal of Queer Studies in Finland*, 2 (2006), <<http://www.helsinki.fi/jarj/sqs>> [accessed January 1, 2007].

Note that you should only include a web reference for an article if it has actually been **published** online. If you access a journal article electronically but

it was originally published in a paper journal then follow the formatting for journal articles above.

Web site

Author (if known), 'Title of Entry/Document', Title of Web site, <web address> [date accessed].

e.g.

Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees, 'Evanston Public Library Strategic Plan, 2000–2010: A Decade of Outreach', Evanston Public Library, <<http://www.epl.org/library/strategic-plan-00.html>> [accessed June 14, 2007].

Translation

Name of Editor or Translator, trans., *Title of Work* (Place of Publication: Publisher, Year).

Richmond Lattimore, trans., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

Sample bibliography:

Bibliography

Evanston Public Library Board of Trustees, 'Evanston Public Library Strategic Plan, 2000–2010: A Decade of Outreach', Evanston Public Library, <<http://www.epl.org/library/strategic-plan-00.html>> [accessed June 14, 2007].

Late, V.V. and Drat, O., eds., *Procrastination* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001).

Lattimore, Richmond, trans., *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

O'Rourke, Michael, 'The Roguish Future of Queer Studies', *SQS – Journal of Queer Studies in Finland*, 2 (2006), <<http://www.helsinki.fi/jarj/sqs>> [accessed January 1, 2007].

Plate, L., 'Wonderful Women Drivers', *Automotive Journal*, 3:2 (1997): 112-21.

Presso, S., 'Caffeine and the Single Girl', in *Staying Up Late*, ed. I. Stare (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 12-32.

Sofa, Ken, *How To Be Idle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

Sources and Electronic Resources

Students are expected to use reputable academic sources for information and secondary reading. Primarily, these include academic books and peer reviewed articles in academic journals. Recognised electronic resources may also be used. For a list of such resources consult the English entry in the library's Internet Subject Tree, found under Electronic Resources:

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/ElectronicResources/InternetSubjectTree/Subjectlists/English/>

Books, book chapters and journal articles related to a relevant topic can also be found via a number of electronic databases which enable you to search under keywords. The two most useful for students of English are:

MLA (Modern Language Association) database. You can use this database to find journal articles, books, dissertations and proceedings in the fields of Folklore, Language, Linguistics and Literature. It covers 1965 to the present day and is provided by OCLC FirstSearch.

LION (Literature Online). This is a fully-searchable library of more than 349,000 full-text works of English and American poetry, drama and prose. It also includes biographies, bibliographies and key criticism. Of particular use is the fully-searchable MHRA's Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (ABELL).

Links to both of these databases can be found on the library's Databases and Datasets webpage:

<http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/library/ElectronicResources/Databases/#S>

Note that **ATHENS** usernames and passwords are required for remote access to certain databases.

Once you have identified relevant journal articles, many of these will be available in paper copy in the library, or electronically via the library. Just search for the journal/periodical title in SAULCAT for information on sourcing the article.

You are warmly encouraged to use these recognised electronic resources. In order to find relevant sources your first port of call should be these recognised databases, NOT Google. The use of information from online *Spark Notes*, *York Notes*, *Wikipedia* and other non-academic websites is completely unacceptable at University level, and may well result in marks being deducted.

ii. Referencing

All quotations and references made in the body of your essay must be clearly identified and specifically acknowledged. Failure to acknowledge in this way is plagiarism.

Numerous different systems of referencing exist. These guidelines follow the Chicago Manual of Style (CMS) Notes System. Its official website is <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>. The basics of the system are outlined below but you if you have further style questions you should consult your tutor or refer to the Chicago-Style Citations Quick Guide on the website.

If you are used to following alternative styles of citation (which you may have learned at another university, for example, or in preparation for a career in publishing), you may use one of those instead of the guidelines outlined here, so long as your alternative method is consistent in itself. Thus, few School of English tutors would object to students using MLA-style, MHRA-style, or the so-called Author-Date system (also known as Harvard-style), to name a few examples. Detailed published guidebooks exist for those styles and can be used by any interested students.

According to the CMS system, superscripted numbers are inserted at the end of the clause or sentence in which a quotation occurs. These correspond to sequentially numbered footnotes listed at the bottom of a page, or endnotes listed at the end of the document, which contain the reference for the quotation. Footnotes can be inserted in most word-processing programmes (including Word or WordPerfect) under the heading 'Insert'. Footnotes can also be used for giving bibliographical references or for making points ('asides') which are inessential to the main argument of your essay.

In-text superscripted numbers appear after the punctuation and quotation marks at the end of a cited clause or sentence. There is no space between the punctuation and the numeral. For example:

CORRECT:

In *Shakespeare's Language* (2000), Frank Kermode argues that although Shakespeare 'was an accomplished non-dramatic poet, [...] his eminence depends on his work for the theatre'¹.

INCORRECT:

In *Shakespeare's Language* (2000), Frank Kermode argues that although Shakespeare 'was an accomplished non-dramatic poet, [...] his eminence depends on his work for the theatre'¹.

In *Shakespeare's Language* (2000), Frank Kermode argues that although Shakespeare 'was an accomplished non-dramatic poet, [...] his eminence depends on his work for the theatre'¹.

In *Shakespeare's Language* (2000), Frank Kermode argues that although Shakespeare 'was an accomplished non-dramatic poet, [...] his eminence depends on his work for the theatre.'¹.

Note that publication details in footnotes are only there to refer the reader to more detailed information in the bibliography at the end of your essay. You therefore do not have to give all publication details in your first footnoted reference to a work (author, title and page numbers are usually sufficient).

e.g.

Ken Sofa, *How To Be Idle*, p. 5.

V. V. Late and O. Drat (eds.), *Procrastination*, pp. 8-9.

S. Presso, 'Caffeine and the Single Girl', p. 15.

L. Plate, 'Wonderful Women Drivers', pp. 113-142.

(In the citation of page numbers 'p.' stands for 'page', 'pp.' stands for 'pages'. Therefore 'pp. 5' is incorrect.)

In subsequent footnotes it is sufficient to given even fewer details (e.g. author and page numbers). It is important not to overcrowd footnotes with redundant information; a footnote should only be the briefest of notes. Footnotes should appear in a smaller font than the main body of your essay.

The most common error in student footnotes is the unnecessary repetition of information. When material is being quoted from the same source as that cited in the footnote directly before it you should use the term *Ibid.* (meaning 'the same'). Thus:

Sofa, *How to Be Idle*, p. 5.

Ibid., p. 7.

Ibid., p. 19.

After a work has been cited once, when you cite it again you should do so in a shortened form. Thus:

Ina Self, *The Poetical Works of Ina Self* (London: Faber, 1948), p. 209.

becomes Self, *Poetical Works*, p. 209. (if there is more than one work by this author listed in your bibliography)

or even Self, p. 209. (if there is only one work by this author listed in your bibliography)

Some examples:

CORRECT:

Mary Christmas, 'The First Noel', *Collected Poems*, p. 71.

Ibid., p. 80.

Chris Cracker, 'The Two Scrooges: How Dickens Invented Christmas', p. 115.

Christmas, 'The First Noel', p. 78.

Cracker, 'The Two Scrooges', p. 112.

Ibid., p. 114.

INCORRECT:

Mary Christmas, 'The First Noel', *Collected Poems of Mary Christmas* edited by Holly O'Holies, 2nd edition, New York, Glasgow, London, Bunter and Sons in the Strand, 1909, p. 71.

Mary Christmas, 'The First Noel', *Collected Poems of Mary Christmas* edited by Holly O'Holies, 2nd edition, New York, Glasgow, London, Bunter and Sons in the Strand, 1909, p. 80.

Chris Cracker, 'The Two Scrooges: How Dickens Invented Christmas', p. 115.

Mary Christmas, 'The First Noel', *Collected Poems of Mary Christmas*, p. 78.

Chris Cracker, 'The Two Scrooges: How Dickens Invented Christmas', p. 112.

References to Primary Texts and Footnotes

When you are quoting repeatedly from a primary text in an essay, you should not include a footnote for every citation. An essay on *Beowulf*, for example, should not contain footnotes with repeated publication details of a *Beowulf* edition, nor page or line numbers referring to *Beowulf*. It is sufficient to explain in only one footnote (usually one of the first footnotes of the essay) which edition of the primary text(s) you are writing on will be used; subsequent references to the primary text(s) (page or line numbers) can then be given in the main body of the text immediately after the quoted words.

First reference to a primary text in footnote:

¹ All quotations from *Beowulf* in this essay are taken from *Beowulf: A Student Edition*, ed. George Jack (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

Subsequent references to a primary text in main body of essay:

In this passage, the poet refers to Grendel as an *aglæca* (line 433). [No footnote necessary!]

Generally Useful Handbooks and Works of Reference

Abrams, M. H., *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 6th edn. (London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993). [PN44.5A3F93]

Alexander, Michael, *A History of English Literature* (Basingstoke: Macmillan,

- 2000). [PR83.A6]
 Burchfield, R. W., ed., *The New Fowler's Modern English Usage*, 3rd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996). [Ref PE1631.F7F96]
 Clanchy, John and Ballard, Brigid, *How to Write Essays: A Practical Guide for Students* (Cheshire: Longman, 1983). [LB2395.C6]
 Truss, Lynne, *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* (London: Profile, 2003). [PE1450.T8]

The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) is an indispensable source of information for the historical use of English words. For an on-line version, accessible from all university computers, go to <http://www.oed.com>.

Judy Pearsall (ed.), *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 10th edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) [Ref AG5.M9F7G01], costs about £14 to buy and represents an excellent investment for any student of English.

Gendered references

You should not automatically refer to an anonymous author, reader or other person as male. ('A medieval reader of Chaucer would have been unsure in his interpretation of this passage' is poor phrasing and historically inaccurate). Difficult choices of vocabulary can sometimes be avoided by switching from singular to plural ('Medieval readers of Chaucer would have been unsure in their interpretation of this passage'). Another conventional alternative is the phrase 'he or she'.

iii. Quotations

Titles of books, plays, journals, and poems long enough to have been published as independent works should be quoted in full and identified by *italics*. Accuracy is important in itself, and eliminates confusion: *Hamlet* is a play; Hamlet is a character in *Hamlet*.

Always italicise the definite or indefinite article when it is part of the title, as *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Waste Land* (not the *Waste Land* and never *The Wasteland*).

If you would like to use underlining instead of *italicising*, you may do so, for instance in exams. (But do not underline and italicise.)

Use single inverted commas for the titles of short poems, short stories in longer collections, journal articles and chapters in books, such as 'Wordy Love Song' in Norman MacCaig's *The World's Room*. So 'North' is a poem by Seamus Heaney, *North* is a book of poems by Seamus Heaney.

The first line of each new paragraph should normally be indented, in which case there is no need to leave a line space between paragraphs.

Verbatim (word-for-word) quotations

These must be enclosed in single quotation marks (inverted commas). Reserve double quotation marks for quotations within quotations. If the quotation is short, incorporate it into the body of your sentence or paragraph and include a footnoted reference.

If the source of your quotation is a novel, your footnote reference must include the author and title (where these details are not clear from the context of your essay) and a page reference to the edition specified in your bibliography. If the source is a play, give similar details of author and title, and act and scene references. If the play is in verse the line reference should be added as well; thus, for example, *Macbeth*, III. ii. 75-6 (or 3.2. 75-6).

If the quotation is long (more than one sentence of prose or more than one line of verse) set it down as an indented or block quotation:

Wordsworth takes the language of rural people as a model for poetic diction because he believes that it is:

a more permanent and a far more philosophical language than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men.¹

Since the quotation is clearly separated from your own prose when thus set out, you should not enclose it in quotation marks as well. The source of the quotation should, however, be given in the relevant footnote or endnote. Indented quotations are usually preceded by a colon (:) rather than a semi-colon (;). Do not indent the next line after an indented quotation unless you mean to start a new paragraph.

Adapting quotations

Quotations, with the following minor exceptions, should appear in your essay exactly as they do in your source.

Omissions from the body of a quotation, which must be honest omissions and not ones designed to alter the impression that a quotation makes, should be clearly indicated by means of a combination of ellipsis dots and square brackets:

‘In between their astronomical activities Piazzini and Jessica visited the physics laboratory and [...] the geological department of the university.’

Additions to your quotations, when additions are needed to fit them grammatically into your sentence structure, should also be enclosed within square brackets:

‘In between their astronomical activities Piazzzi and Jessica [who] visited the physics laboratory and, for Jessica's interest, the geological department of the university’ would, as one of their friends noted disapprovingly in his journal, exchange personal opinions in a free and candid manner.

You should try, however, to avoid too much manipulation of your quoted material. The following is bad practice:

‘It seems [to those expert in the relevant areas of scholarship] that each nation made quite a lot of glass in competition with the other [...] and any exports from Murano to the Netherlandish [Dutch and Belgian] ports of Amsterdam and Antwerp added [...] to [the difficulties involved in making] a correct attribution of origin now.’

Verse quotations

It is very important to reproduce the form of the poem exactly as it appears in the text that you are using. When quoting verse always quote in lines, capitalising at the start of each line if the poet does so. Give the line reference when quoting from a poem that is more than one stanza in length.

3. Essays: some general advice

An essay's mark depends not only on its content, but also on whether it is well or badly written. These remarks address some common problems that students have with essay-writing. They are intended to give you pointers which will make it easier for you to know what is expected of you in essay-writing, and how to avoid some common errors. They are followed by some troubleshooting guidelines on spelling, punctuation, and other important aspects of written English.

The Thesis

Every essay should have a thesis: an argument which can be formulated in one or two sentences, and which tells your reader (as well as clarifying to yourself) the claims that you are making in your essay, or the position that you are attempting to defend. As a general rule, the thesis should be stated within your opening paragraph. Whether or not you follow this rule strictly, you should ensure that you have an argument, and that it is stated clearly enough for your reader to know as soon as possible exactly what you are setting out to claim or defend.

A *good* essay needs a *good* thesis. Within the length of a short essay you should attempt to challenge yourself and your reader; you should attempt to show signs of having thought about what you are writing, and, if possible, seek to find things to say which are not immediately self-evident. In other words, you should try to be independent. In thinking about your thesis, or argument, you should ask yourself if it is possible to disagree with it. If you can think of ways in which your argument can readily be made untenable, then you should try to think of another line of approach.

As you go on with your essay, keep your thesis constantly in mind. Continue to ask yourself this question: ‘How does what I am arguing now relate to my thesis? Am I straying from my argument?’ If the answer is not obvious to you, then stop, and think again, because you could be going wrong. If you are in two minds about what you are saying, then the reader will be confused too. A short essay leaves little space for digression. Try to bring what you are saying back to the point. Don’t be shy of revision. Get into the habit of cutting even those paragraphs which you feel to be rather well written, but which have led you away from your argument and detract from the sense of what you are trying to say.

The body of the essay

Your reader should be able to appreciate, paragraph by paragraph, the way in which the argument is moving forward. Paragraphing is not incidental, or simply a matter of aesthetics (a way of making words look good on the page). Each new paragraph should contain one idea, or several closely linked ideas; a new idea necessitates the opening of a new paragraph. Moreover, the relationship between one paragraph and the next should be clear: you need to provide transitional sentences between one stage in the argument and the next, which show your reader what the relation is between one point and another. In short, your reader should be able to see a clear, coherent and logical argument worked out through your essay.

Plan

Having thought about what you want to do, you should write out a plan for your essay before you start. This outline structure should contain a statement of your thesis, and the topics of each stage of your argument. Your plan, or outline, should clarify to you what relation each step of your argument bears to the next. A poor plan resembles a list of ingredients; a good one resembles a recipe, showing how and where the various elements are to be put together. You should expect your plan to change while you are doing the reading for the essay, so you might wish to think in terms of *planning* (a process) rather than of a *plan* (a fixed statement of intent).

Who are you writing for? Who is your reader?

Think of yourself as writing for a generalised reader and not for a particular individual. You should take it for granted that your audience is familiar with

the texts you are discussing, but also that you are under an obligation to attempt to make your reader interested in what you are saying.

Despite the demands and conventions of an academic essay, you should also try to write with style and vigour. However, you should avoid chattiness or an excessively journalistic approach. In the study of English, the literary quality of an essay can be important if the student is aspiring to do well in the subject. Evidence of reading, beyond the predicted or immediate sources of the subject on which you are writing — general critical works, for example, critical theory, or works similar to those you are discussing but by different authors — can very often be advantageous. A good essay is sometimes one which surprises its reader with daring and insight as well as a self-evident mastery of the texts which are being addressed.

A great deal about essay-writing can be learnt from the critical works that you read. When a passage of prose or poetry or dramatic dialogue impresses you then read it over again until you discover how it works. Consider its sentences, and how they are made; consider how each sentence feeds into the next. Examine the punctuation of the passage which has impressed you. If you want to read general critical works of a kind which will enrich your writing as well as your understanding of literature, then ask your tutor to recommend books for you to read.

Use of Secondary Sources

Use and quote from your reading of critical books and essays when you have an opportunity to make points which are directly relevant to your argument. That is, if a critic's remarks strike you as especially illuminating to your argument, then quote them, or refer to them. But you should avoid giving your reader the impression that your argument is over-dependent on published insights. Similarly, if a critic's claims seem mistaken to you, or in need of modification, then quote or refer to them and use this episode in your essay to emphasise those points that you wish to make. Do not quote or refer to secondary sources merely to prove that you have consulted pertinent critical works.

Acknowledgment

Whenever you use secondary sources you must make it clear to your reader that you have done so by acknowledging your sources in the text or in a footnote or an end-note. Make explicit acknowledgement (including relevant details of editions used and page numbers) whenever:

- you are using someone else's words to express a point (i.e. a direct quotation from your secondary source).

- you are making use of an observation made by someone else (i.e. a discussion of a point, or opinion, or interpretation, in a secondary source, which might not involve direct quotation within the appropriate marks).
- you are making use of information (even apparently ‘factual’ information) which some other critic has researched. Examples could be the influence of one writer on another, or the effect on a writer of a particular historical circumstance, when this information has not been discovered by you.
- If you are quoting lines of verse or a passage of prose which some other critic has quoted to make the same or a similar point.

The inclusion of secondary sources in your Bibliography does not by itself constitute adequate acknowledgment. The Appendix to this *Style Sheet* gives examples of acceptable and unacceptable ways of using secondary sources.

Use of Lectures

Avoid using lecture notes (or tutorial notes) as the main basis of your essays. Almost all tutors in the School will be familiar with the material conveyed in lectures by their colleagues, while the recurrence of the same points and phrases is easily detected during the process of marking. To rely on lecture notes will give your essays a dull, predictable, unoriginal cast of opinion and understanding. If you wish to make a point similar to one made in lectures, try to support it with your own example rather than one used in the lecture.

Finally, avoid statements like ‘scholars have always believed that x . . .’, or ‘most critics agree that y. . .’. It is very unlikely that you will have had the time to read enough background material to support claims of this nature. References to a generalised consensus of opinion are rarely interesting.

4. Trouble-shooting guidelines

Achieving a lucid style

You should aim to present written work that is lucid, and which avoids grammatical errors, poor punctuation and spelling mistakes. Clear thinking and clear expression are inextricable.

You should pay attention to the kind of literary critical writing that you find most persuasive and clear. You will usually find that it is a critic’s style that has played a crucial part in strengthening the persuasiveness of the argument that is being developed. Reading criticism with an eye open to this effectiveness of expression will help you develop your own persuasive abilities.

Repetition

Except very sparingly, and for rhetorical effect, do not repeat the points you make. Having to make the same point twice is evidence of poor planning.

Spelling and punctuation

The principal purpose of punctuation is to mark off the constituent parts of a sentence so as to make its structure and meaning clear to the reader. Conversely, neglecting punctuation is misleading and ultimately frustrating for the reader. If your essay is poorly punctuated, you must expect to lose marks.

Full-stops (or *periods*) signal the completion of a sentence: they distinguish one complete and self-contained statement from the next point to be made. Even if your next point is linked, it should not be connected to the preceding point using a comma.

Commas are used to distinguish parts of a single statement, but not to distinguish separate statements. Do not use them sloppily, simply because you know your ideas are linked but cannot be bothered to focus on proper punctuation. An example of sloppy use:

Hamlet dramatizes the extreme paralysis of will which accompanies melancholia, his melancholia is induced or possibly simply heightened by his father the king's sudden death, his mother has meanwhile married the man Hamlet believes to be guilty of the murder of the king.

This should have been rendered using three separate sentences, with full-stops in place of the commas.

Commas are also used to separate simple items within a list:

He said that he felt that the following qualities were required: fortitude, resolve, compassion, disinterestedness, and wit and wisdom.

Here the items are 'simple' because each of them is an unqualified noun.

Colons and *semi-colons* are heavier stops than the comma and are sometimes interchangeable. Here are some simple rules. Use the colon to introduce indented quotations or items within a list (as in the example just given). Use the semi-colon to separate complex items in a list:

He said that he felt that the following qualities were required: fortitude, by which more than strength of mind is meant; resolve, which should be distinguished from mere resolution; compassion, though in dilute form; disinterestedness, to which are added all of the accompanying good effects of impartiality; and wit and wisdom.

Here the items are complex because each abstract noun is qualified by an explanation introduced by a comma; semi-colons help a reader to sort out qualities from qualifications.

Avoid over-using *parentheses* (brackets); they frequently lead to a complication of the sentence in which they are embedded, when a more thoughtful separation of one idea from another could have eliminated the need for parentheses.

Avoid the use of *exclamation marks*, which may give the impression that you are over-excited or naïve.

Grammar

Grammatical mistakes often made by students include the writing of *incomplete sentences*:

These developments are driven by a preoccupation with political issues. An important one being that of race.

The second sentence here is grammatically incorrect, lacking a main verb. The same ideas could have been more correctly and accurately conveyed thus:

These developments are driven by a preoccupation with political issues, an important one being that of race.

The apostrophe

The apostrophe has *two* purposes. First, it is used to signal the *omission* of a letter, or several letters: e.g. don't = do not, can't = cannot, isn't = is not. Secondly, it can indicate *possession*: Lady Macbeth's hands, Susan's books, the cat's whiskers. It is not, however, to be used with pronouns, such as hers, theirs, and ours.

The commonest mistake that students make with the apostrophe is to misplace it, and especially to confuse *its* with *it's*. *Its* signifies possession (*the effect of the poem is heightened by its metrical irregularity*). *It's* is a contracted form of it is (*it's Tuesday, and my essay is ready to be handed in tomorrow*).

It is important that you learn the distinction between *it's* and *its* now, as repeated errors of this kind will result in the deduction of marks from your written work. An easy way to avoid making the mistake is to remember that contracted forms such as 'can't', 'don't' and 'it's' are fine in colloquial English, but have no place in essays, unless of course they are used in quotations from the text under discussion. So do not use *it's* (the contracted form of *it is*) in essays.

The possessive apostrophe

With singular nouns, the apostrophe is placed before the 's' to indicate possession: *the poet's vision*. With plural nouns, it is placed after the 's': *The Romantics' individualism, the students' union*. Make sure that you position the apostrophe to convey the appropriate meaning.

When the plural form of the noun does not take an 's', as for instance in children, the apostrophe is placed before the possessive 's': *children's books; women's emancipation; other men's flowers*.

Take care also with proper nouns which end in 's'. The modern preference is to form the possessive by adding *apostrophe s* to all such nouns: *Keats's poetry set new standards* (though *Keats' poetry* is acceptable); *James's way of walking is distinctly odd* (though *James' way of walking* is acceptable). [Keat's and Jame's are, of course, wholly improper.] With classical and scriptural names different conventions apply: *Mars' helmet* is commoner than *Mars's helmet*; *Aristophanes' plays* has yet to yield to *Aristophanes's plays*; and, though both *Jesus' ways of preaching* and *Jesus's ways of preaching* are acceptable, the former is commoner in liturgical or solemn use.

Split infinitives

The infinitive in English, though it seems to consist of two words (to be, to go, to eat, to sleep, to dream), is generally treated as a single and indivisible item. Avoid inserting adverbs into the infinitive form of verbs, such as in the famous but grammatically incorrect expression 'to boldly go'.

5. Confusing words

Take time now to look at the following pairs of words which are often confused by students, and learn what distinguishes them:

affect/effect

To *affect* something is to alter it, to *effect* something is to make it happen:

Illness affected my results badly

By dint of ingenious duplicity I effected my escape

Effect is also used as a noun and means consequence:

The effect of a poem's layout on the page can be profound.

[Psychologists, however, use *affect* as a noun, where it means an emotion or a desire that leads to an action (which action is the effect or consequence of the affect).]

discrete (separate) /**discreet** (tactful)

This series of sonnets can be taken as a discrete set of poems.
Be discreet about this: it is a secret.

complementary (supporting or accompanying) /**complimentary** (flattering)

‘The Younger Romantics’ is a complementary module to ‘Revolution and Romanticism.’

Thank you for your complimentary remarks.

disinterested (impartial) /**uninterested** (bored)

I would prefer a disinterested financial advisor, whose impartiality could be trusted.

I do not want a financial advisor who is uninterested in money.

imply (hint or suggest)/**infer** (derive from, or pick up a hint or suggestion)

Do you mean to imply that I am lying?

Should I infer from what you say that you have told the truth?

dependant (a person)/**dependent**

Her will left all her savings to her sole dependant, her daughter.

The result is dependent on certain circumstances.

who’s/whose

Who’s at the door?

Whose are those shoes?

practise(verb)/**practice** (noun)

If you practise playing the piano, you improve.

The practice of using mobile phones on trains should be outlawed.

[This distinction is not observed in American usage, where *practise* is commonly both verb and noun.]

less/fewer/majority/amount/number

‘Less’ refers to a singular noun (less money, less work.). ‘Fewer’ refers to plural nouns (fewer novelists, fewer dramatists). The common supermarket sign (*Nine items or less*) is an error and should read *Nine items or fewer*. ‘Majority’ means a greater number, not a greater amount. ‘Amount’ refers to mass, not number. We speak of a large amount of effort, *not* a large amount of people; this should correctly be a large *number* of people.

Tenses

Be consistent in tenses. Generally, literary critical convention dictates that the present tense is used when referring to events in a literary text or to the thoughts and speech of characters. Use the past tense to differentiate historical or biographical facts from the events in the work being discussed. Use the present tense also when referring to the views of critics. Some examples:

Paul Morel (the central character in *Sons and Lovers*) has a coal-miner for a father; Lawrence himself was the son of a coal-miner.

Jonathan Dollimore argues in *Radical Tragedy* that injustice, both economic and legal, is at the heart of the tragedy in *King Lear*.

Hardy brought out his *Poems of the Past and Present* in November 1901.

In *Poems of the Past and Present* Hardy writes eloquently of the death in the South African Wars of ‘Drummer Hodge’.

Conclusion

If anything in these guidelines or in the style sheet is unclear to you, consult your tutor. Do take on board what is contained here. You are warned that marks will be deducted if these guidelines and conventions are disregarded.

6. E-mails

You may find it convenient to contact university staff by e-mail. If you are unsure about what style and address to adopt in e-mails, you can use the following example as guidance:

Sample e-mail

Dear Dr Bloggs,

I was planning to sign up for your Shakespeare module next year. Could you please confirm that it will be running? Thank you for your help.

Regards,

John Smith (matr. no. 1234567)

Staff e-mail addresses, office hours, the correct titles of individual members of staff (Prof., Dr, Mr, Ms) and their correctly spelled names can be found on the School of English website, under ‘People’. Please remember to give both your first name *and* your surname, and, if your surname is very common or if your query concerns Advising, it is helpful to include your matriculation number as well. In e-mails sent to your English tutor it is of course particularly important to use correct English grammar and spelling if you want to make a good

impression. It is sometimes helpful to think of an e-mail as a business letter; do not be afraid, therefore, to practise your professional office skills when making enquiries. Of course in some cases you may choose to be less formal in your e-mails, especially once you get to know your tutor better.

7. Appendix on plagiarism: some examples

Gross plagiarism is easily detected and swiftly punished, but some examples of plagiarism are less obvious to the untrained eye. This Appendix gives two examples of the improper use and acknowledgment of source material, and one example of how the material might be properly acknowledged. If you are unsure about these examples, consult your tutor before you write your next essay.

Source Material

This is the passage to which all three examples below are indebted. Its reference is: Michael Wheeler, *English Fiction of the Victorian Period, 1830-1890* (London: Longman 1985), p. 67.

Similarly, whereas the opening of the final chapter of *Jane Eyre* — ‘Reader, I married him’ — announces a closed ending of equipoise achieved through vision and suffering, the apparent closure of Lockwood’s final paragraph [in *Wuthering Heights*] remains questionable. He lingers round the graves of Cathy, Edgar, and Heathcliff under a ‘benign sky’, wondering ‘how anyone could ever imagine unquiet slumbers, for the sleepers in that quiet earth’. Yet Nelly has just reported that ‘the country folks, if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that [Heathcliff] *walks*’, and she has met a little boy and some sheep who were terrified by what the boy assumed to be Heathcliff and a woman. The mysteries of Lockwood’s second nightmare in Chapter 3 remain unfathomed to the end.

Version A: Unacceptable

It is questionable whether we should take at face value the apparent closure offered by Lockwood’s final paragraph in the novel. He cannot imagine ‘unquiet slumbers’ for Cathy, Edgar and Heathcliff, yet Nelly has just reported that ‘the country folks, if you asked them, would swear on their Bible that [Heathcliff] *walks*’. Unlike *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights* is not a novel which ends with equipoise achieved through vision and suffering.

This is clearly plagiarism, and equally clearly it is unacceptable. Ideas, words and phrases have been lifted from the original, without acknowledgment. The student will be penalised for plagiarism, in accordance with the policy statement that is set out in the School’s *Handbook* (Section 7).

Version B: Unacceptable

It is questionable how we should respond to the apparent closure provided by Lockwood's final paragraph. His vision of a 'quiet earth' covering the peaceful slumber of the three main protagonists is at odds with Nelly's report that the country folk believe that Heathcliff 'walks'. The suffering that has been undergone in the novel is not balanced out at the end. Though Lockwood seems to have forgotten it, the reader recognises that the mystery surrounding his dream in Chapter 3 has not been explained.¹

¹Michael Wheeler, *English Fiction of the Victorian Period, 1830-1890*; see chapter 3. [student's footnote]

In this instance the student has cited the source, but has not indicated that some words and phrases have been directly lifted from it, nor that the argument offered is essentially a paraphrase of it. Nor is it clear whether the footnote refers only to the last sentence quoted from the essay, or to the whole paragraph. Adoption of Wheeler's ideas should have been acknowledged within the body of the text, using an appropriate form of words (*Michael Wheeler has argued that we need to question . . .*). This student too will be penalised for plagiarism.

Version C: Acceptable

The ending of the novel is more open than we might at first recognise. As Michael Wheeler points out, Lockwood's final vision of a 'benign sky' and a 'quiet earth' covering the peaceful slumber of Cathy, Heathcliff and Edgar is at odds both with Nelly's report that the country folk believe that the ghost of Heathcliff still walks the moors, and with the evidence of Lockwood's own dream in Chapter 3.¹

¹Michael Wheeler, *English Fiction of the Victorian Period, 1830-1890* (London: Longman 1985), p. 67. [student's footnote]

Here the student has named and identified the source, and the nature and degree of indebtedness is clearly stated. In this instance, Wheeler's argument has been summarised or paraphrased, but his words have not been used, so that there is no need to mark anything as a direct quotation from the source. Had the student written 'As Michael Wheeler points out, *the apparent closure of Lockwood's final paragraph* is misleading . . .' the words italicised here would have needed to be enclosed within quotation marks, to indicate that they had been taken directly from Wheeler; the footnote reference would remain the same.

Revised January 2009