



Middle School/High School Writing Handbook

The Writing Process

1. Prewriting

Gather ideas before you write

- ⇒ Make a list.
- ⇒ Make a web/graphic organizer.
- ⇒ Ask someone for ideas.
- ⇒ Let your ideas flow.
- ⇒ Free write.
- ⇒ Outline.



2. First Draft

- ⇒ Look over ideas in prewriting ...see if there is any order to them
- ⇒ Begin writing with the ideas that are most familiar to you.
- ⇒ Keep your writing purpose and audience in mind.

3. Revise

- ⇒ Put your ideas through **THE WASH** (page 12)
- ⇒ Revise for traits:
 - Ideas and Content
 - Organization
 - Voice
 - Word choice
 - Sentence fluency

4. Edit

- ⇒ Put your writing through **THE WASH** (page 12)
- ⇒ Edit for conventions
 - spelling
 - punctuation
 - capitalization
 - grammar
 - usage
 - paragraphing

5. Publish

- ⇒ Follow format rules (see page 12)
- ⇒ Polish the document for presentation



Inside this handbook:

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“I love writing. I love the swirl and swing of words as they tangle with human emotions.”
James Michener

Format Requirements for Presentation

Use these standard formatting requirements for all paragraph and essay assignments.

Body of the Paper

- 12 point –Times New Roman
- Maintain standard 1-inch margins
- Double-spaced
- Do not add extra spacing between paragraphs.
- Align left.
- One tab indent per paragraph. Do not use space bar.
- Do not write “The End” at the bottom of writing assignments

Heading

- Assignments of two pages or less do not require a title page or page numbering.
- Assignments of two or less pages require a heading in the upper right hand corner of the page.
- The heading is single-spaced and aligned right.

Titles

- The heading will be followed by the typing of the title, if required.
- The title should be two spaces down from the last line of the heading.
- The title may be written in another font --no larger than 18 point—as long as the font is appropriate and easily legible.
- Do not put the title in quotation marks, italics or underlining.



Required heading information

First and last name
Assignment
Class
Date

Title Pages and Page Numbering

- Assignments of three or more pages require a title page and page numbers.

Page Numbering

- In the upper right hand corner of the page should be the writer’s first initial, last name and page number.
- Numbering page one of a page is optional by today’s formatting rules. You may begin by numbering page 2. Page numbering can be automatically completed in the header.

Title Page Format

- The measurements for the title page are based on Times New Roman --12 point—centered.
- Other fonts, styles and sizes are acceptable on the title page as long as it is completed in good taste and easily legible.
- Titles should not exceed 30-point size depending on the overall appearance.
- Do not put the title in quotation marks, italics or underline.

Measurements

- From the top of the page “Enter” down 14 single spaces (**Around the 3 inch line**). Type title.
- “Enter” down 20 single spaces (**Around the 7 inch line**). Type heading information as stated above .
- Heading information should not exceed 14 point to allow for greater impact of the title.
- Complete measurements before changing fonts and sizes to keep measurements precise.

Handwritten Writing Assignments—When accepted by the instructor

- Write in blue or black ink or dark pencil if the instructor permits it.
- Maintain 1 inch margins and 1/2 inch indent per paragraph.
- Must be neat and legible.
- Write heading information in the upper right corner of the paper.
- No torn edges on paper.
- Only write on one side of the paper.

Ideas and Content

Ideas and Content Rubric

The heart of the message, the content of the piece, with details that enhance the theme

5

This paper is clear and focused. It holds the reader's attention.

- * Topic is narrow and manageable.
- * Relevant quality details go beyond the obvious.
- * Ideas are fresh and original.
- * Reader's questions are answered.

3

The writer is beginning to define the topic, even though development is still basic or general

- * The topic is broad.
- * Support is attempted.
- * Ideas are reasonably clear.
- * Writer has difficulty going from general to specific.
- * The reader is left with questions.
- * The writer generally stays on topic.

1

The paper has no real sense of purpose or central theme

- * The writer is still in search of a topic.
- * Formation is limited or unclear or length is not adequate for development.
- * Everything seems as important as everything else.
- * Text may be repetitious, disconnected with too many random thoughts.

Tips for having great ideas and content

This is the main focus or purpose for the writing.

The reader's attention should be clear with relevant anecdotes and details.

- ◆ Narrow the topic to something specific.
- ◆ Use fresh and original ideas.
- ◆ Write from experience.
- ◆ Show insight in the writing.
- ◆ Make the main idea stand out.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is the using someone else's ideas or words as though they were your own.

1. Any time you use sources in your writing, whether a quotation, paraphrase, or summary, you must credit your sources. There are many online MLA format sites that can assist you in documentation. Google: MLA format and you will be linked to a variety of sites.
2. All parties to plagiarism are considered equally guilty. If you share your course work with another student, you are considered as guilty as the person who plagiarizes it, since you enabled the plagiarism to take place.

“The mere habit of writing, of constantly keeping at it, of never giving up, ultimately teaches you how to write.” Gabriel Fielding

Organization

Organization

The thread of central meaning, the logical pattern of ideas

5

The organizational structure enhances the central idea of the paper; includes a satisfying introduction and conclusion

- * An inviting introduction that draws the reader in and a satisfying conclusion that leaves the reader with a sense of closure and resolution.
- * Thoughtful transitions.
- * Sequencing and pacing are logical and effective.
- * The title is original.

3

The organizational structure is strong enough to move the reader through the text without much confusion

- * Recognizable introduction and conclusion.
- * Transitions often work well.
- * Sequencing sometimes shows some logic.
- * Pacing is fairly well controlled.
- * Title is present

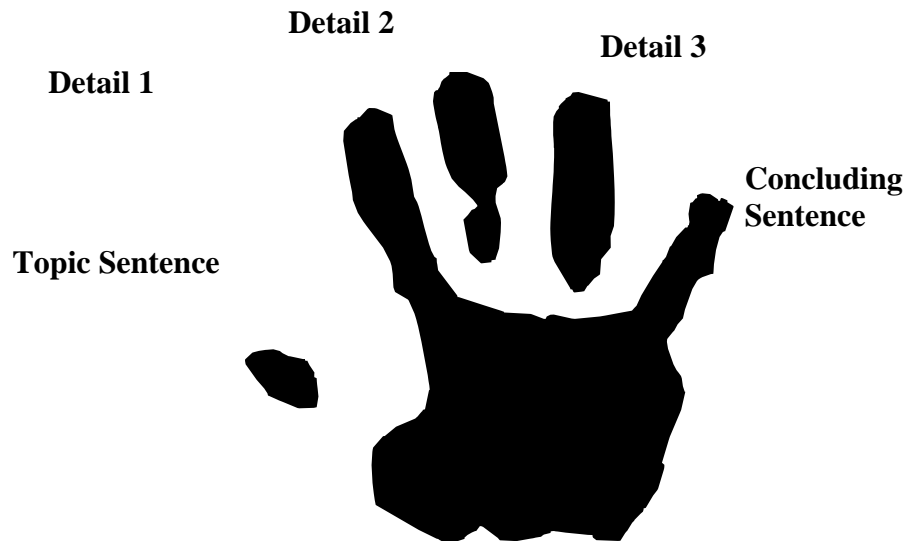
1

The writing lacks a clear sense of direction

- * There is no real lead.
- * Connections between ideas are confusing.
- * Difficult for reader to get a grip on the main point
- * Sequencing and pacing are awkward.

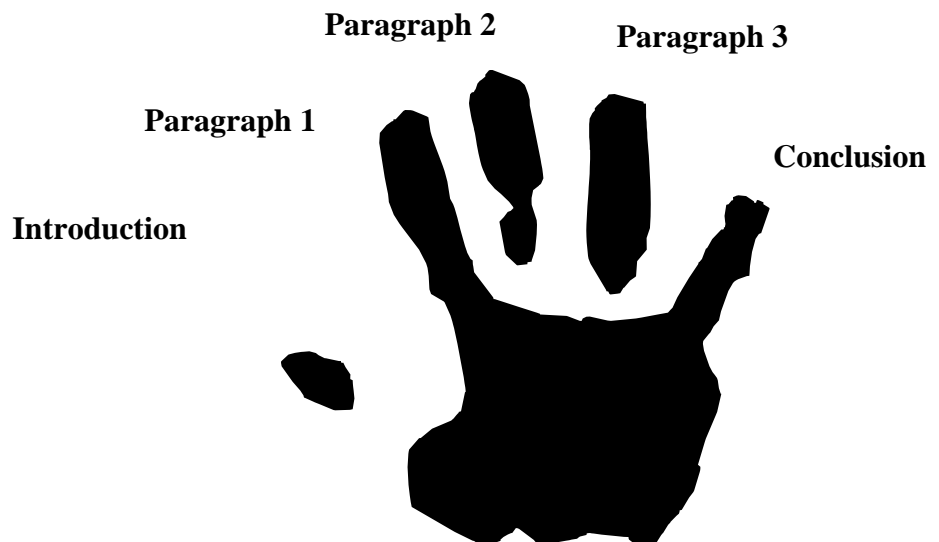
Need a hand with writing? Remember the rule of five for a well organized paper.

Paragraph writing



Remember to use transitions between detail sentences!

Composition Writing: The Five Paragraph Paper



Organization: Transitions

Trans-means “reach across or over.” A transition in writing — whether it’s a word, a phrase, or even a sentence— “reaches across” to connect one idea to another.

Transitions to Clarify

- * for example
- * in other words
- * simply stated
- * that is
- * specifically
- * for instance
- * put another way
- * stated differently
- * to clarify
- * To illustrate the point

Transitions to Compare

- * accordingly
- * as
- * in the same way
- * in conjunction with
- * like
- * similarly
- * also
- * comparable to
- * just as
- * likewise
- * sometimes

Transitions to Contrast

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| although | as opposed to |
| but | even so |
| counter to | even though |
| in spite of this | in the meantime |
| however | conversely |
| in spite of this | nevertheless |
| on the contrary | on the other hand |
| otherwise | still |
| sometimes | yet |

Transitions to Emphasize a Point

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| again | another key point |
| indeed | with this in mind |
| in fact | for this reason |
| frequently | on the positive side |
| truly | to point out |
| to emphasize | surprisingly enough |
| to repeat on the negative side | |

Transitions to Add Information

- | | |
|---------------|-------------------|
| additionally | also |
| as well | equally important |
| together with | likewise |
| again | further |
| besides | for example |
| next | furthermore |
| along with | another |
| finally | for instance |
| moreover | in addition |

Transitions Combinations

- A good... A better... The best
- Initially...Then...After that
- To begin...Then...Consequently
- As soon as...Next...Later...In the end
- At the beginning...Then...Following this...Finally
- One way...Another way...A final method
- First of all...Besides...In addition
- To start...Furthermore...Additionally...Last
- In the first place...After that...Later on...At last
- One important...Another important...The most important

Transitions to Conclude or Summarize

- accordingly
- due to
- in closing
- in short
- therefore
- to conclude
- all in all
- consequently
- finally
- in conclusion
- in summary
- lastly
- thus
- to sum up



Organization: Introductions, and Conclusions

Paragraphs are arranged around one idea.

- ⇒ A topic sentence helps the reader know what to expect in a paragraph.
- ⇒ Supporting sentences give details and facts that support the topic sentence.
- ⇒ A concluding or “clincher” sentence pulls all the details together



Conclusions

Conclusions bring the writing to a sense of completeness. To achieve this the conclusion must bring the reader back to the main idea.

Techniques for writing conclusions

- Restate the main idea. Find a new stronger wording.
- Summarize the major points.
- Close with a final idea or example.
- End with a comment on the topic.
- Call on the reader to take action.
- Never write “I have told you about...” or “I have written about...”

How long should a conclusion be?
10 % of the paper

Introductions

An introduction should

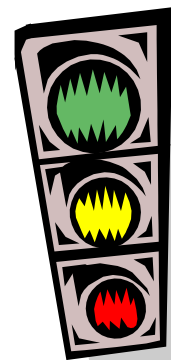
- catch the reader’s interest
- set the tone
- present the thesis (The thesis statement is the main point of an essay. It is placed as the last sentence of the introduction

Never begin with “I am going to tell you about...”

Techniques for writing introductions

- Begin with an anecdote or example.
- Begin by stating a startling fact or adopting an unusual position.
- Use an appropriate quotation.
- Start with background information.

How long should an introduction be? About 10-15% of your paper.



“The point of good writing is to know when to stop.”

L.M. Montgomery, 1874-1942, Canadian writer of children’s stories such as Anne of

Word Choice

Word Choice Rubric

5

The writing creates a mental picture for the reader.

- * Powerful action verbs
- * Adjectives are descriptive and accurate.
- * Nouns are specific, not general.
- * Slang and cliches are not used.
- * Language is natural and not overdone.

3

The language is functional, but difficult for the reader to get a mental picture.

- The message comes across, but with language that doesn't capture imagination.
- Some use of slang and cliches
- May misuse words
- Tends to avoid new words but has one or two good moments.
- Contains a few energetic verbs, accurate adjectives, specific nouns.

1

The paper has no real sense of purpose or central theme.

- Language is not energetic.
- Message is difficult to picture.
- Relies on the same words and avoids using new words.
- Cliches and slang are overused.
- Words are used incorrectly.

Dead Word list—These are taboo things

stuff

pretty much

something

end up

very

you, your, yourself

like

kind of

sort of

could of

should of

whole lot

a lot

get, got, gotten

nice

cool

fine

good

just

totally

lots

awesome

well

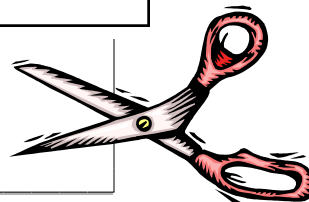
so

fun

Prepositions

Aboard	in front of
about	in regard to
above	inside
according to	in spite of
across	instead of
after	into
against	like
along	near
alongside	notwithstanding
amid	of
among	off
apart from	on
at	on account of
because of	onto
before	out
behind	outside
below	over
beneath	past
beside	prior to
besides	regarding
between	since
beyond	subsequent to
by	through
concerning	throughout
considering	till
despite	to
down	toward
during	under
except for	underneath
from	until
in	unto
in addition to	up
in behalf of	upon

Cut these out of your writing!



“Don’t tell me the moon is shining; show me the glint of light on broken glass.”
Anton Chekhov

Muscle Verbs (Verbs to rev-up your sentences)

blast	crowd	droop	gnash	scream	stab
blot	crow	dwelt	gnaw	screw	stack
blush	clamp	flag	grace	scrub	stage
blaze	cleanse	flirt	grab	shade	stall
blame	cleave	flinch	graft	shake	stash
blacken	clog	flash	grasp	shame	stick
blur	clutch	flip	grease	share	sting
blow	cluck	clank	gripe	shield	stoop
bloom	creep	flap	grind	shift	strip
block	crawl	flake	grope	shine	stow
brush	cramp	flare	groan	ship	strap
break	craft	fake	growl	shoot	stretch
breeze	crab	flatten	grumble	shoo	strike
breathe	cradle	fly	giggle	sing	stump
bruise	crack	flex	guffaw	skate	stun
brace	cry	flame	hang	smack	switch
blare	crease	flee	hum	smirk	swat
bring	creak	fleece	jam	smell	swell
buzz	crest	float	knock	smoke	sweep
chase	crop	fight	kiss	smite	swipe
choose	cross	flock	kill	snake	sweat
chew	crouch	flood	lunge	sneak	trip
chuckle	cruise	flock	lure	snap	trap
chomp	crunch	floor	nudge	sniff	trudge
chill	crown	flaunt	ooze	snip	troop
chop	crush	flow	play	span	twine
chip	drop	fluff	please	scan	twist
cheat	drape	fry	plan	skimp	twitch
chafe	drag	free	place	spite	whine
char	drain	fret	plead	snatch	whirl
chuck	dream	frisk	pluck	sneer	whiz
clear	dry	front	plow	spike	wrap
clean	dress	frost	plot	split	wreak
clank	drip	fudge	plunge	sponge	
clip	drive	fuel	pray	spot	
click	drift	frown	ring	spray	
clutter	drill	glance	scale	spread	
cloud	drink	glare	scam	spur	
clue	drizzle	glaze	scold	spin	
clasp	drown	gleam	scald	spit	
clap	drum	glide	scare	sneer	
climb	drub	gloss	scrape	spike	
close	drug	glow	scout	split	
claw	drench	glue	scratch	sponge	

When revising for vocabulary, rely on the muscle verbs to do the heavy lifting in sentences.



“Omit needless words. Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts.”
William Strunk, Jr.

Word Choice

Linking Verbs		Helping verbs	
am	is	am	shall
are	was	are	will
were	will be	is	could
been	being	was	would
Others that can be linking verbs		were	should
turn	grow	be	may
remain	sound	been	might
seem	look	being	must
appear	feel	have	did
taste	become	has	does
		had	do

Adverbs: tell how, when, where, to what extent

Use adverbs sparingly in your writing. Always see if you can use a better verb or adjective before adding an adverb.

Ending in —LY	Not ending in —LY	
fully	already	out
extremely	together	here
finally	rather	away
carefully	very	today
quickly	now	often
probably	soon	late
easily	then	just
painstakingly	quite	never
gradually	nearby	well
strangely	fast	too
rapidly	not	so
suddenly	over	there

Substitutes for Get and Got

Accomplished	Fix	Purchase
Achieve	Follow	Pursue
Acquire	Gain	Put
Act	Generate	Puzzle
Annoy	Give	Salvage
Approach	Generate	Score
Arrive	Give	Secure
Ask	Go	See
Assassinate	Grab	Seize
Attain	Grasp	Serve
Bag	Hand	Shoot
Be	Help	Slip
Become	Hire	Snare
Borrow	Hit	Snatch
Bribe	Hook	Steal
Bring	Induce	Strike
Build	Influence	Succeed
Buy	Inform	Support
Capture	Inherit	Survive
Catch	Kill	Raise
Collect	Learn	Reach
Come	Live	Reap
Comprehend	Locate	Receive
Conceive	Make	Regain
Contract	Manage	Remember
Convince	Master	Remove
Cook	Murder	Rent
Do	Obtain	Retrieve
Drive	Overcome	Ring
Earn	Perceive	Run
Eat	Persuade	Take
Escape	Prepare	Thrill
Establish	Procure	Trap
Fetch	Produce	Understand
Find	Profit	

Words that slow down writing—Be concise

Why say this.....When you mean this?

a large number	many
accomplished by the use of	done
adjacent to	next to
agree with the idea	agree
at such time	when
at the present time	now
being that	because
by the use of	with
demonstrates that there is	shows
despite the fact that	although
due to the fact that	because
during the time that	while
for the reason that	because
has a tendency	tends
informed me that	said
in the course	during
in order that	so
in order to	to
in the event that	if
in the neighborhood of	near
in view of the fact that	because
most of the time	usually

Sentence Fluency

Sentence Fluency Rubric

5

The paper has an easy flow and rhythm. It is easy to read aloud.

- * Writing sounds natural with one sentence flowing into the next.
- * Varied sentence beginnings
- * Variation in sentence structure

3

The text moves along efficiently, but lacks rhythm and grace. It may sound mechanical or technical instead of pleasant and musical.

- * Simple sentences are okay, but compound and complex sentences need work.
- * The sentences makes sense but are not skillfully written.
- * Some variety in sentence beginnings, length and structure
- * Some parts sound good when read aloud, while others do not.

1

The paper is difficult to follow or read aloud. Sentences often run together

- * Sentences do not sound natural.
- * Reader may have to pause or read the sentence again to understand what is meant
- * Very little variety in sentence beginnings, length or structure.
- * Several fragments and run-ons
- * The reader cannot make sense of the connection between sentences—sounds random.

Sentence Beginnings

Use one of these methods to create variety at the beginnings of sentences to break out of the “subject-verb begun sentence rut.”

1. Two adjectives: **Intelligent, hardworking** students study every night
2. Appositive: Margaret, **the top student in the class**, often goes to the library.
3. Prepositional Phrase: **In the brightly lit classroom**, students study for their science test.
4. Infinitive: **To prepare for the test** is the student’s responsibility.
5. Gerund: **Listening and studying all day** will be the responsibility of the students.
6. Participle: **Having sat in the classroom all day**, the students were ready for a snack.
7. Adverb Clause: **Until we learned the parts of speech**, we couldn’t improve our writing.
8. Adjective Clause: Andy, **who has the mind of a scientist**, worked as a lab assistant.
9. Noun Clause: **That Andy has read every book in the library** has never been proven.

Hints for improving sentence fluency

- Never start two sentences the same way in a paragraph unless it is to create a sense of repetition and impact for effect
- Read the written text aloud. Often times the writer can hear errors when the text is read aloud.
- If there is a lack of variety in sentence beginnings, look at the words that appear later in the sentence. Could they move to the beginning?
- If there are too many short choppy sentences, look to combine with the ideas that are in another sentence. Adding complex sentences can improve writing fluency dramatically.
- Be careful of sentences that have too many conjunctions or subordinating clauses. Try to avoid “*and* overload.”
- Check the commas. Lack of commas can cause unclear meaning and commas used in the wrong places can lead to choppy sounding sentences.

Sentence Fluency (Continued) / Voice / Conventions

<p>Use subordinate clauses to write with complex sentences to improve sentence fluency.</p>	<p>Voice Rubric</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>	<p>Conventions Rubric</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p>		
<p style="text-align: center;">Common subordinating conjunctions for writing with adverb clauses</p>	<p>This paper shows the writer’s personality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Honest and sincere; written from the heart * Language helps the reader see what is happening. * Shows the writer cares about the topic. * The reader develops a real sense of humor, sadness, happiness, suspense, etc. 	<p>The writer uses standard writing conventions to make the writing easy to read with very few errors</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Spelling is correct. * Punctuation is accurate. * Capitalizations skills are present. * Grammar an usage are correct. * Paragraphing is sound. 		
<table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>after as as long as as soon as if once so that though until whenever wherever while</p> </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <p>although as if because before even though since than unless when where whether</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>after as as long as as soon as if once so that though until whenever wherever while</p>	<p>although as if because before even though since than unless when where whether</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>The paper has some personality, but the reader has a hard time connecting with the writer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Has moments of honesty and sincerity * Voice may be strong on occasion, then hide behind generalities. * The writing hides as much as it shows. * Writer seems afraid to show how he/she feels. 	<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p>The writer shows reasonable control over a limited range of writing conventions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Spelling is usually correct. * End punctuation is usually correct. * Most words are capitalized correctly. * Problems with grammar and usage are not serious. * Paragraphing is attempted.
<p>after as as long as as soon as if once so that though until whenever wherever while</p>	<p>although as if because before even though since than unless when where whether</p>			
<p style="text-align: center;">Noun clauses are usually introduced with these words</p> <p style="text-align: center;">that what whomever who whoever whom whomever</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>The paper has no personality and lacks feeling.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The reader cannot sense sincerity or honesty. * The reader has no connection with the writer. * The writing is not very exciting throughout most of the paper. * The writer seems to lack caring of the topic. 	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p>Errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, usage and grammar and paragraphing distract the reader and make the text difficult to read.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Spelling errors are frequent. * Punctuation is missing or incorrect. * Capitalization is random. * Errors in grammar and usage are noticeable. 		
<p style="text-align: center;">Adjective clauses are introduced by relative pronouns</p> <p style="text-align: center;">who whom whose which that</p>				

Conventions: Editing and Revising with *The WASH*

Before handing in your writing, always put your writing through *The WASH*



- ⇒ Know your audience
- ⇒ Know your purpose
- ⇒ **Ideas and Content:**
 - Add specific details—show, don't tell
- ⇒ **Organization:**
 - Identify topic and concluding sentences
 - Circle transitions
 - Make sure you have an inviting introduction and a satisfying conclusion
- ⇒ **Word Choice**
 - Limited use of “to be” verbs per paragraph: is, are, am, was, were, be, been, being
 - No dead words
 - Use major words only once per sentence
 - Avoid contractions, abbreviations and slang
- ⇒ **Sentence Fluency**
 - No two sentences in the same paragraph begin with the same word
 - Avoid sentences beginning with: *a, an, the, or, and, but, so*
- ⇒ **Conventions**
 - Write out numbers of two syllables or fewer.
 - Check spelling, grammar, punctuation and capitalization.
 - Avoid contractions, abbreviations and slang.
 - Check for fragments and run-ons.
 - Watch for misused homonyms (Ex: their/there/they're).

