Grammar Checklist

**Commas**

1. Use a comma to separate two independent clauses (sentences that express a complete thought and can be a complete sentence on its own) that are joined by any of the following conjunctions: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so (FANBOYS).

*Example: Max went to the Red Wings game, but they lost.*

1. Use a comma when a dependent clause (not a complete sentence on its own) comes before an independent clause (can be a complete sentence on its own).
   1. *Example: When Lauren and Andrew arrived at school today, they realized that they forgot her essay on the printer! (not really though ;)*
2. Use a comma when you insert extra information in the middle of a sentence.
   1. *Example: Malachi, a smart boy, is continuously on his phone in class.*
3. Use a comma to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses written in a series.
   1. *Example: Sarah, Jalon, Carlos, Don, and Mykaela got together on Tuesday, filmed their trailer, and published it to YouTube. (I have no clue if that’s true)*
4. Use a comma to separate two or more adjectives that describe something.
   1. *Example: JB has a nice, blue shirt on.*
5. Use a comma when writing a direct quote…place a comma before quote.
   1. *Example: Colby said, “Catcher in the Rye is a pretty good book.”*
6. Use a comma when you are using a transition word (therefore, consequently, etc.). Place the comma after the transition word.
   1. *Example: Landen, Tracie, Dalen, Akbar, Will, Jalen, Briana, Elijah, Dean, Alex, and Freman were not used in a sentence; therefore, I just made this one up.*

**Semicolons**

1. Use a semicolon in place of a period to separate two sentences where the conjunction has been left out (the two independent clauses connect).
   1. *Example: Call me tomorrow; I will give you my answer then.*
2. Use a semicolon before introductory words such as *however, therefore, consequently etc.* when they introduce a complete sentence.
   1. *Example: I ate like a pig; therefore, I expect to feel sick later.*
3. Use a semicolon to separate units of a series when one or more of the units contain commas.
   1. *Example: This conference has people who have come from Boise, Idaho; Los Angeles, California; and Nashville, Tennessee.*

**Quoting vs. Paraphrasing**

1. A quote is a statement copied verbatim from an outside source and used in the essay.
   1. *Example: “What really knocks me out is a book that, when you're all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it. That doesn't happen much, though” (Salinger 118).*
2. A paraphrase is a summary of a statement from an outside source using your own words.
   1. *Example: Holden explains how he wishes he was good friends with the author of a book he just read so that he can call up the author whenever he wants (Salinger 118).*

Note: Both a quote and paraphrase serve as support to the argument of the paper and are both helpful in proving your argument. Whether you paraphrase or directly quote your evidence, evidence must always be cited!

**In-Text Citations (Incorporating Quotes into Essays)**

In MLA style, referring to the works of others in your text is done by using a citation, which comes after a quote or a paraphrase. The order is as follows:

Direct Quote

Context/Background of Evidence + Signal Phrase, “Quote” (Author’s Last Name Pg. #).

1. *Example: In chapter eleven, Holden is reflecting upon how he feels about reading. He states, “What really knocks me out…” (Salinger 118).*

Paraphrase

Context/Background of Evidence + Signal Phrase, paraphrased evidence in all different words (Author’s Last Name Pg. #).

1. *In chapter eleven, Holden is reflecting upon how he feels about reading. He explains how he wishes he was good friends with the author of a book he just read so that he can call up the author whenever he wants (Salinger 118).*

Do’s and Don’t’s of Essay Writing

* Do not use “a lot” because “a lot” is where cars are parked. Think about it…how much is “a lot” anyway? It is different for everyone, so if you are trying to give the reader an idea about how much of something there is, be more specific than “a lot.”
* Do not use “things” or “stuff” – again, not specific enough for the reader to imagine…don’t do that *stuff*, okay guys? Those *things* aren’t good.
* You do not have to be fancy and use words that you would not normally use…word choice is about picking the best words for what you want to say rather than trying to make yourself sound like a stuffy professor
* Do not include the reader in a formal essay (no “you, us, we, our,” etc.) – Think about it…if you include the reader and they do not agree with what you are saying, you lose credibility with them… More importantly, DON’T command either (see what I did there?? Haha) So for example, don’t say “Imagine…” “Think about it…” etc.
* Make sure your tenses match – an essay should always be in the present tense (he GOES vs. he went) unless describing something that happened in the past (flashback) or it’s in a direct quote…then you can use past tense. So make sure you never say anything like, “Holden **stops** in front of the museum and **stared** at it for a while” because “stops” is in present tense and “stared” is in past tense; they should be in the same tense…PRESENT.
* Make sure your pronouns match. Never say, “**A person** walked down the street and **they** stopped at the library” because “a person” and “they” don’t go together. “A person” goes with “he/she.”
* Do not make generalizations (“Everyone, always, never, all people,” etc.) You do not want to come off as someone who makes assumptions about people…*everyone hates that*
* Only use first person (“I, me, my”) if you are describing a personal experience that is important to the essay…do NOT say, “I believe,” “I think,” “In my personal opinion,” “I realize,” etc. *I think that’s unnecessary*
* Questions: It is unnecessary to ask questions in an essay – if you ask the reader a question and do not answer it, readers can get annoyed OR if you ask the reader a question and do answer it, then what was the point of asking the question? Plus, questions imply “you” which is second person…so you can’t use it in an essay.
* Do not use contractions (“don’t, won’t, can’t, wouldn’t” etc.) – if you don’t just type out the whole word, you seem lazy or careless.
* Be direct…don’t dance around the subject. It could be that if you say what you have to say in a way that is too fluffy and not to the point, then your point will not be made abundantly clear right away the way that it would if you just said it directly. In other words, BE DIRECT/CONCISE.
* Take pride in your work; make it polished and refined…have someone proofread it for spelling and grammar mistakes. Look how hard it is to raed a sentence that don’t follow any rules of grammar and has lots of spelling mistakes because it is hard to read and their are no commas and this is a really long drawn out sentence and your probly thinking okay when is this gonna end but it’s not its just gonna to go on until your like okay fix this nafso before my brain explodes.

**MLA Format**

All essays are required to be in MLA format (for more information and a sample, visit the OWL Purdue MLA website: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>)

12-Point Font, Times New Roman, All 1-Inch Margins, Double Spaced, One Space Between Sentences, heading on the left side of the paper, centered title, header is last name and page number (see sample on Intro/Conclusion page)