

LINDEN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

ESSAY WRITING GUIDE

Introduction

This Essay Writing Guide contains the information you will need when you need to write an essay in any high school class. Part One deals with general information about essay writing. Part Two addresses the MLA format while Part Three contains information about the APA format. Please keep in mind that although this Guide covers most of the general information about essays, **your teacher has the final word on the format he or she prefers**; be sure to ask your teacher if you have any questions.

Part One: General Information

An essay is essentially a long answer to a specific question. Your teacher may ask you to write a persuasive essay—supporting a position—or an expository essay—explaining a topic. In this section you will find answers to general questions about essays.

1. What is the basic structure of an essay?

All essays follow the same basic structure. This includes an introduction, several supporting paragraphs, and a conclusion. The number of supporting paragraphs depends on the topic or the length requirement that your teacher has assigned.

Introduction: This paragraph should gain your reader's interest and identify the thesis or topic (see question 3 below) that you plan to develop. The thesis statement should be the last sentence of your introduction.

Supporting paragraphs: These paragraphs present the main points or reasons supporting your thesis or clarifying your topic. Supporting ideas may include: facts, details, statistics, definitions, examples, anecdotes, and quotations. Each main point should be discussed in a separate paragraph with smooth transitions between paragraphs. Arrange your supporting paragraphs in an intentional order: importance, chronology, location, or classification.

Conclusion: This final paragraph should restate the thesis or topic and tie the main points of your supporting paragraphs together.

2. How do I format the pages of my essay?

- Use only white 8½ x 11 inch paper
- Use black ink only
- Use a 10- to 12-point font in a style that is simple and easy to read; Times New Roman, Arial, or Cambria are good choices
- Double-space your essay
- Use 1 inch margins; the default margins in Microsoft Word are fine

- Page numbers go in a header at the upper right corner of each page, along with your last name (MLA format) or the title of your essay (justified left in APA format)
- Indent five spaces—or one tab—at the beginning of each new paragraph
- Use left justify for the positioning of your text
- If you are not asked to include a title page, place the following information in the upper side of your first page only: Your full name, your teacher’s name, the name of the course, and the date it is being handed in; also, the title of your essay must be centred on the next line below this information (see examples in Part Two and Part Three)
- If you are asked to include a title page, this must include the title of your essay, your full name, the name of the course, your teacher’s name, and the date it is being handed in (see examples in Part Two and Part Three)

3. How can I write an effective thesis statement?

The final sentence of your introduction should focus the reader’s attention on the position you are going to support or the information you are going to provide; this is the thesis or topic statement. This sentence must be clear and specific.

Examples:

Sir Francis Drake’s circumnavigation of the globe led directly to the war with Spain in 1588.

There are many competing theories about what really happened the morning of September 11, 2001.

Young children exposed to low levels of lead may face health problems later in life.

4. What level of language should be used in an essay?

Essays may be either formal or semi-formal, depending on the subject and type of essay. Formal language is appropriate for subjects that are serious and objective in tone. Semi-formal language is appropriate for subjects that are more light-hearted or personal in tone. Be sure to check with your teacher which he or she prefers.

Formal language:

- uses only third-person
- does not contain any contractions, abbreviations, slang, or colloquialisms
- does not contain any grammatical, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation errors

Semi-formal language:

- may use first- or second-person
- may use contractions
- may use abbreviations or colloquialisms sparingly but avoids the use of slang
- does not contain any grammatical, spelling, capitalization, or punctuation errors

5. What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the act of presenting someone else's ideas as your own. This happens when you copy someone else's work or when you neglect to give credit in the body of your essay and in a Works Cited page. Plagiarism is a very serious offence and must be avoided at all times. Therefore, you must give credit for anyone else's ideas or words that you use in an essay.

6. How can I make sure I'm using reliable sources?

It is vital to judge the validity of information before you use it as supporting evidence for your essay. Do not use out-dated, incomplete, or inaccurate information. You also need to be sure that your source is an unbiased expert. This is especially true for information found on the Internet, since there is no editor or publishing company to control what is posted. Government and education sites are usually reliable, as are most nonprofit-organization and professional-business sites. Private and personal sites are less reliable. If you find the same information on more than one reliable site, there is a better chance that it is accurate. Try to find the original source of the information, if possible. If you cannot find the name of the author or organization on a website, **do not** use the information for your essay.

7. How can I avoid plagiarism?

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to give credit where credit is due. Any information you find in the course of your research and use in your essay—whether it is quoted word-for-word, summarized, or paraphrased—must be credited. You do this in two places: First, you give credit inside your essay with an in-text citation. Second, you give credit at the end of your essay in a Works Cited page. Each in-text citation must refer to an entry in the Works Cited page and each entry in the Works Cited page must refer to an in-text citation. Instructions and examples of each of these are found in the following sections referring to MLA and APA formats.

A good guideline is to cite everything unless you are sure that the information is common knowledge, such as a significant date or a general statement. For example, you would not need to cite the fact that Mahatma Gandhi was assassinated on January 30, 1948—even if you did not know this before your research.

In addition to this guide, there are some very helpful tools online that you can use when citing sources, both in-text and in your Works Cited:

<http://www.easybib.com> (MLA only—unless you subscribe to the site)

<http://www.citationmachine.net>

<http://www.thewritesource.com>

Part Two: MLA

The Modern Language Association (MLA) is a professional association for scholars of language and literature. They have developed a format that enables consistency in all essays that are submitted for publication in these fields. In general you would use the MLA style in an English or Biblical Studies class.

For more information on the MLA style, see:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

1. Sample First Page

Unless your teacher specifically asks you to include a Title Page with your essay, all of the necessary information—your name, your teacher’s name, the course, the date handed in—is included on the left side of the first page. Be sure to include the title of your essay—centred and not underlined—as well as the page number with your last name.

Little 1
Chuck Little Mr. M. Janzen Literary Focus ELA 30S 9 September 2010
Loss of Innocence: The Theme of All Literature
In William Blake’s <i>Songs of Innocence and Experience</i> , the reader is introduced to the juxtaposition of two concepts which effectively characterize all English literature produced in the last four centuries. The pastoral innocence of <i>The Lamb</i> represents all that is good and righteous in the rural England with which Blake was so familiar. The onset of the industrial revolution and its violent repercussions, however, are portrayed with scathing clarity in the dark mirror image of <i>The Tyger</i> . The terrible

2. Sample Title Page

If your teacher asks you to include a Title Page with your essay, be sure to include all of the correct information. If you have a Title Page, you do not need to include this information on the first page of your essay; simply start your introduction. Notice that the Title Page does not include the page number or your last name in the top, right corner.

Loss of Innocence:
The Theme of All Literature

Chuck Little
Literary Focus ELA 30S
Mr. M. Janzen
9 September 2010

3. In-Text Citations

Every time you use information that you have discovered in the course of your research, you need to give the author credit in an in-text citation; this applies regardless of whether the information is quoted word-for-word, summarized, or paraphrased.

- In most cases, providing the author's last name and a page number is sufficient:

In response to rapid metropolitan expansion, urban renewal projects sought "an order in which more significant kinds of conflict" (Mumford 485).

- If there are two or three authors, include the last name of each:

(Winks and Kaiser 176)

- If there are more than three authors, include the last name of the first author followed by "et al." without any intervening punctuation:

(Baldwin et al. 306)

- If the author is mentioned in the text, only the page reference is inserted:

According to Postman, broadcast news influences the decision-making process (51-63).

- To cite literary prose works, give the page reference first, and then add a chapter, section, or book number in abbreviated form after a semicolon.

In *Cry, the Beloved Country*, Paton presents Steven Kumalo as "a man who lives in a world not made for him" (14; ch.3).

- To cite verse (plays and poems), use the divisions (act, scene, book, stanza) and lines. Use periods to separate the various parts.

When she learns that Romeo is a Montague, Juliet exclaims, "My only love, sprung from my only hate!" (1.5.138)

- To cite the Bible, use the book's title or an abbreviated form thereof along with chapter and verse separated by a colon. Include the abbreviation for the version you are using if it is anything other than King James Version.

Paul instructs Timothy, "Watch your life and doctrine closely" (1 Tim. 4:15 NIV).

- To cite an online source without a specified author use the title of the website.

The Educational Resources Information Centre addresses problems with television viewing and children ("Guidelines").

4. Works Cited Entries

Once you have used information in your essay and given credit with an in-text citation, you must include the bibliographical details of the source in a Works Cited page. Notice the following about the examples below:

- Entries are in alphabetical order according to author’s last name—or the first piece of information in the entry
- The title of the page—“Works Cited”—is not underlined
- The page numbers and your last name are continued on this page
- All entries that are longer than one line long have the second and subsequent lines tabbed once; this helps the reader to easily find all entries
- All entries list the medium: “Print” or “Web” in these examples
- Web sources no longer include the URL (internet address)

Janzen 7	
Works Cited	
Abrahams, Noah. <i>Who Has Seen the Rain?</i> Winnipeg: Taylor and Janzen Publications, 2006. Print.	< Book
“Brussels sprouts.” <i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> . 25th ed. 2008. Print.	< Encyclopedia
Cather, Willa. “Paul’s Case.” <i>Perrine’s Literature: Structure, Sound, and Sense</i> . Ed. Thomas R. Arp and Greg Johnson. New York: Heinle and Heinle, 2002. Print.	< Short story from a book
Davidson, Peter. “Going Fishing.” <i>Outdoors Canada</i> . 15 June 2002: 116-119. Print.	< Article
deMaupassant, Guy. “Was It a Dream?” <i>The Classical Library</i> . Rev. Dr. Robert S. Munday. Web. 30 June 2010.	< Short story from the web
Llewellyn-Jones, Rosie. “Africans in the Indian Mutiny.” <i>History Today</i> 59.12 (2009): 40-47. <i>Academic Search Premier</i> . EBSCO. Web. 30 June 2010.	< Online article from EBSCOHost
<i>Holy Bible: New International Version</i> . Colorado Springs: International Bible Society. 1984. Print.	< Bible
Reader, Daniel. <i>On Writing a Research Paper</i> . Western Kentucky University, 2007. Web. 21 Oct. 2009.	< Document from a website

Part Three: APA

The American Psychological Association (APA) is a scientific and professional organization of psychologists. They have developed a formatting style in order to ensure consistency in the submission of articles. In general you would use the APA format in your Science or Social Studies courses.

For more information on the APA style, see:
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/>

1. Sample Title Page

The Title Page must include: the title, your name, and your institution (school). Notice also that the pagination begins on the Title Page and a shortened version of the title is justified to the left of the header.

Running on Empty	1
<p>Running on Empty: The Effects of Hyper-Involvement on the Lives of High School Students Samuel Clemens Linden Christian School</p>	

2. Abstract

Your teacher may ask you to provide an Abstract with your APA essay. An Abstract is a concise summary of the main points of your paper that contains your research topic, research questions, participants, methods, and conclusions. It should be a single paragraph without indentation of the first line. The header should carry over from your Title Page. Simply centre the title "Abstract" at the top of the page in plain font (no underline or bold).

Consult your teacher for specific instructions regarding the Abstract.

3. Sample First Page

The first page of your essay will contain the header you created on your Title Page with the page number on the right side an abridged title on the left. Centre your full title on the first line and then continue with the introduction after that. Notice that if you included an Abstract, this would be the third page.

Running on Empty	3
Running on Empty: The Effects of Hyper-Involvement on the Lives of High School Students	
Canadians in the twenty-first century live busier lives than at any other time in history. From the demands of full-time jobs to innumerable leisure-time activities, more and more people are finding that they do not have the margin in their lives that their ancestors of a hundred years ago did. This stressful situation is spreading itself to high school students as well. The average twelfth-grade students holds at least	

4. In-Text Citations

Every time you use information that you have discovered in the course of your research, you need to give the author credit in an in-text citation; this applies regardless of whether the information is quoted word-for-word, summarized, or paraphrased. Include the page number only if you use a direct quote.

- Generally you will include the author's last name, the date of publication, and the page number in the reference:

Consumerism has become "a national obsession" (Jones, 1998, p. 12)

- To cite a work with multiple authors mention all the authors for the first in-text citation. Subsequently, use only the first author's last name, followed by "et al.":

First time:
(Reinharz, Levitt & Burns, 1994, p. 141).

Subsequently:
(Reinharz et al., 1994)

- To cite an anonymous work use a short title—usually the first two or three words of the full title—in place of the author's name. Remember to *italicize* or underline periodical or book titles and to put article and chapter titles in "quotation marks":

World population still expands, but more slowly now ("New Hope," 2000)

- When a corporation, an organization, or an association claims of authorship of a document, treat the organization’s name as if it were the author’s last name. Place abbreviations of long names in square brackets and use only the abbreviation (without square brackets) in subsequent references:

First time:
(National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 1997)

Subsequently:
(NIMH, 1997)

5. Reference Page

Once you have used information in your essay and given credit with an in-text citation, you must include the bibliographical details of the source in a References page. Notice the following about the examples below:

- Entries are in alphabetical order according to author’s last name—or the first piece of information in the entry
- The title of the page—“References”—is not underlined
- The page numbers and title are continued on the header of this page
- All entries that are longer than one line long have the second and subsequent lines tabbed once; this helps the reader to easily find all entries

Running on Empty	7
References	
Abrahams, Noah. (2006). <i>Who Has Seen the Rain?</i> Winnipeg: Taylor and Janzen Publications.	< One author
<i>Brussels Sprouts</i> . (2008). In <i>Encyclopedia Britannica</i> (25th ed., London: Vol. 2). Britannica Publishers.	< Encyclopedia
Davidson, Peter. (2002). Going Fishing. <i>Outdoors Canada</i> , 47, 116-119.	< Article
<i>Holy Bible: New International Version</i> . (1984) Colorado Springs: International Bible Society.	< Bible
Terry, Calvin J. (2004, June). Becoming a Meteorologist. <i>The Weather Network</i> . Retrieved June 28, 2006, from http://www.weather.com/resources/metro.html	< Website