Shaler Area High School

Handbook for Writing & Research

Based on MLA, 7th Edition
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Mrs. Anne Loudon
Mrs. Amanda Neumann

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Many classes require a research project or paper to be completed at most grade levels including post-high school courses. For many students this can be an overwhelming task, but this handbook is one of the tools to help you.

The purpose of this handbook is to set a common standard for students and teachers in the Shaler Area School District. This is based on use of the Modern Language Association (MLA) format; however, be aware that other style manuals exist including American Psychological Association (APA) and Chicago Manual of Style that may be required to use at some point in future educational pursuits.

- Choose a topic
- Write a thesis statement
- Identify appropriate sources
- Take notes
- Create an outline
- Write rough draft
- Revise and format
- Submit paper to teacher and Safe Assign
Choosing a Topic

One of the most difficult steps in the research process is choosing a topic. When given the opportunity to select your own topic, it is important to choose one that balances specificity, availability of resources, and personal interest. It is often a good idea to start with a broad idea, then whittle it down by asking yourself questions such as who, where, how, and when. It is recommended that you brainstorm some specific ideas and then research the availability of resources in the library and on the internet to see if these ideas can actually be made into a paper meeting the length and depth requirements.

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<td>The Impact of the Ash Borer Beetle on Forests in Western Pennsylvania</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Once you have selected your topic and gathered a variety of sources, the next step is to develop a thesis statement. A thesis statement is one, declarative sentence that establishes the purpose for your project or paper. It is the driving force of the paper that alerts the reader to the specific content of the entire project. If the purpose of a paper is persuasive, the thesis statement must express the author’s position on the topic. The thesis statement appears in the introductory paragraph; however, its positioning within the paragraph may be specified by your teacher.

**Topic:** Stopping Teen Gang Activity  
**Thesis Statement:**  
Teen gang activity in the United States can be stopped by a combined approach which consists of supervised youth programs, more job availability, and closer family relationships.

**Topic:** AIDS Research  
**Thesis Statement:**  
Although much research has gone into finding a cure for the AIDS virus, we are no closer to a real cure than we were when the disease first became known.

**Topic:** Religious Conflict in the Middle Ages  
**Thesis Statement:**  
Even though Christians and Muslims were supposedly fighting for religious dominance in the medieval world, their motives were strongly affected by the desire for land and economic power.

**Topic:** How Poe’s Life Influenced His Writing  
**Thesis Statement:**  
Edgar Allan Poe’s education, family history, and personal relationships greatly influenced his writing style.
Choosing Appropriate Sources

Once you have established the focus of your paper, begin to gather reliable sources. You should be aware that not all sources related to your topic are appropriate for your paper. General encyclopedias such as World Book and Wikipedia, although not the best sources for academic research, are a good place to gain background knowledge. Make certain that you are following your teacher’s requirements.

Since the internet provides so much information that can be submitted by anyone, it is especially important to evaluate these sources. Often the website address (url) can provide a clue as to the credibility of the source.

.com = commercial
.edu = educational
.gov = government
.org = non-profit organization

Evaluate print and electronic sources by taking a closer look at the ABCD’s of evaluation:

A= Accuracy & Authority
- According to the details provided, does the author appear qualified to present information on the topic?

B= Bias
- Does the source enrich the reader’s experience rather than promote social biases (gender, racial, religious)?

C= Content & Currency
- Is there enough information to make visiting this site worthwhile?
- Is the “last modified” or “updated” date provided?
- Is the “most recent revision” or copyright date appropriate for the content?

D= Design
- Is the text easy to read and not cluttered with distracting advertisements, graphics, fonts and backgrounds?
Plagiarism

Purpose:
The Shaler Area School District strives to create an environment of academic integrity wherein all students can produce original works with appropriate identification of the sources of information. Academic dishonesty is a very serious offense. Therefore, it shall be the policy of the District to maintain an educational environment in which plagiarism will not be tolerated.

Definition:
Plagiarism is defined as presenting the ideas or statements of another without crediting the original source. Even unintentional plagiarism is considered a serious matter. Plagiarized sources include, but are not limited to, the written word, pictures, photographs, music, internet sources, works of art, and the spoken word.

Authority:
The Shaler Area School Board prohibits all forms of plagiarism. Plagiarism is against the school code of conduct and any violation will result in disciplinary action.

Guidelines for maintaining Academic Integrity:
The faculty will:
- Define plagiarism for students.
- Teach methods of properly citing sources.
- Monitor incremental progress of the completion of projects.
- Utilize instructional strategies for the prevention and detection of plagiarism.

Students will:
- Show academic integrity by not plagiarizing.
- Properly cite all work presented to teachers.
- Provide further documentation of submitted assignments upon request.
- Provide all original sources for assignments upon request.

Consequences:
Failure to comply with Shaler Area School District’s plagiarism policy regarding academic integrity will result in the following actions, which may include, but are not limited to:
- A mandatory conference with the student, including parents, teachers, and/or school administrators.
- The assignment will be marked as incomplete until rewritten with proper citations.
- Once rewritten, the “I” will be changed to a “0” grade for the assignment.
- Refusal to rewrite an assignment will result in the “I” being converted to a nine-week grade of an “F”.
- Discipline will be in accordance with student infraction guidelines (detention, suspension, etc.).
- Instances of plagiarism will be documented in a student’s record in the same manner as other infractions.
Many of your teachers will require you to submit your papers to Blackboard via SafeAssign. This is a program that will cross reference your paper with a vast multitude of other papers and websites to identify plagiarized information. SafeAssign can be a useful tool for you to screen your own paper and to protect your intellectual property.

Please realize that SafeAssign is just one tool that teachers use to identify plagiarism.

DIRECTIONS FOR SUBMITTING TO SAFEASSIGN:

Submit a SafeAssignment

Follow these steps to submit to a SafeAssignment.

1. From a content area within a course, select the SafeAssignment and click View/Complete.
2. The Upload SafeAssignment page will appear.
3. Complete the page using the table below as a guide and click Submit.

Upload Safe Assignment Fields

The Add SafeAssignment page includes the following fields.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIELD</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Displays the title of the SafeAssignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructions</td>
<td>Displays the instructions for the SafeAssignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comments</td>
<td>Enter any comments for the Instructor in this field.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>File to Attach</td>
<td>Click Browse to locate a file to upload as a SafeAssignment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Reference Database</td>
<td>Select this option to upload your paper to the Global Reference Database. It will be used to check papers from other schools for plagiarism. The paper will only be used to check for plagiarism.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Blackboard’s SafeAssign Building Blocks Student Manual
Note Taking

Note cards are index cards on which you record relevant information from your sources using direct quotation, paraphrase or summary note-taking styles. They will help you to:

- Avoid plagiarism
- Write an outline or group notes easily
- Determine the validity of the information
- Determine the relevancy to your topic
- Recognize essential vs. nonessential information

How to make a note card
1. Write a slug (one to four-word label indicating the card’s contents) in the upper left corner.
2. Write the author’s last name and exact page number(s) from the source in the upper right corner. If the source has no author, use a shortened version of the title. Properly punctuate the title with underlining or quotation marks. Many electronic sources have no page numbers. If the paragraphs are numbered, use those numbers. Otherwise, use only the author or abbreviated title.
3. Write the note (direct quote, paraphrase or summary) in the middle. See guidelines for writing notes on the specific note-taking style pages.
4. Limit the note to only one side of the note card.

Sample of a paraphrased note card:

```
slug

Food as medicine        Mindell 9-16

The right foods can prevent disease and aging in the human body. Americans have grown too accustomed to a poor diet of highly processed foods. We need to return to a more natural diet.
```

Sample of a direct quote note card:

```
slug

Food as medicine        Mindell 10

“In the 1950s, food quickly lost its status as a healing agent and was regarded solely as fuel for the body.”
```

Adapted from Lufkin High School’s Tip Sheet #6 http://www.lufkinisd.org/lhshome/library/big6tip6.htm
**Bibliography Cards**

**INDEX CARDS**

Use 3" x 5" or 4" x 6" index cards for the working bibliography and use a separate card per entry. Index cards allow greater flexibility than a lengthy list on notebook paper. As your research progresses, you will be able to arrange and rearrange your sources to best suit your needs. It is a good matter of practice to check the accuracy of all necessary information against the sample entries.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY CARD FORMAT**

Include the following information on each bibliography card:

- **Middle of Card**: Bibliography entry
- **Lower left-hand corner**: The library and source where the work can be found
- **Lower right-hand corner**: Special features of the source or personal note (i.e., charts, graphs, pictures, etc.)
- **Upper right-hand corner**: Call number if the source is a book

---

**Example**


An alternative to creating note cards is annotating. In order to write a good outline or essay, annotation is helpful. Annotation is merely a written conversation between the reader and the writer with the reader actively responding to the text. This exercise will help you find connections between ideas within the text with your own ideas and ideas in other sources.

Useful tools include highlighters and sticky notes.

- As you read, look for items you find interesting, significant, or that raise questions. (Sample comments: What is the author trying to say? I don’t understand this part. Look this up.)

- Use stars, circles, arrows, lines, highlighting, and any other meaningful symbols to mark these as you read.

- You may assign different colors to elements (pink for questions, yellow for main points, orange for connecting ideas, etc.)

- Adding slugs to your sticky notes may also help you organize your annotations.

- Use arrows and lines to show related ideas in the text.

- Write questions in the margins about the text. Ex. What does this mean?

- Put a line of text in your own words to aid understanding.

- Note any vocabulary words that are unfamiliar. Look up and note the definitions in the margin.

- Make connections with the text. Ex. This makes me think of....

Now go back and look at the marks you have made.

Think about the connections you have found, questions you’ve raised.

Why did you find that line interesting?
What was the author trying to do?
Once you have taken sufficient notes, a logical way to organize your material is to create an outline.

A **formal outline** is a type of graphic organizer that uses numbers and letters to show relationships among ideas. A formal outline can be a **topic outline**, composed of words or phrases, or a **sentence outline**, composed entirely of complete sentences. Never mix the two styles in one outline. You might write a formal outline for your own personal organization of material, or your teacher may require that you write one while you are working on your project to check your progress.

The outline is part of the process and should be written **BEFORE** the rough draft, not after the paper is written only to fulfill a requirement.

A formal outline will help you to:
- Remain organized and stay focused when you put your product together
- See if you have enough (or too much) material to support your thesis statement
- Figure out the order in which your main ideas and subordinate ideas will appear in the final product.

These are the traditional outlining symbols:

I.

A.

1.

2.

a.

b.

B.

II.

Use at least two subdivisions at each level. Do not write a Roman numeral I without a Roman numeral II, an A without a B, and so on. If a level has only one subdivision, either integrate it into a higher level or expand it to at least two subdivisions.

You may need to do some more research and note-taking if you find informational gaps while writing the outline.
Thesis: Research shows that single-sex classes are better for girls and, therefore, should be encouraged.

I. During the first 200 years in America, women were not allowed in schools.
   A. Initially, education was only for men.
   B. Throughout the nineteenth century, the number of coed schools increased.
   C. In 1972, Congress passed Title IX, a law prohibiting sex discrimination in educational institutions.

II. One significant advantage of single-sex classes is the elimination of gender bias that often occurs in coed classes.
   A. Teachers pay more attention to boys.
      1. Girls are not called on as often as boys in coed classes.
      2. Many times teachers tolerate disruptive behavior in boys but discourage the same behavior in girls.
   B. Favoritism is also an issue in coed classes.
      1. Teachers “get a thrill from involving a boy who’s going to be disruptive.”
      2. Teachers have higher expectations for boys than for girls.

III. Girls benefit from being free from the gender bias of coed classes.
   A. They perform better academically.
      1. Textbooks “show an inherent and often inadvertent bias against females in textbooks.”
      2. This bias also shows itself in teaching techniques.
   B. Techniques that are disadvantageous to girls are more apparent in certain subject areas.
      1. Girls show more interest in math when taught in single-sex classes.
      2. This is also the case in science courses.

IV. Not only do single-sex classes offer academic advantages, but also personal benefits.
   A. Distractions are eliminated when the sexes are separated.
   B. All-girl schools offer a nurturing environment in which girls are not afraid to try.
      1. The single-sex environment makes girls feel more comfortable in class.
      2. In all-girl schools, one is respected for doing well in class, instead of being mocked by other students.
   C. Girls have lower self-esteem than adolescent boys.
      1. Single-sex education compensates for this disparity.
      2. All positions of power are held by girls.
Thesis: Research shows that single-sex classes are better for girls and, therefore, should be encouraged.

I. Background
   A. Segregated education
   B. Coeducation
   C. Title IX

II. Gender Bias
   A. Attention
      1. Opportunity
      2. Discipline
   B. Favoritism
      1. Encouragement
      2. Expectation

III. Academic advantages
   A. Grade improvement
      1. Materials
      2. Methods
   B. Techniques
      1. Math
      2. Science

IV. Personal advantages
   A. Distraction
   B. Comfort
      1. Environment
      2. Students
   C. Development
      1. Self-confidence
      2. Role models
Writing the Paper

A research paper should be comprised of an introductory paragraph, numerous body paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph.

An effective introduction includes the thesis statement, main discussion points, and background information. After reading the introduction, the audience should have a clear understanding of the paper’s content and purpose.

All body paragraphs must relate to the thesis statement and include a transition, topic sentence, and concluding sentence. Paragraphs should be a minimum of five sentences and should be presented in a logical order. Remember that the main ideas presented in each paragraph should be connected by the transitions within the topic and concluding sentences.

The concluding paragraph should summarize all main discussion points presented in your paper. It is your final opportunity to make your most important ideas clear. Try to avoid using first person pronouns (I, me, my). Use the conclusion to go beyond the text and show the universal nature of your topic. This paragraph should be a unique ending, not simply a repetition of sentences or phrases already used in the paper. End the conclusion with a sentence that rephrases the thesis statement in a way that definitively finishes the paper and leaves the reader with a lasting impression.
Make certain you are following MLA formatting style rules when producing your final draft.

- 1-inch margins all around
- 12-point font in black ink (Times New Roman or Arial are preferred.)
- Entire paper is double spaced (This includes the heading, works cited page, quotes, etc.)
- Heading in the top, left corner (This is in place of a cover page.)

Student Name
Teacher’s Name
Course Title
Due Date

- Title must be centered and appear below the heading. (Do not boldface, underline, italicize, increase point size, or put in quotation marks!)

- Page number must include your last name and an Arabic number and should be placed in the top right corner of every page.

- Be certain to adhere to any additional specific teacher requirements.
Parenthetical documentation is a way to let your reader know what information is original and what information is borrowed. In parenthetical documentation, you use parentheses to indicate or cite the sources of borrowed material. If you do not cite your sources, you are committing plagiarism. Parenthetical documentation gives your statement credibility and lets your instructor know that you did the research. It also allows the reader a way to check your original source for accuracy.

**When you must cite**
Whenever you use material from another source, you must let your reader know immediately, in parentheses right after you use it, where it came from.

- **Direct Quotations** – written or oral formats
  (nonfiction or fiction, speeches, song lyrics or anything you copy word-for-word)
- **Paraphrased or Summarized Information**
  (any borrowed information or ideas that you have rephrased or condensed into your own words)
- **Statistical Data**
  (charts, graphs or tables)
- **Images that are attributed to someone**
  (photos, paintings, sculptures, maps, cartoons and computer graphics, but not “clip art”)

**When you do not have to cite**
- Your own opinions, interpretations and analysis
- General information (If the same information is found in three or more sources)
- Well-known facts (If in doubt, document.)

The difference between well-known facts and little-known facts is not always easy to determine. Consider the following examples:

Virtually everyone knows that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated while serving as United States President, so that fact, including the date and location, need not be documented. Every source about Abraham Lincoln would contain this information.

On the other hand, not everyone knows that Robert Todd Lincoln, son of Abraham Lincoln, witnessed the assassinations of three Presidents: his father’s, President Garfield’s, and President McKinley’s. As a result, he refused to attend any more state affairs. That little-known fact, although readily verified, would need parenthetical documentation.

A parenthetical citation must include the author’s last name and page number in parentheses. (If the source is anonymous, use a properly punctuated abbreviated version of the title. If the source is a website, in place of a page number use the date the website was accessed.)
See the sample paper in the appendix for examples.
Incorporating Quotations

The purpose of using direct quotations is to support your thesis statement. Only include direct quotations when the original material is written in such a way that cannot be appropriately paraphrased. Use quotations conservatively and adhere to your teacher’s requirements. If a direct quotation exceeds four lines of type, MLA style requires that you indent one inch from the left margin, continue to double space, and omit quotation marks. Remember to include an introduction that provides the author’s name or the first piece of information in the works cited entry followed by a colon. In this special case, the period goes before the parenthetical citation.

Short quotation (sample)

According to one study, dreams may express "profound aspects of personality" (Foulke 184).

Long quotation (sample)

In "American Origins of the Writing-across-the-Curriculum Movement," David Russell argues:

Writing has been an issue in American secondary and higher education since papers and examinations came into wide use in the 1870s, eventually driving out formal recitation and oral examination. From its birth in the late nineteenth century, progressive education has wrestled with the conflict within industrial society between pressure to increase specialization of knowledge and of professional work (upholding disciplinary standards) and pressure to integrate more fully an ever-widening number of citizens into intellectually meaningful activity within mass society.(3)

If you have used the author’s name to introduce any quotation, make certain that you do not use it in the parenthetical citation (see examples above).
Works Cited Page

The Works Cited page is the last page of the research paper. This is a list of the sources that you have cited within the paper. The purpose of a Works Cited is so that the reader may reference your parenthetical citations.

MLA requires a specific format for the Works Cited page:

- Works Cited page should be numbered like all other pages of your paper
- Works Cited should be centered as a title at the top of the page
- The document is double spaced
- All entries need to be alphabetized
- Each Works Cited entry on the page should appear as a parenthetical citation within the paper
- The entries use a hanging indentation (the 1st line goes to the left edge of the margin and each line thereafter is indented 5 spaces.)
- Double space all citations, but do not skip spaces between entries

Formatting examples of commonly used sources follow.
## Quick Guide for Citing Resources—MLA Style

### Print Sources

**Book (one author)**

Author. *Title*. Place of publication: Publisher, copyright date. Format.


**Book (two or three authors)**


**Encyclopedia Article**


**Magazine Article**


**Map or Chart**


### Electronic Sources

**Article in an Online Magazine or Newspaper**

Name of author. “Title of article.” *Title of Magazine or Newspaper*. Publisher. Date of publication. Medium of Publication (web). Date of access.


**A Page on a Web Site**

Author. “Page Title.” *Title of Website*. Publisher or sponsor of the site; if not available, use N.p. Date of publication. Medium of publication (web). Date of access.


**Online Dictionary/Encyclopedia**

“Title of article or word looked up.” *Name of encyclopedia or dictionary*. Publisher. Edition or Year. Format. Date of access.


If you need to cite a source that isn’t listed here, reference the Purdue Online Writing Lab:

Go to: [https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/)

Click on: Research and Citation

Click on: MLA Style

Click on: MLA Formatting and Style Guide

Choose the source you need
# Quick Guide for Citing Resources—MLA Style

## Popular Sources at SAHS

Below are a few samples of SAHS commonly used databases. Please know that many of the databases will format your citation for you. Please ask your teacher or a librarian for assistance. Additional [MLA Citation](#) information can also be found on the SAHS Library website.

Use the following example for the required CITATION ELEMENTS:

- **Author’s Last Name, First Name.** “Article Title.” *Publication Name*. Vol. Issue (Publication Date):
  - Page Number/Range. *Database Name*. Medium of Publication (Web). Date of Access (day month year).

### Biography in Context (Gale)


### Literature Resource Center (Gale)


### Opposing Viewpoints in Context (Gale)


### Gale Virtual Reference Library (Gale)


### Global Issues in Context (Gale)


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Adapted from Rosemont High School [MLA Citation Examples for RHS](#)
Peer Editing Worksheet

Writer: ____________________________
Editor: ____________________________

Directions: The objective of this exercise is for you to read, evaluate, and edit your peer's research paper. This will help him/her in preparing the final revision. Read the paper carefully and objectively. Respond to the following prompts and make any necessary corrections and suggestions on the text.

1. Does the paper have a title? If so, suggest an improvement. If no title is provided, suggest one here.

2. Is the title page correctly formatted? Check content, spacing, punctuation, and capitalization.

3. Determine the purpose of this work. How can the writer better achieve this purpose?

4. Define the writer's intended audience.
   
   a. Is sufficient information provided to fill in the "knowledge gap"? Explain.

   b. Note where the writer can add or subtract details to meet the needs of the audience.

5. Read the introduction. Copy the thesis statement here. Make corrections and suggestions. Remember, the introduction should be a dynamic, attention-getting piece of writing.

6. Does the introduction introduce the four main points discussed in the paper? If not, make suggestions for improvement. Does the conclusion restate the thesis and summarize the four main points? If not, make suggestions for improvement.
7. Evaluate the paper’s organization:
   a. Underline the topic sentence of each paragraph. Does each topic sentence state the paragraph’s focus? Does each topic sentence reflect one of the main points discussed in the introduction? If topic sentences are weak or nonexistent, make suggestions for improvement.
   
   b. Underline the concluding sentence of each paragraph. Does each concluding sentence restate the main point of the paragraph and provide a strong transition to the next main point? If concluding sentences are weak or nonexistent, make suggestions for improvement.
   
   c. Are the transitions clear between paragraphs? Is the paper smooth to read? Do you ever have to “back track” to get to the point? If such confusion occurs, make corrections on the text.

8. Are all points supported with specific, concrete examples? Explain.

9. How many direct quotes are used in the paper?
   a. Are quotes strong enough? Explain.
   
   b. Are quotations woven smoothly into the paper? Are quotes introduced with sufficient context and analyzed by the writer? (Interpretive Sandwich) Explain how the writer can improve his/her use of quotations from the text.
   
   c. Are quotations cited properly using parenthetical documentation? Make any necessary corrections on the text.

10. Look for citations as you read the paper. Make certain each citation includes an introduction, page number, and author’s last name (if applicable). Unless the information is general knowledge, A CITATION MUST BE PROVIDED! Are there portions of the paper where citations are lacking? Is so, please note where the problem exists.

11. List the sources cited in the paper:
12. Each time you see an author’s last name or a source listed in the paper, check it off on the works cited page. (Remember, only list sources that have been cited!)

a. List below any sources that are cited but are not listed on the works cited page.

b. List below any sources that are on the works cited page but are not cited in the paper.

c. Is the works cited page formatted correctly?
   (1). Heading centered?
   (2). Page(s) numbered correctly?
   (3). Are entries listed in alphabetical order?
   (4). Are entries double-spaced?
   (5). Are the second and subsequent lines of each entry indented?
   (6). Are bibliographic citations set up correctly? Punctuated? Is all necessary information provided?

13. Evaluate the sentence structure of the paper.

a. Is the structure varied? Underline portions of the paper where the structure is choppy or rambling.

b. Are the beginnings of sentences varied? Underline portions of the paper where weak phrasing is exhibited (i.e. there is, there are, etc.) or where sentences beginnings are repetitious.

c. Underline and correct any fragments, comma splices or run-on sentences.
14. Evaluate the style of the paper.

   a. Circle poor/weak uses in diction. Make suggestions for stronger vocabulary and language usage.

   b. Is language controlled? Note passages in the paper that seem too "cluttered" with excess wording.

   c. Look for wording errors and vague phrasing such as:
      
      “I will talk about...”
      “This essay will discuss...”
      “This paper says...”
      “I think”, “I feel”, “I believe”

   d. Correct any shifts in verb tense.

   e. Circle uses of vague/weak wording such as things, stuff, it, there is, there are, etc.

   f. Circle any contractions.

   g. Circle any uses of “you”.

   h. Correct any errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and grammar.

   i. Correct any errors in formatting (i.e. headings, margins, page numbers, double spacing, parenthetical documentation, etc.).

15. Assign a grade to this paper. Explain.
You can create sentence variety and rhythm variety by using different sentence beginnings. Be aware of your sentence structures.

**Subject and Verb**
I ran out of the room, and I grabbed a sandwich.

**Subordinate Clause**
Because I was in a hurry, I ran out of the room.

(Commonly used subordinating conjunctions: although, because, if, since, though, unless. until, when, while)

**Adverb**
Hurriedly, I ran out of the room.

(Words ending in -ly)

**Prepositional Phrase**
With a sandwich in my hand, I ran out of the room.

(Commonly used prepositions: about, above, across, among, before, behind, below, beside, between, for in, on, over, under, with)

**Conjunctive Adverb**
I was in a hurry; therefore, I ran out of the room.

(Commonly used conjunctive adverbs: for example, moreover, nevertheless, furthermore, otherwise, therefore, however)

**Participial Phrase**
Grabbing a sandwich, I ran out of the room.

(Verbs ending in –ing that modify a noun)
I. Connectives that link similar ideas:

- again
- also
- and
- besides
- for example
- for instance
- furthermore
- in addition
- in a like manner
- likewise
- moreover
- of course
- similarly
- too

II. Connectives that link ideas that are dissimilar or apparently contradictory:

- although
- as if
- but
- conversely
- even if
- however
- in spite of
- instead
- nevertheless
- on the contrary
- on the other hand
- otherwise
- provided that
- still
- yet

III. Connectives that indicate course, purpose or result:

- as
- as a result
- because
- consequently
- for
- for this reason
- hence
- since
- so
- then
- therefore
- thus

IV. Connectives that indicate time or position:

- above
- across
- afterward
- around
- at once
- at the present time
- before
- beyond
- eventually
- finally
- first
- here
- meanwhile
- next
- presently
- thereafter
- thereupon
A Call to Action:
Regulate Use of Cell Phones on the Road

When a cell phone goes off in a classroom or at a concert, we are irritated, but at least our lives are not endangered. When we are on the road, however, irresponsible cell phone users are more than irritating: They are putting our lives at risk. Many of us have witnessed drivers so distracted by dialing and chatting that they resemble drunk drivers, weaving between lanes, for example, or nearly running down pedestrians in crosswalks. A number of bills to regulate use of cell phones on the road have been introduced in state legislatures, and the time has come to push for their passage. Regulation is needed because drivers using phones are seriously impaired and because laws on negligent and reckless driving are not sufficient to punish offenders.

No one can deny that cell phones have caused traffic deaths and injuries. Cell phones were implicated in three fatal accidents in November 1999 alone. Early in November, two-year-old Morgan Pena was killed by a driver distracted by his cell phone. Morgan’s mother, Patti Pena, reports that the driver “ran a stop sign at 45 mph, broadsided my vehicle and killed Morgan as she sat in her car seat.” A week later, corrections officer Shannon Smith, who was guarding prisoners by the side of the road, was killed by a woman distracted by a phone call (Besthoff). On Thanksgiving weekend that same month, John and Carole Hall were killed when a Naval Academy midshipman crashed into their parked car. The driver said in court that when

Source: Diana Hacker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2006).
This paper has been updated to follow the style guidelines in the *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers, 7th ed.* (2009).
he looked up from the cell phone he was dialing, he was three feet from the car and had no time to stop (Stockwell B8).

Expert testimony, public opinion, and even cartoons suggest that driving while phoning is dangerous. Frances Bents, an expert on the relation between cell phones and accidents, estimates that between 450 and 1,000 crashes a year have some connection to cell phone use (Layton C9). In a survey published by Farmers Insurance Group, 87% of those polled said that cell phones affect a driver’s ability, and 40% reported having close calls with drivers distracted by phones. Many cartoons have depicted the very real dangers of driving while distracted (see fig. 1).

Scientific research confirms the dangers of using phones while on the road. In 1997 an important study appeared in the New England Journal of Medicine. The authors, Donald Redelmeier and Robert Tibshirani, studied 699 volunteers who made their cell phone bills available in order to confirm the times when they had placed calls. The participants agreed to report any nonfatal collision in which they were involved. By comparing the time of a collision with the phone records, the researchers assessed the dangers of driving while phoning. The results are unsettling:

We found that using a cellular telephone was associated with a risk of having a motor vehicle collision that was about about four times as high as that among the same drivers when they were not using their cellular telephones. This relative risk is similar to the hazard associated with driving with a blood alcohol level at the legal limit. (456)

Source: Diana Hacker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2006).
Fig. 1. A cartoon shows the dangers of using cell phones and other devices while driving (Lowe A21).

The news media often exaggerated the latter claim (“similar to” is not “equal to”); nonetheless, the comparison with drunk driving suggests the extent to which cell phone use while driving can impair judgment.

A 1998 study focused on Oklahoma, one of the few states to keep records on fatal accidents involving cell phones. Using police records, John M. Violanti of the Rochester Institute of Technology investigated the relation between traffic fatalities in Oklahoma and the use or presence of a cell phone. He found a ninefold increase in the risk of fatality if a phone was being used and a doubled risk simply when a phone was present in a vehicle (522-23). The latter

Source: Diana Hacker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2006).
statistic is interesting, for it suggests that those who carry phones in their cars may tend to be more negligent (or prone to distractions of all kinds) than those who do not.

Some groups have argued that state traffic laws make legislation regulating cell phone use unnecessary. Sadly, this is not true. Laws on traffic safety vary from state to state, and drivers distracted by cell phones can get off with light punishment even when they cause fatal accidents. For example, although the midshipman mentioned earlier was charged with vehicular manslaughter for the deaths of John and Carole Hall, the judge was unable to issue a verdict of guilty. Under Maryland law, he could only find the defendant guilty of negligent driving and impose a $500 fine (Layton C1). Such a light sentence is not unusual. The driver who killed Morgan Pena in Pennsylvania received two tickets and a $50 fine—and retained his driving privileges (Pena). In Georgia, a young woman distracted by her phone ran down and killed a two-year-old; her sentence was ninety days in boot camp and five hundred hours of community service (Ippolito J1). The families of the victims are understandably distressed by laws that lead to such light sentences.

When certain kinds of driver behavior are shown to be especially dangerous, we wisely draft special laws making them illegal and imposing specific punishments. Running red lights, failing to stop for a school bus, and drunk driving are obvious examples; phoning in a moving vehicle should be no exception. Unlike more general laws covering negligent driving, specific laws leave little ambiguity for law officers and for judges and juries imposing punishments. Such laws have another important benefit: They leave no ambiguity for drivers. Currently, drivers can tease themselves into thinking they are using their cell phones responsibly because the definition of “negligent driving” is vague.

Source: Diana Hacker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2006).
As of December 2000, twenty countries were restricting use of cell phones in moving vehicles (Sundeen 8). In the United States, it is highly unlikely that legislation could be passed on the national level, since traffic safety is considered a state and local issue. To date, only a few counties and towns have passed traffic laws restricting cell phone use. For example, in Suffolk County, New York, it is illegal for drivers to use a handheld phone for anything but an emergency call while on the road (Haughney A8). The first town to restrict use of handheld phones was Brooklyn, Ohio (Layton C9). Brooklyn, the first community in the country to pass a seat belt law, has once again shown its concern for traffic safety.

Laws passed by counties and towns have had some effect, but it makes more sense to legislate at the state level. Local laws are not likely to have the impact of state laws, and keeping track of a wide variety of local ordinances is confusing for drivers. Even a spokesperson for Verizon Wireless has said that statewide bans are preferable to a “crazy patchwork quilt of ordinances” (qtd. in Haughney A8). Unfortunately, although a number of bills have been introduced in state legislatures, as of early 2001 no state law seriously restricting use of the phones had passed—largely because of effective lobbying from the wireless industry.

Despite the claims of some lobbyists, tough laws regulating phone use can make our roads safer. In Japan, for example, accidents linked to cell phones fell by 75% just a month after the country prohibited using a handheld phone while driving (Haughney A8). Research suggests and common sense tells us that it is not possible to drive an automobile at high speeds, dial numbers, and carry on conversations without significant risks. When such behavior is regulated, obviously our roads will be safer.

Because of mounting public awareness of the dangers of drivers distracted by phones, state legislators must begin to take the problem seriously. “It’s definitely an issue that is gaining
steam around the country,” says Matt Sundeen of the National Conference of State Legislatures (qtd. in Layton C9). Lon Anderson of the American Automobile Association agrees: “There is momentum building,” he says, to pass laws (qtd. in Layton C9). The time has come for states to adopt legislation restricting the use of cell phones in moving vehicles.

Source: Diana Hacker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2006).
Works Cited


Source: Diana Hacker (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2006).