

CITRUS HIGH SCHOOL'S ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

GRAMMAR AND PUNCTUATION REFERENCE GUIDE

The University of Chicago's Writing Program Grammar Resources Website linked through The College Board's AP Central Website proclaims, "... 'rules' in writing—unlike, say, rules in Newtonian physics—are not written in stone. They are established by agreement among experienced writers, even though experienced writers can and do disagree all the time. You'll find, then, that grammar books and sites can offer conflicting advice."

Often a favorite source may conflict with your teacher's beliefs. Follow each individual teacher's clear and concise instructions of grammar and punctuation, whether it is for general writing or it is for a research style such as Modern Language Association (MLA) or American Psychological Association (APA). While no single source is definitive, and some disagree on minor, specific points of punctuation, the English Department at Citrus High School values the solidarity of the sources used to compile this resource guide.

This resource guide is not intended to be an all-encompassing list of grammar and punctuation rules. It should be used, rather, as a quick reference for questions about major punctuation errors and for consideration of basic grammar in sentence construction.

Sources

1. Purdue (University) Online Writing Lab (OWL)
2. *Warriner's English Grammar and Composition* Complete Course edited by John Warriner
3. The College Board's AP Central's Grammar Resources on the Web Link to The University of Chicago's Writing Program and The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Grammar Handbook
4. *The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation* by Jane Strauss
5. *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk, Jr. and E.B. White
6. *Eats, Shoots & Leaves* by Lynn Truss
7. Mignon Fogarty's Grammar Girl blog (as a direct reference for number 35)

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Quotation Marks

1. **Periods (and also commas) ALWAYS go inside the ending quotations marks. The period is a declarative punctuation mark and does not change the sentence structure so it NEVER goes outside the closing quotes.**

Example

At the 2013 Grammy Awards, the British band Mumford & Sons won Album of the Year with *Babel*, largely on the strength of their hit single “I Will Wait.”

2. **Use SINGLE quotation marks (with NO spaces) within regular or “double” quotation marks for quotes within quotes. At the end of the sentence, the period goes inside ALL quotation marks.**

Example

Boxing icon Muhammad Ali said, “I hated every minute of training, but I said, ‘Don’t quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion.’”

3. **When the writer quotes directly from a source and that source has a misspelling or has a grammatical error, continue to quote the source exactly as it is, or verbatim, and IN BRACKETS include the Latin term [sic] right after the error. The term “sic” means “Thus it was written” in Latin.**

Example

The famous movie director Stanley Kubrick once ungrammatically wrote of his fictional character in his movie *2001: A Space Odyssey*, artificial intelligence computer Hal 9000, “I would rather die then [sic] see them restore my movie by doing a different voice over for Hal.”

4. **Use regular, “double” quotation marks to indicate a word’s or a phrase’s emphasis.**

Example

American hip-hop artist Lonnie Rashid Lynn, Jr., known by his stage name Common, through his hip hop albums, his clothing modeling, his poetry, his animal rights activism, and his television acting portrays the very definition of the term “swag.”

5. **The use of an ending question mark or of an ending exclamation point follows the logic of a sentence. If the entire sentence is a question or is an exclamation, then these punctuation marks go inside the ending quotes. Only one ending punctuation mark is used with quotation marks. The stronger punctuation mark wins. Therefore, in the below example, use no period after “war.”**

Example

Do you agree with the challenging statement by Shakespeare that “All’s fair in love and war”?

Titles in Quotation Marks

6. **Use quotation marks around the titles of short poems, song titles, short stories, magazine or newspaper articles, essays, speeches, chapter titles, short films, and episodes of television or radio shows.**

Examples

“Messy Room” by Shel Silverstein, “One Love” by Bob Marley, “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson, “Questions Still Surround America’s Drone Program” in *Rolling Stone*, “Justin Bieber signs up for trip to space” in *The Tampa Tribune*, “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathon Swift, *Twilight*’s chapter six titled “Scary Stories,” 2011’s Oscar winner “The Fantastic Flying Books of Mr. Morris Lessmore,” *Star Trek: The Next Generation*’s favorite episode as voted by fans “The Inner Light,” one of radio icon Paul Harvey’s most famous broadcasts “What is a Policeman?”

***Note**—Speeches such as the Gettysburg Address and I Have a Dream, and religious books such as The Holy Bible King James Version and Quran are only capitalized.

Titles in Italics

7. **Italicize the titles of magazines, books, newspapers, academic journals, films, television shows, long poems (generally considered 100 lines or more), plays of three or more acts, operas, musical CDs, works of art, websites, and individual trains, planes, or ships. Italicize these titles when typing, and underline them when writing.**

Examples

magazine—*US News & World Report*, book—*The Old Man and the Sea*, newspaper—*USA Today*, academic journals—*Harvard Law Review* or *Literature/Film Quarterly*, film—*Mean Girls*, television show—*Extreme Hoarders: Buried Alive*, long poem—*The Raven*, play—*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, opera—*Die Walkurie* (The Valkyrie) by Richard Wagner, musical albums (CD—Tame Impala’s *Lonerism*, work of art—Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*, website—*hulu.com*, train—*Indianapolis Express*, plane—WWII bomber *Memphis Belle*, ship—RMS *Titanic*

Colons

8. **Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list, quotation, appositive, or other idea directly related to the independent clause. A complete sentence must always precede the colon.**

List Example

Health-conscious Michaela decided to shop at the organic grocery store for some items: soy milk, Vegan jerky, tofu turkey rolls, aged cashew cheese, and all-natural Asian meat cups.

Quote Example

In his 2nd Inaugural Address, President Abraham Lincoln stressed a positive, forgiving tone throughout his speech: “With malice toward none, with charity for all...”

Appositive Example

His history teacher suggested the perfect profession for her troublesome student: professional comedian.

9. **Use a colon to join together two independent clauses to emphasize the second clause.**

Example

Continual bickering among national politicians in Washington has hindered governmental progress in establishing a national immigration policy: a Utah guest worker state bill, fingerprinting policies from several states, and the “papers please” Arizona initiative all indicate the need for a national policy.

Semi-colons

10. **A semicolon joins two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb (however, therefore, moreover, furthermore, thus, meanwhile, nonetheless, otherwise) or a transitional word or phrase (in fact, for example, that is, for instance, in addition, in other words, on the other hand, even so).**

Example

Mistrust of partisan politics in Washington historically began with the Watergate scandal and the eventual resignation in 1974 of President Richard M. Nixon; in fact, the eventual pardoning of Nixon by President Gerald Ford, Nixon’s successor, only served to heighten the public’s suspicion of political cronyism.

11. **A semi-colon joins two independent clauses when the second clause equally emphasizes the first.**

Example

The courthouse square in downtown Inverness bustles with activity in the winter months; religious preachers, restaurant patrons, political and social protesters, even local craftsmen and artisans occupy the lawn almost on a daily basis.

12. **Use a semicolon to join elements of a series when individual items of the series already include commas.**

Example 1

Recent incidents of flash mobs have occurred sporadically in such cities as Schenectady, New York; South Bend, Indiana; Jacksonville, Florida; and Salt Lake City, Utah.

Example 2

Farmers in the corn belt of the central Midwest dominate our nation’s food crops with corn, grown in vast agribusiness land plots to primarily feed cattle; soybeans, most commonly used to make the number one U.S. edible consumer oil bottled for supermarkets; and hay, often alfalfa used for domestic grazing animal consumption.

Dashes

13. **Dashes set off or emphasize the content enclosed within dashes or the content that follows a dash. Dashes emphasize the content more than do parentheses. Dashes are generally considered to be longer than hyphens. Use NO spaces before and after.**

Example

Perhaps one reason McDonalds is unveiling its “Midnight Menu” to be offered between midnight and 4 a.m.—including Big Macs, McNuggets, desserts, and in a new twist also Egg McMuffins and pancakes, as well—is that it sees its profit margin growing by becoming the place people head to after the nightclubs close, and the place tired workers stop by on the way home from swing shifts.

Hyphens

14. Use a hyphen to join two or more words serving as a single adjective BEFORE a noun. Use NO spaces before and after.

Examples

chocolate-covered strawberries, self-absorbed *American Idol* winner, one-way street

15. Use a hyphen with compound numbers.

Examples

forty-seven, ninety-nine

16. Use a hyphen with the prefixes ex-, self-, all-, with the suffix -elect, between a prefix and a capitalized word, and with figures (dates).

Examples

ex-husband, all-inclusive, pre-WWI, anti-American, mid-1970s

Commas

17. Use commas to separate three or more words, phrases, or clauses written in a series, including using a comma just before the final coordinating conjunction (for, or, nor, and, but, yet, so). If coordinating conjunctions connect ALL elements in a series, do NOT use commas.

Example 1

Ulysses spent his summer in Crete studying the fine arts of basic spear stabbing, Trojan horse building, complex siren wooing, as well as bow and arrow target practice.

Example 2

Sailors on the *Nina* and the *Pinta* and the *Santa Maria* suffered from dysentery and from scurvy during their voyage to the new land.

18. Use commas to separate independent clauses when they are joined by these seven coordinating conjunctions: and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet.

Example

Game one of the NBA finals was completed between the Miami Heat and the San Antonio Spurs, but the crowd refused to leave until they had a peek of Justin Bieber's anonymous seatmate.

19. **Use a pair of commas in the middle of a sentence to set off clauses, phrases, and word groups such as appositives (clauses that further modify the noun) that are not essential to the meaning of the sentence.**

Example 1

While this Pakistani restaurant's outside façade indicated it might offer the consumer an exciting and invigorating dining experience, its actual food, on the other hand, was rather bland and tasteless.

Example 2

Even though I appreciate the time-consuming work you seem to have put into the visuals on your science fair project, in this case, however, you appear to have plagiarized most of the information.

20. **Use commas to separate two or more coordinate adjectives that describe the same noun. DO NOT add an extra comma between the final adjective and the noun itself.**

Example 1

Your cousin has a ludicrous, clown-like smile following her botched plastic surgery.

Example 2

Her high school students perceived her as a difficult, obsessive, heartless math teacher until the students realized once they got to college that she had prepared them for even the most difficult math equations.

21. **A series contains three or more items separated by commas. The items in a series can be either nouns (such as “dog”) or verb phrases (such as “get in the car”). When using a conjunction, such as “and” or “or,” at the end of the series, remember to precede it with a comma. When using conjunction between ALL items, DO NOT use commas.**

Example

The starving teenager sitting in the back row stealthily consumed an entire zip lock bag of potato chips, two spicy Slim Jims, a half bag of Mike and Ike **jellies, and** a half can of energy drink, all within the first ten minutes of 2nd block.

Apostrophes

22. **There are two forms of the word its: the possessive pronoun its and the conjunction it's (meaning “it is”). There is no such word as its'.**

Example 1

It's (it is) a commonly held belief among bloggers that eventually more people will read blogs than will read novels.

Example 2

The dodo bird is recognized both by its inability to fly or its inability to sit anywhere other than in the back row in an English classroom.

23. **Add an apostrophe and an S to form a singular possessive. (Is there one or more than one?)**

Example 1

The boy's snap back cap, worn sideways, identified him as both a poser and as a foolish spender of money.

Example 2

Mr. Evans's tendency to high five his students in the hallway changed unexpectedly one day to a fist bump.

23a. **Exception! For ancient names (real or fictional) that already end in an S, add only the apostrophe for a singular possession.**

Example

Hercules' strength was no more important than his ability to intellectually solve a problem with the Augean Stables.

24. **Add only an ending apostrophe to form a plural possessive. (Is there one or more than one?)**

Example 1

Her two cats' tails were singed in the fire pit when the mean Doberman Pinscher cornered them both in a moment of frenzy.

Example 2

The red balloons' combined helium allowed the protagonist in the movie *Danny Deckchair* to fly across the outlands of Australia.

Example 3

The boys' bathroom in the gym designated for the visitors was so overpowering with its stench that the entire girls' volleyball team implored their bus driver to head for home as soon as possible!

Plural Use without Apostrophes

25. **For decades, abbreviated decades, and centuries, do not use apostrophes with the ending S.**

Example 1

During the latter part of the 1960s, political protests grew in reaction to the Vietnam War.

Example 2

The Renaissance, translated from Italian to English meaning "rebirth," which ended at roughly the end of the 1600s, is primarily known for the artistic contributions of Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo.

Example 3

[NOTE: no apostrophe in conjunction with the S, but an apostrophe facing away toward the missing numbers]

The Cold War's demise is still today symbolized by the beginning of the destruction of the Berlin Wall at the very end of the '80s.

26. **Use apostrophes for the plurals of lower case letters (but NOT for upper case letters or for numbers).**

Examples 1 & 2

Cross your t's and dot your i's. Mind your p's and q's when using a printing press.

Example 3

The business teacher's tendency to give her students prior knowledge of her quiz questions meant most of her students received As and Bs.

Example 4

The string of 7s she rolled in Las Vegas netted her a small fortune!

27. **DO NOT use apostrophes for the plurals of symbols.**

Example 1

"We have many 4Gs around the country," claimed the Verizon Wireless kiosk rep in early 2013, referring to Verizon's recently enhanced fourth generation (4G) Long Term Evolution (LTE) smart phone coverage.

Example 2

Dell's X51s, the hot gaming desktop, recently flooded the market, and just preceded the company's unveiling of some fresh Alienware laptops, what all Dell fans were waiting for this year.

Ellipses

28. **Use ellipses (ellipsis points) to omit words in a direct quotation. DO NOT use spaces before or after the ellipses.**

Example

Mary, a long-winded storyteller, began and ended her tale by saying, "Well, first I had to rob Peter...and then I ended up being able to pay Paul."

Spelling of Numbers and Letters

29. **Write out ALL numbers that begin sentences.**

Example

Seventeen percent of that school was classified as dropouts!

30. **Use numerals (sometimes Roman) to identify, with figures and symbols, or with large numbers.**

Examples

\$124.00, 4.99 liters, 364 days, room 222, Henry VIII, WWII, act 5 scene 2, 12 billion

31. **Spell out EITHER numbers one to nine, OR numbers one to ninety-nine. Write out numbers above EITHER nine OR ninety-nine. Here, usage varies by teacher! If you are using a specific citation style, such as MLA or APA, consult the style manual for specific formatting instructions.**

Examples 1

two people, five movie screens, and nine kisses; 11 keys, 20 times a winner, and 50 plantains

Examples 2

forty-four attempts, sixty-five miles an hour, and ninety-nine seconds underwater; 101 Dalmatians, 276 trombones, and 1,001 nights

Run-ons (Comma Splices)

32. **Link two independent clauses with the coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet), using a comma before the connecting word.**

Example

The professional bird watcher enjoys strolling through Whispering Pines Park, yet he has never caught sight there of the blue crested gooney bird.

33. **When you use any type of a connecting word other than the coordinating conjunctions and, but, for, or, nor, so, or yet between the two independent clauses, or you do not use any connecting word, use a semicolon (;).**

Example

The college dropout often visited Universal Studios on his parents' dime; his chemistry major girlfriend, however, preferred to use her days reading science journals.

34. **Run-on sentences describe two independent clauses which are joined together with no connecting word or punctuation to separate the clauses. The writer often uses a pronoun to incorrectly fuse the parts together.**

Examples 1

Incorrect—They weren't gang members at all they were undercover police officers.

Correct—They weren't gang members at all; they were undercover police officers.

Examples 2

Incorrect—I didn't know which major I wanted to concentrate on when I first entered college I was too confused about my life to decide between art history and theater.

Correct—I didn't know which major I wanted to concentrate on when I first entered college as I was too confused about my life to decide between art history and theater.

Sentence Fragments

35. **Fragments, incomplete sentences, usually are pieces of sentences that have become disconnected from the main clause. Correct them by removing the period between the fragment and the main clause. Newly combined sentences may need other kinds of punctuation.**

Example—Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana offers through the internationally renowned Mendoza College of Business many majors. Such as finance, marketing, accounting, entrepreneurship, and management.

Revision—Notre Dame University in South Bend, Indiana offers through the internationally renowned Mendoza College of Business many majors such as finance, marketing, accounting, entrepreneurship, and management.

36. **Some fragments are written as main clauses but lack a subject or main verb.**

Example 1

Fragment—An opinion on hydraulic fracking to mine domestic oil without clear evidence.

Revision—**The scientist expressed** his opinion on hydraulic fracking to mine domestic oil without clear evidence.

Example 2

Fragment—**A woman who remains silly and becomes callous in *The Great Gatsby*.**

Revision 1—The famous female character Daisy Buchanan is a woman who remains silly and becomes callous in *The Great Gatsby*.

Revision 2—Daisy Buchanan, one of the greatest and most tragic female characters in literature, is a woman who remains silly and becomes callous in *The Great Gatsby*.

37. **Fragments with no subjects are constructed out of mixed parts. They start one way (often with a long prepositional phrase), but end with a regular predicate (verb word group). Removing the preposition at the beginning is usually the easiest way to edit such errors.**

Examples

Fragment—In which the primary goal is to sell thousands of Samsung Galaxy SIII 4G phones.

Revision—~~In which the~~ The primary goal is to sell thousands of Samsung Galaxy SIII 4G phones.

Fragment—By surprisingly and disturbingly stopping by after midnight and throwing pebbles at my second story window just to say hello.

Revision—~~By surprisingly~~ Surprisingly and disturbingly stopping by after midnight and throwing pebbles at my second story window, Bubba just wanted to say hello.

Using Who or Whom

38. Use **who** as the subject of the sentence and **whom** as the object of the (most commonly used) prepositions **for, to, by, on, and with**.

Here is a “quick and dirty tip” from Mignon Fogarty’s Grammar Girl blog:

“Like ‘whom,’ the pronoun ‘him’ ends with ‘m.’ When you’re trying to decide whether to use ‘who’ or ‘whom,’ ask yourself if the answer to the question would be ‘he’ or ‘him.’ For example, if you’re trying to ask, ‘Who (or whom) do you love?’ The answer would be ‘I love him.’ ‘Him’ ends with an ‘m,’ so you know to use ‘whom.’ But if you are trying to ask, ‘Who squeezed all the water out of [SpongeBob]’ the answer would be ‘He squeezed all the water out of [SpongeBob].’ There’s no ‘m,’ so you know to use ‘who.’”

Examples

“to whom,” “for whom,” “by whom,” “on whom,” and “with whom”

Prepositions

39. **Prepositions are words or short phrases that identify the spatial (in space), directional (the direction in which something is moving), or temporal (in time) relationship of one or more people or things to other people or things. DO NOT end your sentences in prepositions such as (among others) above, across, within, around, along, behind, below, beside, between, on, at, in, to, with, from, since, for, by, from, inside, nearby, off, out, of, through, toward, under, and within.**

Example

Incorrect—What car roof did you mistakenly place your purse on?

Correct—Flip the sentence order.) On what car roof did you mistakenly place your purse?

Noun Phrase Pronoun Agreement/Antecedents

40. **Agree in number—If the pronoun takes the place of a singular noun, use a singular pronoun. NOTE: The construction “his or her” is too wordy, so use a plural noun as your antecedent such as “they” as your pronoun. If you do use a singular noun and the context makes the gender clear, then use just “his” or “her” rather than “his or her.” Remember: the words “everybody, anybody, anyone, each, neither, nobody, someone, a person,” etc. are singular and take singular pronouns.**

Example 1

Incorrect—If a student parks a car in CHS’s front parking lot, ~~he or she~~ has to buy a parking sticker to be legal.

Correct—If a student parks a car in CHS’s front parking lot, she has to buy a parking sticker.

Example 2

Incorrect—When a student comes to class, ~~they~~ should have pen and paper supplies!

Correct—When students come to class, they should have pen and paper supplies!

41. **Do not be vague or ambiguous in your sentence. Refer clearly to the specified noun or noun phrase.**

Example

Although the brand new fire red Trans Am with the soaring eagle on the hood smashed into the apple tree in the old grouch's front lawn, ~~it~~ [the Trans Am] was not severely damaged. (What was not severely damaged—the car or the tree?)

Active vs. Passive Voice

42. **Use active voice (action verbs) whenever possible to energize your writing. In active voice, the subject of the sentence performs the action expressed in the verb. Passive voice uses a verb phrase that will always include a form of be, such as am, is, was, were, are, or been.**

Examples

Active Voice—The man bit the dog, so it became newsworthy.

Passive Voice—The dog was bitten by the man, so it became newsworthy.

Parallel Structure

43. **Parallel structure means using the same pattern of words to show that two or more ideas have the same level of importance with the word, the phrase, or the clause. The usual way to create parallel structures is with the use of coordinating conjunctions such as “and” or “or.”**

Example 1

Incorrect—Constantine likes dancing, singing, and to attend punk rock concerts.

Correct—Constantine likes dancing, singing, and **attending** punk rock concerts.

Example 2

Incorrect—The neighbor of the compulsive hoarder said that she was a health hazard because she piled uneaten and rotting food on the floor of her kitchen, recycled used soda cans and pop bottles in her bathroom tub, and her attention to detail to set traps for rodents was lacking.

Correct—The neighbor of the compulsive hoarder said that she was a health hazard because she **piled** uneaten and rotting food on the floor of her kitchen, she **recycled** used soda cans and pop bottles in her bathroom tub, and she **lacked** the attention to detail to set traps for rodents.

44. **Parallel structure that begins with clauses must maintain clauses. Changing to another pattern or changing the voice of the verb (from active to passive or vice versa) breaks the parallelism.**

Examples

Incorrect—The teacher taught his dog that it should get plenty of sleep during the day, that it should not eat too many dog treats, and to do some warm-up kitty juggling exercises before the main meal.

Correct—The teacher taught his dog **that it should get** plenty of sleep during the day, **that it should not eat** too many dog treats, and **that it should practice** some warm-up kitty juggling exercises before the main meal.

Addressing the Subject in a Research Paper

45. **In both an informal biography and a formal research paper, address the person or the subject with full name for the first time, and thereafter by only the last name. DO NOT use the informal, or “friendly,” Christian/first name.**

Example

Incorrect—**Edgar Allan Poe**'s life was marked by considerable melancholia, often induced by his proclivity for alcohol and his propensity to morbidly associate with women who died of disease. ~~Edgar~~ would never truly find peace in his life.

Correct—**Edgar Allan Poe**'s life was marked by considerable melancholia, often induced by his proclivity for alcohol and his propensity to morbidly associate with women who died of disease. **Poe** would never truly find peace in his life.