

The Formal Essay

Format and structure.

The Title Page

- A title page is required on all formal essays. It is an easy and effective way to present essential information.
- The title page has a *specific* format which must be observed...

*ROMEO AND JULIET: THE COMEDY GONE
WRONG*

by
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English 12 - (section)

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- Type same size as body of essay
- Title in middle of the page
- Title All Capitals.
- Name under title. (case sensitive)
- Titles of significant works *italicized*. (*underlined if handwritten)
- Lesser works (poems, essays) in “quotation marks”
- Teacher’s name, course and due date in bottom LEFT hand corner.
- No abbreviations on date
- SAME* RULES APPLY FOR HANDWRITTEN ESSAYS**

Some Practical Advice...

- If your title is too long, put it on two lines, default spacing on WP, double spaced if hand-written.
- Try to avoid wordy titles, and make them interesting introductions to your essay.
- Titles such as “essay”, “English 12 Assignment” or repeating the title of a text, Romeo and Juliet are very poor and should be avoided.

WORKS CITED

- In the MLA style (the style we're following), the list at the end of the essay of all the materials to which you referred in any way during the writing of the essay is called *Works Cited*. (other styles refer to this page as the *Bibliography*, or *References*.)
- The list is placed on a new page at the end of the essay under the centred title WORKS CITED.

- Usually follows basic format: Author information. Book information. Publisher information.
- Double space after the heading and between entries.
- SINGLE SPACE WITHIN THE ENTRIES
- Begin each entry at the margin
- Subsequent lines of the entry are indented 5 spaces.
- Alphabetise the entries by author's LAST name. If the author's name is unknown (as in some encyclopaedia articles), alphabetise the first word after *A*, *An* or *The*.

One Author:

Anderson, Doris. *Slave of the Haida*. Toronto: MacMillan, 1974.

2-3 Authors:

Anhill, Terry, Janet Grant, and Alastair Sweeney. *Canadians All: 6 Portraits of Our People*. Toronto: Methuen, 1986.

A Work in an Anthology, Reference, or Collection

Goddard, Harold C. “Macbeth as the Third Murderer” *The Tragedy of Macbeth and Related Readings*. Ed. Saliani, Ferguson, and Scott. Albany: 1997. 136-138.

Video

Remember Africville. Videocassette. Prod. And Dir. By Shelagh MacKenzie. National Film Board of Canada, 1991. 34:30 min.

(2-3) Editors:

Shakespeare, William, Linzy Brady, and David James. *Macbeth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014. Print.

Websites:

Websites formally use this format;

Author's Last Name, First Name. "Title of Document." *Title of Complete Work* [if applicable]. Version or File Number [if applicable]. Document date or date of last revision [if different from access date]. Protocol and address, access path or directories (date of access).

Burka, Lauren P. "A Hypertext History of Multi-User Dimensions." *MUD History*. 1993. <http://www.utopia.com/talent/lpb/muddex/essay> (2 Aug. 1996).

**I will accept name of article, name of home site,
and the URL, like this:**

"A Hypertext History of Multi-User Dimensions." *MUD History*.
<http://www.utopia.com/talent/lpb/muddex/>

Do not put a period after the URL - it will look like part of the address.

Quotes & Notes

- Occasionally, you will find that the words of an expert precisely sum up and support your view. In that situation, it is a good idea to use those words in your essay. It is a BAD idea, however, to pass them off as your own. Give credit where credit is due.

- If quotes take up four lines or more, the following must be done *instead of quotation marks*:
- Single-space the quoted material
- Increase left margin 2.5 cm (1 inch)
- For example,
- As it turns out, they had known each other for quite some time.

...he had been a farm boy when, orphaned, he had come to work for her father, and Buttercup referred to him that way still. “Farm Boy, fetch me this”; “Get me that, Farm Boy—quickly, lazy thing, trot now or I’ll tell Father.” (Goldman, 35)

- If quoting material that takes up fewer than four lines, you keep it in the body of the essay, surround it with “quotation marks”,

- For Example:

Regardless of how rudely she behaved toward him, his reply remained the same: “As you wish.” (Goldman, 35).

Quoting Shakespearian text:

Like regular text, the rules change depending on how much of the bard you wish to quote:

Four lines or more – reproduce it exactly as you see it in the book; single spaced, with ACT. Scene. Lines (Capital Roman numerals. lower case roman numerals. Arabic numerals):

I am very sorry, good Horatio,
That to Laertes I forgot myself;
For by the image of my cause, I see
The portraiture of his: I'll court his favours:
But, sure, the bravery of his grief did put me
Into a towering passion. (V.ii.75-80)

If you quote fewer than 4 lines, you keep it in the body of your essay, but offer line breaks:

As the duel starts, Hamlet asks Laertes to “Give me your pardon, Sir; I have done you wrong; / But pardon't, as you are a gentleman” (V.ii.217-218).

Quoting Shakespearian text, continued...

If you quote an exchange of dialogue, indicate the speakers:

The King had allowed Polonius to spy on Hamlet and the Queen.
Now he wants to know what she found out:

King: What Gertrude? How does Hamlet?

Queen: Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier: in his lawless fit,
Behind the arras hearing something stir,
He whips his rapier out, and cries, "A rat! a rat!"
And in this brainish apprehension kills
The unseen good old man. (IV.i.6-12)

*** You do not have to put speakers' names in bold or italics.

- Once you have quoted material, you need to cite it, and decide *where* to cite it.
- The MLA Style uses **parenthetical acknowledgements (known as *references*)** which are placed after the quote.
- References happen to be convenient for the writer, and equally informative to the reader.
- The reference usually refers only to the author's last name and the relevant page number. (Jones, 34)
- Additional information will be found on the **WORKS CITED** page

Miscellaneous Essay Stuff

- ALWAYS USE 1.5 OR DOUBLE SPACING!
- The formal essay format is just that - formal. Therefore, your essay demands a mature level of writing. Consider your voice and tone when writing. Ultimately, your challenge is to convince people to agree with you. Don't turn them away with a negative or abrasive tone.
- Do not use contractions or abbreviation shortcuts. (**versus**, not vs., **for example**, not i.e)
- Do not use slang, jargon or other informal language.

Informal address:

If you are writing about David Suzuki, there are a number of ways you could address the man. He could be referred to as Dr. Suzuki (in this instance, abbreviations are acceptable), he could be referred to as “the noted scientist”, or even “the television personality”.

Under NO circumstances should you ever call him...



DAVID

You do not know him. He is not your friend, and first name basis is considered an informal address.

- Do not end a listing of examples with “etc.” Your job is to provide precise examples, not to leave your essay dangling, expecting the reader to fill in your blanks.

- Introductions allow you to set the tone for your essay. Choose your language carefully. Your goal is to set the tone for the reader in a way that is informative and interesting enough to encourage further reading. Not an easy task. Write and re-write until you are confident in your opening.

- Conclusions are your last chance to make a lasting impression. Recap what you’ve presented , tie up loose ends, and drive your point home. This will take more than 2-3 sentences.

- Avoid the first person. Only very rare occasions allow the use of “I did,” “I think” or other first person approaches in a formal essay. Besides, your writing will be much more convincing if you write about what *is*, not what you *think* it is. After all, you have done a ton of research and are now an expert in the field, right? You’ve become an authority, so write with authority.

- Avoid using phrases like, “In this essay”, “I will prove...” or “in conclusion” . The reader knows it is an essay, they know your focus is to prove something, and if they are toward the end of the work, they know it’s time for a conclusion.



PREFER THE ACTIVE OVER THE PASSIVE VOICE

To make your writing memorable, try to use the active voice whenever possible.

ACTIVE: The committee *reached* a decision.

PASSIVE: A decision *was reached* by the committee.

Linking verbs are usually a form of *be*: *am, is, are, was, were, being, been*. In the active voice, the subject of the sentence does the action; in the passive, the subject receives the action.

FORM OF *BE*: A surge of power *was* responsible for the
destruction of the coolant pumps.

PASSIVE: The coolant pumps *were destroyed* by a
surge of power.

REVISED ACTIVE: A surge of power *destroyed* the coolant
pumps.

To transform a sentence from the passive voice to the active voice, make the actor the subject of the sentence. Because the passive focuses attention away from the performer and because it is usually duller than the active, excessive use of it makes for dull and difficult writing.