



Parents' Paper Editing Guide

I. Introduction

One of the goals of this course is to help students become strong, confident, self-sufficient writer/editors, able to write well on both in-class and homework assignments, as well as on the essay portions of the battery of standardized tests that they begin taking during their second year of high school. Parental assistance, though not necessary, is always welcome as we work together to help students become good writers. What follows is a strategy to help parents encourage and assist their children toward that goal.

A foundational assumption of the course is that in order to become discerning historians and readers of culture, as well as persuasive writers and shapers of culture, students must become proficient at both reading and writing. Students of history can and should be taught to discern the subtle and not so subtle ways in which language can be used to persuade and elucidate, as well as mask and manipulate. Did the presidential candidate walk **briskly** to the plane, or **hesitantly**, or **resolutely**? Or did the candidate just walk to the plane? And what is implied by each of these different terms?

Throughout the year I will be working to help each student become more adept at reading, as well as writing/editing. Most students intuitively observe more grammar and syntax rules than they realize in their verbal communications. For example, they implicitly know that a sentence needs a main “thing,” plus action words to describe what the “thing” is doing, shorter and longer pauses (i.e. punctuation) to clarify meaning, location words to describe where the thing is (prepositions), etc. But written expression is of course a different story; many students have more difficulty making coherent meaning when writing. To write well, students must understand that the writing process is really a writing/editing process. These two skills, writing and self-editing, are inextricably bound together in a largely non-chronological relationship, and good writing does not occur unless both skills are continuously utilized at virtually every step of the writing process.

II. Directions

1. Parents are encouraged to use this method on both long and short assignments. In fact, parental attention to shorter assignments early in the year will help prepare students to tackle longer assignments with confidence.
2. Students' written homework should normally be typed.
3. The parent who chooses to help in the editing process should begin by asking the student to read his or her completed homework aloud, while carefully checking the manuscript to be sure that the student is reading exactly what is written on the page. (While proofreading aloud, students often spontaneously



correct their work, and thus fail to recognize their own written errors. Some students may need to point to each word as they read aloud to avoid this tendency.)

4. After proofreading aloud, the student should create a second draft, correcting all the manuscript errors that he/she saw and heard.
5. The parent should read the second draft to catch further errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc., placing a hash mark at the end of each line, one mark for each error in the line. *It is important that the parent not indicate the location of the errors, only the total number of errors per line of text.*
6. Armed with knowledge about the number of errors in each line, the student should identify those errors, crossing off a hash mark as each error is found and corrected. The student should then retype the manuscript for submission and turn it in to the teacher for evaluation, on or before the due date.
7. Parents may want to note the general types of errors (spelling, syntax, grammar, malapropisms, etc.) that appear most frequently, and should encourage their student to seek help from the instructor, consult the class website for remedial (and fun) exercises, and visit Lab's free Writer's Center for assistance.
8. As students become comfortable with this process, they will be asked to edit each other's papers during class, following this same method.
9. Periodic evaluations of student writing, via in-class writing assignments throughout the year, will help the teacher see how each student is progressing in their writing/editing skills. Students' progress in writing/editing will be reflected in their final grade.
10. Each student in this course will be registered on turnitin.com and most of their written work, along with teacher comments and grades, will be appear on this site. Throughout the school year, parents should feel free to ask their child to show them their written work.