

Guide to Formal Essay Writing



This guide to essay writing has been created by teachers of Fredericton High School to help you research, write, reference, and format your essay. Each section contains a list of helpful links that will assist you with essay writing. These links have been tried and approved by FHS teachers.

At the end of this guide are three links to sample essays, formatted to match the three styles of writing that are used at FHS.

I. BEGINNING YOUR PAPER - Topic Selection and Research

- (a) **Topic Selection:** Your topic should be something you are interested in within the confines of the course you are taking and at the instructor's discretion.
- (b) **Research:** Read as much as you can about your topic. Find as many academic sources about your topic as possible. Books are best; however, academic websites work, too (these are primarily .edu sites).
- (c) Once you understand your topic, **create a "why" or "how" question** that will generate discussion or argument.
- (d) **Thesis Statement:** Formulate a thesis statement that begins to answer the question you have about your topic. This should include an argument and several reasons to help prove your argument.
- (e) **Format:** Establish the format for your paper. This may be dependent upon the class or discipline for which you are writing your paper. Common formats include APA style, Chicago-manual style, or MLA style.

Helpful Links

Understanding assignments - <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/understanding-assignments/>

Tips for Thesis Statements - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/545/01/>

Academic Search Engines – <http://scholar.google.ca/>
- <http://search.ebscohost.com/> (requires school user ID and password)

II. WRITING YOUR PAPER

- (a) **Introduction:** Provide background information and basic details about your topic. Give direction for your essay and include your thesis statement at the end of your introduction.
- (b) **Body of the paper and paragraphing:** Consider the order and sequencing of your arguments, topic statements for individual paragraphs, and the number of words within the paper that you can use per argument or sub-topic.
- (c) **Conclusion:** Reaffirm your thesis statement, draw final conclusions, and offer a memorable quotation or final statement.
- (d) **Sources:** Keep track of your sources of information (page numbers in texts, academic websites visited) for use in your bibliography or works cited page.
- (e) **Conventions/Grammar:** Avoid first person pronouns ("I", "we", "you" etc.), vague references and generalities, clichés, slang and colloquialisms. Avoid passive tense and use active verbs when possible.

Helpful Links

Writing Rubric -

http://www.district18.nbed.nb.ca/sites/district18.nbed.nb.ca/files/noteattach/other/1107/district_18_common_high_school_writing_rubric.pdf

Common Writing Problems -

http://www.unb.ca/fredericton/studentservices/_resources/pdfs/wss/commonproblems.pdf

III. REFERENCING YOUR PAPER

- (a) **References:** To avoid plagiarism, make sure you provide references for your sources of facts and arguments about your topic.
- (b) **Quotations:** Include direct quotations from academic or primary source texts (novels, plays, poems, historical material, journals and articles) to provide academic support and validity for your argument
- (c) **Interpretation:** Ensure that direct quotations are not misinterpreted and that they help to prove your arguments.
- (d) **Consistency:** Be consistent with style and formatting. For example, APA and MLA formats will use in-line citations for references. Chicago-manual style format requires footnotes.

Helpful Links

Plagiarism - <http://www.concordia.ca/programs-and-courses/academic-integrity/plagiarism/>

Research and Citation Resources - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>

Citation Format Generator - <http://citationmachine.net/index2.php>

APA Format - <http://www.library.cornell.edu/resrch/citmanage/apa>

Chicago-manual Format - <http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html>

MLA Format - <http://library.concordia.ca/help/howto/mla.php>

IV. PREPARING YOUR PAPER FOR SUBMISSION

- (a) **Proofreading:** Is your thesis clear? Is it supported by academic references? Are conventions of writing followed? Is it organized and have you avoided repetitive statements and word use?
- (b) **Verify your references and quotations:** Have you accurately cited sources, including page numbers and bibliographical information?
- (c) **Revise and Edit:** Did you re-read your paper (perhaps out loud), making any minor corrections?
- (d) **Title/title page:** Does your paper offer a compelling title to interest the reader? Does the title page meet the format requirement?
- (e) **Bibliography:** Do you have a properly annotated bibliography, consistent with the selected format (APA, Chicago-manual, MLA)?

Helpful Links

Proofreading - <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/>

SAMPLE PAPERS

Sample APA format paper - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/18/>

Sample Chicago-manual format paper - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/11/>

Sample MLA format paper - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/13/>