

Written work at LTS adheres to the dictates of SWE

# **SWE OVERVIEW**

STANDARD WRITTEN ENGLISH

Students will

- Express personal ideas and feelings in a variety of modes
- Express critical and evaluative ideas
- Communicate information, ideas, and beliefs to various audiences
- Express ideas persuasively and provide support

Each grade level will demand an increasingly sophisticated style.

Reports, theses, defense essays, projects, math tasks, and any other work as designated by a faculty member will be

- word processed, spell checked, and grammar checked;
- double spaced, with 1.5-inch side margins and 1-inch top and bottom margins;
- printed 12-point in a clear, readable font such as Arial or Times New Roman.

Written work follows a prescribed format, if appropriate to the assignment, and demonstrates the following:

- Complete Sentences
- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Proper Paragraphing
- Correct Pronoun Case and Use
- Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement
- Proper Placement of Modifiers
- Correct Use of Commas
- Correct Use of Semicolons
- Correct Use of Colons
- Correct use of Homonyms (there, their, they're; its, it's; your, you're)
- Avoidance of Flying Which's, This's, and That's
- Avoidance of "The reason is because..." and of "The reason why..."
- Avoidance of Split Infinitives
- Parallel Construction
- Correct Use of "That" and "Which"
- Correct Use of Participial Phrases

See pp. 3-6 for Explanations & Examples, p. 6 for References, and p. 7 for SWE Editing Checklist.

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# SWE EXPLANATIONS & EXAMPLES

STANDARD WRITTEN ENGLISH

## COMPLETE SENTENCES

A sentence is a group of words expressing a complete thought beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period, exclamation point, or question mark.

## SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

Beware of the following tricky situations:

The basket of flowers is on the table. (*basket is*)

The coach, as well as his players, is pleased with the win. (*coach is*)

Each of my brothers is six feet tall. (*each is*)

Both of my brothers are six feet tall. (*both are*)

My friends and I are leaving at six. (*friends and I are leaving*)

*When the subjects are joined by “or” or “nor,” the verb agrees with the nearer subject.*

*Sentences usually sound better when the plural is placed second.*

Either he or his friends are leaving at six. (*he or his friends are leaving*)

Neither the coach nor his players were winners. (*coach nor his players were*)

## PROPER PARAGRAPHING

A standard paragraph contains the following elements:

Topic sentence

Support sentences containing details that pertain to the topic

Concluding or transition sentence

Reasons for a new paragraph are:

Presenting a new idea

Presenting a new time or place

Emphasizing a point

Highlighting a contrast or a comparison

## CORRECT PRONOUN CASE AND USE

Subject Pronouns:

I, you, he, she, it, we, they, who, whoever

~~Him and I are going soon.~~ He and I should leave soon. Who is going with you?

Object Pronouns:

me, you, him, her, it, us, them, whom, whomever

Whom did you see at the movies? I saw him and her. Give it to him and me.

~~She gave it to he and I. She liked him and I.~~

Possessive Pronouns:

my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, our, ours, their, theirs, whose

Leave ours on the table. ~~Her's is the one I want. Its not his. Who's is it?~~

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## Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

A pronoun agrees in person (*speaker, person spoken to, or person spoken about*) and number (*singular and plural*) with the noun for which it stands.

~~Has everyone brought their book?~~ Has everyone brought his book?

Have you brought your books?

~~When one makes a mistake, you should apologize.~~ When one makes a mistake, he should apologize. When you make a mistake, you should apologize.

~~Neither of the girls have their book.~~ Neither of the girls has her book.

## Proper Placement of Modifiers

~~I only type forty words a minute.~~ I type only forty words a minute.

~~A messenger wrapped in red paper delivered a package.~~ A messenger delivered a package wrapped in red paper.

~~Turning left at the corner, his house is the second on the right.~~ *There is no one or no thing that could be turning left.* If you turn left at the corner, his house will be the second on the left.

~~We found the dog walking home from school.~~ *If the dog is walking home from school the sentence is correct. If we are walking home from school, the sentence is should read, "Walking home from school, we found the dog."*

## Correct Use of Commas

Between items in a series—

He bought butter, eggs, bacon, and bread. *A comma after the final item and before the 'and' is never wrong; to leave that comma out can be misleading.*

To set off non-essential information—

My oldest brother, the boy in the red jacket, goes to college.

My brother, Tom, won yesterday's marathon. *Tom is my only brother. If I had more, I would not set his name off in commas because it would then become necessary information: it tells the reader which brother I am writing about.*

Before the conjunction in a compound sentence—

I would like to come to the party, but I have to finish my homework.

He is taking a walk, and she is doing her homework.

No comma before the conjunction in sentence with a compound verb—

~~He is taking a walk, and eating an ice cream cone.~~

After introductory words, phrases, and clauses—

Yes, I will be there at eight. Around the corner and up the hill, ran the little boy.

Before you hand in your paper, please check the spelling.

To separate and set of parts of a date or an address—

He was born on July 20, 1918, in Boston, Massachusetts.

In other conventional situations—

Dear Jim, John K. Jones, Jr. (John K. Jones Jr. *is also correct.*) Sincerely yours,

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## Correct Use of Semicolons

To separate parts of a compound sentence when there is no conjunction—

She likes carrots; he likes beans.

To separate items in a series when the items contain commas—

The members of the committee are Jack, the president; Susan, the treasurer; and Martin, the vice-president.

Please bring peanut butter, jelly, and bread; ham, eggs, and bacon; and apples, oranges, and grapes.

## Correct Use of Colons

At the end of a complete sentence that is followed by a list—

I found these items: hat, gloves, mittens, and sweater.

At the end of a sentence that is followed by a word, phrase or clause  
adds information to the sentence—

Please bring the following items to class: book, pen, and paper.

In other conventional situations—

Dear Sir: Chapter 14: verse 12

that

## Correct Use of Homonyms

They're waiting for their baggage over there by the desk. They are waiting...

You're sure that the complaint is about your behavior. You are sure...

It's about time that you changed its flea collar. It is about time...

## Avoidance of Flying Which's, This's, and That's.

Which, that, and what are pronouns and should be used to replace nouns, not whole clauses or sentences—

~~I was late which made my teacher angry.~~ Because I was late, my teacher was angry.

~~I overslept. This was my mistake.~~ My mistake was over-sleeping!

~~I missed the bus. That was the final straw.~~ Missing the bus was the final straw.

## Avoidance of Redundancy,

as in “The reason is because...” and “The Reason Why...”

~~The reason I lost the job is because I was late.~~ I lost the job because I was late.

~~The reason why I am late is that I overslept.~~

The reason I am late is that I overslept. I am late because I overslept.

## Avoidance of Split Infinitives

~~I decided to quickly read the article.~~ I decided to read the article quickly.

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## Parallel Construction

Grammatical Constructions joined by coordinate conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, yet, for) are in the same grammatical form—

~~I like swimming, running, and to play baseball.~~

I like swimming, running, and playing baseball.

I like to swim, to run, and to play baseball.

~~Jim likes writing papers, but his brother likes to read novels.~~

Jim likes to write papers, but his brother likes to read novels.

Jim likes writing papers, but his brother likes reading novels.

~~I will either leave by seven tonight or I will go in the morning.~~

I will either leave by seven tonight or go in the morning.

Either I will leave at seven tonight or I will go in the morning.

## Correct Use of “That” and “Which”

If a group of words is essential to the meaning of a sentence, use “that” and do not set the group of words off with commas—

The letter that arrived this morning was mailed last year.

If a group of words is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, use “which” and set the group of words off with commas—

Yesterday, which was sunny, was my birthday.

My home, which is painted red, was repossessed yesterday.

## Correct Use of Participial Phrases

A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject—

~~Waiting for my date, the clock struck twelve.~~

Waiting for my date, I heard the clock strike twelve.

## References

*The Elements of Style*, William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White, Third Edition, Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., New York, 1979.

*The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*, Allan M. Siegal and William G. Connolly, Random House, New York, 1999.

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# **SWE EDITING CHECKLIST**

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Look for errors in spelling, verb tense, sentence structure, clarity of idea, proper paragraphing, capitalization, and punctuation. Use a spell check and a grammar check on word-processed work.

## **SYMBOLS USED FOR CORRECTION OF WRITTEN WORK**

	awkward	Use more direct wording.
	unclear	Make the point of a comment easier to understand.
	word choice	Use a more precise word.
	spelling	Check the dictionary.
	verb tense	Make the verb tense agree with the tense of the rest of the piece.
	not a sentence	Use a complete thought to express your idea.
	parallelism	Make verbs agree with subjects, and make pronouns agree with antecedents. Make items in a series be in the same grammatical form.
mnay	transposition	Switch the order of the letters.
	good point	Take credit for a valid comment!
	run-on sentence	Create a shorter, less confusing sentence.
	paragraphing	Make a new paragraph or use paragraphs.
tom	capitalization	Use capitalization rules.
Dog	lower case	Get rid of the capital.
it it	deletion	Delete the word(s).
thecat	elision	Insert a space.