

GRAMMAR/WRITING STYLE CHEAT SHEET

- It is often better to paraphrase rather than use quotations; either way, you must cite.
- Avoid using contractions (i.e. use "do not" instead of "don't", etc.)
- Do not use first person (I, we, etc.) or second person (you, the reader, etc.).
 - "I will explain the three causes of the Revolution..." is wrong
 - "The three causes of the Revolution were..." is correct
 - "At the end of this paper, you will understand why the Revolution occurred..." is wrong
 - "The Revolution occurred because..." is correct
- There, Their, and They're
 - There: location (i.e. The bird is over there.)
 - Their: possessive (i.e. Their bird is over there.)
 - They're: contraction of *they are* (i.e. They're watching their bird over there.)
- Witch and Which
 - Witch: scary lady with warts and green skin (i.e. The witch came to eat our babies.)
 - Which: interrogative (i.e. Which witch came to eat our babies?)
- Which or That?
 - Use "which" if a group of words adds information.
 - The books, which have red covers, are new.
 - Notice that all of the books are new and they all have red covers, but the information about the red covers is in addition.
 - Leap years, which have 366 days, contain an extra day in February.
 - Notice that the information after "which" is not necessary to understand the sentence.
 - Use "that" if a group of words limits the set of things you are talking about
 - The books that have red covers are new.
 - Notice that this is not talking about all of the books (unlike above), only those with red covers.
 - Meetings that are held on Tuesdays are in the cafeteria.
 - Notice that this is not talking about all meetings, just those on Tuesdays.
 - Realistically, few people will know the difference.
- Hear and Here
 - Hear: what you do with your ears (i.e. I could not hear the band.)
 - Here: location (i.e. I moved over here so I could hear the band.)
- Its and It's
 - Its: possessive (i.e. The dog lost its leash.)
 - It's: contraction of *it is* and occasionally *it has* (i.e. It's a big building.)

- Prepositions: prepositions indicate relationships between things mentioned in a sentence

- The most commonly used prepositions are: of, to, in, for, before, with, and on
- Do not end a sentence in a preposition.

- Two, Too, and To (when in doubt, you should probably use "to")

- Two: the number "2" (i.e. I enjoyed the two marshmallows.)
- Too: also, excessively, and very
 - I, too, enjoyed the two marshmallows.
 - Two marshmallows was one too many.
 - He did not seem too interested in my two marshmallows.
- To: direction (most of the time), accompanying, before/until, regarding, any other uses
 - I, too, heard about the two marshmallows so I went to find them.
 - As I ate the two marshmallows I danced to the music.
 - I ate the two marshmallows at a five minutes to ten.
 - The two marshmallows were agreeable to everyone.
 - My two marshmallows were similar to those two.
 - I wanted a room to myself before I began eating my marshmallows.

- Numbers

- Numbers below 10 should be spelled out
 - "There were six kittens." is correct
 - "There were 6 kittens." is incorrect
- Numbers above nine should be written as numbers unless they begin a sentence
 - "There were 13 kittens." is correct
 - "There were thirteen kittens." is incorrect
 - "Thirteen kittens appeared." is correct
 - "13 kittens appeared." is incorrect

- Apostrophe Rules (excluding use in contractions)

- 's: singular possessive (i.e. That is my dog's leash.)
- s's: singular possessive (i.e. That is my dog Jess's leash.)
- s': plural possessive: (i.e. Those are my dogs' leashes.)
- an apostrophe should not be used in dates (1930's is wrong; 1930s is correct)

- Affect vs Effect

- affect (v.) - to have an influence on (i.e. His statement did not affect me.)
- affect (v.) - to make a display of (i.e. She affected an air of sophistication.)
- affect (n.) - an emotion (i.e. During the test the patients maintained a normal affect.)
- effect (n.) - something which follows a cause - when you *affect* a situation you have an *effect* on it (i.e. The effects of my actions were limited.)
- effect (v.) - to create (i.e. I am trying to effect a change in the way the business runs.)

- Comma Usage

- Use commas to separate items in a list of three or more things. Sometimes, it is taught that the last comma can be omitted. This is true, however including it is never incorrect, and is sometimes very necessary.
 - "I went to the store for milk, bread, soup, and soap." is clear.
 - "I went to the store for milk, bread, soup and soap." is not clear. It leaves the status of "soup and soap" unclear. "Soup and soap" could be a delicious singular item like "macaroni and cheese", or it could be two separate items.
- Use a comma and a little conjunction (and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so) to connect two independent clauses. Though we often pause after a coordinating conjunction when speaking, there is very rarely a comma placed directly after the coordinating conjunction, even when it is with an interjection.
 - He hit the man, but he did not fall.
 - She received a B on her test, yet Joan was not happy.
 - The team did well in the pre-season, but of course, they always do.
- Use a comma to set off quoted elements (usually).
 - Sarah said, "No sir, I do not want to buy a puppy from you, and I do not believe that you have candy in your windowless van."
 - "I will not help you find your puppy," said Sarah, "and will I help you eat the candy you have inside your windowless van."
 - If, however, the second quote is an independent clause, you should use a period: "I will not help you find your puppy," said Sarah. "I also will not help you eat the candy you have inside your windowless van."
 - Do not use a comma to set off quotes which are introduced by "that" or which are embedded in the text.
 - Sarah told the police that "the handsome man told me he had a puppy and candy."
 - Sarah said the handsome man told her he had "puppies and candy in his van", but she did not believe he was telling the truth.
 - Do not use commas to set off quotes that are exceptionally long (especially if they are over one sentence in length), instead use a colon.
 - Sarah told the police this story: "This man told me he had lost his puppy, but that he thought the puppy was in his van. Then he pointed to his van, and explained that he also had candy in the van. He said that we should go to his van together to find the puppy and eat the candy."
- Use a comma to set off phrases that express contrast.
 - Some people believe that the world will end in ice, not fire.
 - The puppies were cute, but very messy after eating the candy.
- Use a comma to set off parenthetical elements. A parenthetical element is a part of a sentence that can be removed without changing the meaning of the sentence.
 - Steve's dream, to become a puppy salesman, is within his reach.
 - Sally, Steve's wife of thirty years, does not support his efforts.
 - Paris, France, is sometimes called the "City of Lights."
 - Yes, it is always a matter, of course, of preparation.

- Comma Usage Continued

- Use a comma to set off introductory elements.
 - Noticing the toilet paper on his shoe, he realized why everyone was laughing.
 - Of course, it was not a good enough grade to satisfy her parents.
- Use a comma to separate coordinate (related/connected) adjectives: if you can place "and" or "but" between the adjectives, a comma probably belongs there.
 - "He is a tall, distinguished fellow." could be written "He is a tall and distinguished fellow.", so you use a comma.
 - "She is a little old lady." would not be written "She is a little and old lady." so you do not use a comma.
- Use a comma to avoid confusion. Though this is very flexible, and it is easy to overuse commas. Be cautious. Head the advice of Oscar Wilde when he said, "I have spent most of the day putting in a comma and the rest of the day taking it out."

- Semicolon Usage

- Semicolons are used to join two very closely related independent clauses (clauses that could be sentences) that are not connected by a conjunction; they are not fancy replacements for commas.
 - "Shelley is an entertaining author; her books are quite deep." is correct
 - "Shelley is an entertaining author. Her books are quite deep." is also correct
 - "Shelley is an entertaining author; and her books are quite deep." is incorrect

- Quotation Marks and Periods

- Because of printing press technology several hundred years ago, in American English the quotation mark always encloses the punctuation.
- In British English, however, the punctuation appears outside of the quotation mark if the quotation is not an independent clause. Most people do not care which way this is done.
 - American English
 - "The birds were pretty."
 - Jane said, "The birds were pretty."
 - British English
 - "The birds were pretty."
 - Jane said, "The birds were pretty".

- Conjunctions are used to connect two words, phrases, or clauses together

- The most common are: as, for, or, nor, while, however, whenever, and nevertheless
- These words should never begin sentences unless they are being used as adverbs
 - "However big the fool, there is always a bigger fool to admire him." is correct
 - "However, he was a fool." is incorrect.
 - "He, however, was a fool." is correct.