

Habits of Highly Effective Writers.

The following is a list of things that would make me (and markers in Edmonton) thrilled and, I dare say, generous. A quick 'once-over' will not suffice. Read these and internalize them. Make them apart of you and your writing.

Do not use incorrect formats when writing titles of works.

When introducing the literature be sure to offset it appropriately. Therefore, minor texts are enclosed in quotation marks and major texts are in italics (If you are handwriting the equivalent to italics in underlining the text).

Full Length Works

The Crucible (Full length play)

Merchant of Venice (Full length play)

Night (Fictional Novel)

Schindler's List (Full length film)

Ethan Frome (Novel)

Night Circus (Novel)

The Edmonton Journal (Paper)

Beowulf (Epic Poem)

Modern Family (TV Series)

Minor Works

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (Poem)

"5 Myths About Healthy Eating" (Magazine article)

"Journal of a Wife Beater" (Short Story)

"The Lottery" (Short Story)

"2081" (Short Film)

“When Good Kids Go Bad” (Single episode of *Modern Family*)

Say: Traditions in “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson...

Say: Motifs are utilized in *Macbeth* to emphasize...

Say: Social sterility in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” ...

Introduce the author(s) of the text(s) you are discussing.

The first time you introduce the author it should include their full name. Subsequent mentions of the author only need to include their last name.

Say: In the poem “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” T.S. Eliot evokes sympathy in the speaker by employing allusions. Eliot has purposefully juxtaposed the speaker’s situation with that of the great Gods of ancient societies.

Say: William Shakespeare depicts the ideal of ambition as dangerous in *Macbeth*.

Do not use first-person pronouns (I, me, myself, mine) and second-person pronouns (you, your, yourself) in critical-voice Responses. It is colloquial and sounds subjective.

Don't Say: I think Harper Lee is making a comment about racism in the 1930's.

Say: Harper Lee is making a comment about racism in the 1930's.

Don't Say: You can see that Shylock is portrayed as a shrew and ill-moral character in *The Merchant of Venice*.

Say: Shylock is portrayed as a shrew and an ill-moral character in *The Merchant of Venice*.

The exception is the occasional use of “we” “our” and “us” in referring to the readers of the text that is being discussed.

Do not use contractions or abbreviations in critical response texts.

Don't Say: He's the worst husband imaginable.

Say: He is the worst husband imaginable.

Don't Say: The man is tired, angry etc.

Say: The man is tired, angry, hungry, and ill tempered.

Do not misplace apostrophes.

Apostrophes are used for two reasons:

Firstly, to indicate possession. (The boy's dog, the boys' dogs', the boy's dog's bone)

Secondly, an apostrophe is used in contractions (can't=cannot, it's= it is, that's= that is, would've= would have and so on.) With this said, avoid using contractions in critical response pieces.

The exception comes with pronouns- in these cases an apostrophe is not used (theirs, yours, hers, ours) DO NOT EVER USE APOSTROPHE TO FORM PLURALS!

Do not set commas or periods outside quotation marks.

Don't Say: "I saw the man running that way", remarked the witness.

Say: " I saw the man running that way," remarked the witness.

Don't Say: "... what an excellently presented meal".

Say: "...what an excellently presented meal."

Do Not Title Essays Incorrectly

It is incorrect to simply title your essay with the name of the work in which you are writing about. The title should indicate the content in which you are writing. For example:

Macbeth = bad title

Ambition in *Macbeth*= good title

Critical Response of *To Kill a Mockingbird* = bad title

Social Stratification in *To Kill a Mockingbird* = good title

Do not use the non-word "alot"

This word does not exist in the human language. Use a lot. Better yet, use the phrase much or many.

Don't say: *Alot of the novel has to do with preconceived notions of right and wrong.*

Say: *Much of the novel has to do with preconceived notions of right and wrong.*

Do not say "We as human beings" or "we the readers." "We" is enough. The reader will not assume that "we" refers to non-humans or to those that haven't read the text discussed.

Do not use commas haphazardly. As a rule, use commas to offset words or phrases that could be deleted from the sentence without making the whole sentence incomplete.

This is correct: *Auten's style, so strongly lyrical and rhythmic, is decidedly poetic, even through her vehicle is prose.*

The phrases “so strongly lyrical and rhythmic” and “even though her vehicle is prose” could be deleted and a complete sentence would stand.

It would read: Austen’s style is decidedly poetic.

Do not use text message language!!!! (Five exclamation points because I mean it!)

Never use any of the following for any reason: U, lol, brb, Y, OMG, ok- and any other lingo that the ‘cool kids’ are using, nowadays. You may be the most intelligent person in the world, but if this shows up on your diploma you will not receive a good grade-guaranteed.

Do not over-rely on spell-checker.

We have all made the mistake of writing **defiantly** when we really wanted to say **definitely**. Or perhaps you wrote **aquatinted** but really meant **acquainted**. It is best to read your work aloud (if circumstances permit) because your ears will detect errors your ears will not.

Do not use “is when.” Say “occurs when” or “happens when”

Do not be Redundant

Being redundant is saying the same thing twice. It is shocking and appalling. Being redundant will cost you. Redundancies cause writing to become wordy and long-winded and not to mention unnecessary. I once **thought to myself** that writing long passages was always **cash money** but I grew greater and am no longer a **young teenager** and know better. Isn’t that just painful to read?

Here are some other redundancies to avoid:

Do not pad your text with intensifiers: words such as ‘**very**’ ‘**extremely**’ ‘**highly**’ ‘**really**’

Do not say, “**Thought to myself.**” **Who else would you be thinking to?**

There are thousands of redundancies here are few more:

Absolutely essential
Always forever
Bad trouble
Combined together
Dark night
Down under
Elevate up
End result
Evil villain
Grand total
New discovery
Raise up
Crystal clear
Safe haven
Small child
Extreme hazard
Honest truth
Square box
Safe sanctuary
Oral conversation
Prior history
Written down
Unexpected surprise

Do not use unassimilated quotes. These read awkwardly. Instead embed words or phrases.

Do not use the word "like" It is vague and ill fitting of formal writing.

Do not say: It was like Macbeth was blinded by greed.

Say: It was as if Macbeth was blinded by greed.

Say: It was as though Macbeth was blinded by greed.

Do not assume that your writing will become fluent and flawless without a lot of hard work and deep thinking.

Here are some hints that should help the responsible student:

1. Read good writing. Go to the Alberta education website. Then to “diplomas” then “examples of student writing.” Note the tendencies of a 3, 4, or 5 writer. Get a ‘feel’ for it. Good writers imitate great writers.
2. Go to various grammar websites and polish your skills. There are many. If you do not like the Internet scene then come see me. I have a wonderfully thrilling grammar guide that you may use.
3. Read and understand comments on handed back assignments. If you are confused see me!
4. Look through the website. See what former students have written. Note the revisions that my colleagues and myself have included. Learn from them!
5. If you hurry your writing you will make careless mistakes. If time permits, re-read your work.
6. Become comfortable using a paper dictionary and thesaurus. These tools are legal and extremely helpful on Part A of the diploma.
7. Understand the question that is being asked of you on all assignments. It is rather difficult to attain a good grade when you do not answer the question posed.