A Guide to the
Castleton University

Writing Standards
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Writing Standards

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Credits

These former Castleton University students wrote essays included in the book *And the Glory of the Latter House Shall Be Greater Than That of the Former*, a history of the university edited by Holman D. Jordan, Jr., and published in 1968. Their essays inform the examples found throughout Chapter 9 of *A Guide to the Castleton University Writing Standards*.

A Letter from Dr. Karen M. Scolforo

Welcome to Castleton University. We are honored to count you among the thousands of students who have shared in our storied history as the first institution of higher education in Vermont.

As a lifelong learner and passionate writer, I have dedicated much of my life to the art and science of writing, earning a Master of Arts in Writing and Literature and a Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. As Castleton University President, it is my pleasure to introduce you to A Guide to the Castleton University Writing Standards and sincerely hope that it helps ignite a similar passion for learning. In the pages that follow, you will find important information about the Castleton Writing Assessment, including how to achieve the necessary writing standards. The members of the Castleton Family—our faculty, staff, administration, and your fellow students—are committed to helping you meet your academic goals. An exceptional understanding and mastery of writing is the foundation for all other academic pursuits, and we will help you to build that foundation.

On behalf of our entire Castleton Family, welcome to Castleton University, welcome home.

Kind regards,

Dr. Karen M. Scolforo
President, Castleton University
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1. Statement about Writing

Castleton University expects you to become an accomplished writer and to understand writing as a powerful means of both expression and thought.

The university promotes such accomplishment and understanding by way of the curriculum itself, including writing and writing-intensive courses; by way of tutorial assistance offered through the Writing Clinic; by way of the university writing assessment, which you must pass before you are graduated from the university; and by way of the general campus culture.

Consequently, you will conduct significant scholarly work at the juncture of writing and thought. For example, you will write to comprehend those ideas that define and illustrate the academic subjects you choose to study. You will discuss with others what you have written and how you have written so that, in turn, you will become a confident and effective critical reader of your own writing. And, most important, you will study and practice strategies for writing, especially strategies for revision, that best can assist you to succeed at writing.

The university provides you these opportunities, and this challenge, to ensure that you do become an accomplished writer and can therefore fulfill not only your academic responsibilities but also your future professional and civic responsibilities.

2. The Writing Assessment: Baccalaureate Degree

To be graduated with a baccalaureate degree from Castleton University, you must pass the university writing assessment. That is, you must satisfy the following three conditions, all informed by the university writing standards.

1) You must pass the required writing course, English 1061.
2) You must pass two writing-intensive courses.
3) You must complete three timed essays, including one culminating essay that earns a passing score.

Writing Course

While enrolled in the required writing course, English 1061, you will study and practice the forms of writing most important to general academic thought and expression, especially those forms that explain, persuade, and profit from research. You will also study and practice grammar, punctuation, documentation, and style. In concert with these endeavors, you will study and apply to your own writing the strategies by which effective writers discover and examine ideas, revise what they write, and fulfill their obligations to topic, audience, and purpose. By way of English 1061, then, you will understand what the university writing standards mean, why those standards are central to the mission of the university, and how you can demonstrate those standards in your own writing.

Besides whatever other writing you complete for English 1061, you will write one fifty-minute essay in class during the tenth week of the semester.

The university recommends that you complete this required writing course by the end of your first semester or at least by the end of your first year. Subsequent course work will reinforce and extend what you achieve in English 1061.
Writing-intensive Courses

While enrolled in the two required writing-intensive courses, you will investigate disciplinary or interdisciplinary subjects even as you continue to investigate the subject and act of writing. You will study and practice the forms of writing most important to the disciplines and professions represented by your writing-intensive courses and, in that way, you will study and practice writing by way of the university writing standards. You may select writing-intensive courses from among those courses that meet requirements in general education and from among those courses that meet requirements in any major and minor offered at the university, so long as those courses are designated by a (WI) in the schedule of classes at registration. A university committee determines which courses are so designated, based in part on the number, and quality, of writing opportunities those courses offer you.

Besides whatever other writing you complete for these two courses, you will write one fifty-minute essay in class during the tenth week of the first writing-intensive course and one culminating essay out of class during the twelfth week of the second writing-intensive course.

The university recommends that you complete the required writing course, English 1061, before you enroll in the first writing-intensive course and that you complete one writing-intensive course before you enroll in the second.

Three Timed Essays

One of the many forms of writing that you will practice during the required writing course and the two writing-intensive courses is explanation and persuasion under timed circumstances. Such practice will prepare you for those plentiful occasions in university, work, and civic life when you must write quickly yet skillfully.

Soon after you write the fifty-minute essay for English 1061, you will receive a brief evaluation of that essay, including recommendations for improvement. Soon after you write the fifty-minute essay for your first writing-intensive course, you will receive a brief evaluation of that essay, too. Eventually, near the end of your second writing-intensive course, you will write the culminating essay. You must write a passing culminating essay before you pass the university writing assessment. All three evaluations will accord with the university writing standards. Writing the first two essays, therefore, will help prepare you to write the culminating essay.

If your culminating essay is of passing quality and if you have satisfied all other conditions, you will pass the university writing assessment. If your culminating essay is of unusually high quality and if you have satisfied all other conditions, you will pass the culminating essay with distinction and will pass the university writing assessment. If your culminating essay is of low quality, however, you will not pass that culminating essay, nor will you pass the university writing assessment until you have written another culminating essay that is of passing quality and have satisfied all other conditions.

The university recommends that you diligently try to pass the university writing assessment early in your study at the university, but by no later than your junior year. Furthermore, the university recommends that you complete another writing course, another writing-intensive course, tutorial study at the Writing Clinic, or some combination of these if you do not pass the culminating essay and must make another attempt.
3. The Writing Assessment: Associate Degree

To be graduated with an associate degree from Castleton University, you must pass the university writing assessment. That is, you must satisfy the following three conditions, all informed by the university writing standards.

1) You must pass the required writing course, English 1061.
2) You must pass one writing-intensive course.
3) You must complete two timed essays, including one culminating essay that earns a passing score.

Writing Course

While enrolled in the required writing course, English 1061, you will study and practice the forms of writing most important to general academic thought and expression, especially those forms that explain, persuade, and profit from research. You will also study and practice grammar, punctuation, documentation, and style. In concert with these endeavors, you will study and apply to your own writing the strategies by which effective writers discover and examine ideas, revise what they write, and fulfill their obligations to topic, audience, and purpose. By way of English 1061, then, you will understand what the university writing standards mean, why those standards are central to the mission of the university, and how you can demonstrate those standards in your own writing.

Besides whatever other writing you complete for English 1061, you will write one fifty-minute essay in class during the tenth week of the semester.

The university recommends that you complete this required writing course by the end of your first semester or at least by the end of your first year. Subsequent course work will reinforce and extend what you achieve in English 1061.

Writing-intensive Course

While enrolled in the required writing-intensive course, you will investigate a disciplinary or interdisciplinary subject even as you continue to investigate the subject and act of writing. You will study and practice the forms of writing most important to the discipline and profession represented by your writing-intensive course and, in that way, you will study and practice writing by way of the university writing standards. You may select your writing-intensive course from among those courses that meet requirements in general education and from among those courses that meet requirements in any major and minor offered at the university, so long as those courses are designated by a (WI) in the schedule of classes at registration. A university committee determines which courses are so designated, based in part on the number, and quality, of writing opportunities those courses offer you.

Besides whatever other writing you complete for this course, you will write one culminating essay out of class during the twelfth week of the semester.

The university recommends that you complete the required writing course, English 1061, before you enroll in the writing-intensive course.

Two Timed Essays

One of the many forms of writing that you will practice during the required writing course and the writing-intensive course is explanation and persuasion under timed circumstances. Such practice will prepare you for those plentiful occasions in university, work, and civic life when you must write quickly yet skillfully.

Soon after you write the fifty-minute essay for English 1061, you will receive a brief evaluation of that essay, including recommendations for improvement. Eventually, near the end of your writing-intensive course, you will write the culminating essay. You must write a passing culminating essay before you pass the university writing assessment. Both
evaluations will accord with the university writing standards. Writing the first essay, therefore, will help prepare you to write the culminating essay.

If your culminating essay is of passing quality and if you have satisfied all other conditions, you will pass the university writing assessment. If your culminating essay is of unusually high quality and if you have satisfied all other conditions, you will pass the culminating essay with distinction and will pass the university writing assessment. If your culminating essay is of low quality, however, you will not pass that culminating essay, nor will you pass the university writing assessment until you have written another culminating essay that is of passing quality and have satisfied all other conditions.

The university recommends that you diligently try to pass the university writing assessment early in your study at the university. Furthermore, the university recommends that you complete another writing course, another writing-intensive course, tutorial study at the Writing Clinic, or some combination of these if you do not pass the culminating essay and must make another attempt.

4. Writing Standards

Audience and Purpose
Students fully consider the relationships among writer, topic, audience, and purpose. They understand the many ways by which those relationships govern what they write and how they write. And they demonstrate that understanding through articulate and meaningful writing.

Arrangement
Students provide a context for what they write and establish why their topic is important. They use arrangement strategies that signal and support their purpose and that result in coherent and fluent thought within and among sentences and paragraphs.

Elaboration
Students understand that writer, topic, audience, and purpose determine the kind and degree of elaboration. They select and pace their explanations, examples, and evidence accordingly.

Synthesis
Students gather, evaluate, and synthesize research material so that they are well informed about their topic, audience, and purpose; so that they can draw accurate inferences and provide accurate and useful explanations, examples, and evidence; and so that they can establish their credibility as writers. They know why and how to cite sources, and they summarize, paraphrase, and quote appropriately.

Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling
Students understand that effective grammar, punctuation, and spelling help them to write clearly and credibly—and so help them to achieve their purpose. They apply this understanding to what they write, abiding by the conventions of standard written English.
5. Writing Standards: Audience and Purpose

Students fully consider the relationships among writer, topic, audience, and purpose. They understand the many ways by which those relationships govern what they write and how they write. And they demonstrate that understanding through articulate and meaningful writing.

Accomplished writers of academic, professional, and civic prose understand that every writing occasion demands vigorous attention to the relationships among writer, topic, audience, and purpose. Before you begin to write and then even as you do write, you should consider and reconsider what you (the writer) want to write about (the topic), to whom (the audience), and for what reason (the purpose). Eventually, those relationships should be sensible enough and sharp enough to guide you unfailingly as you work toward your final draft.

The following explanation of terms will help you to analyze whatever writing occasion you might find yourself addressing.

Writer

Just as you perform a variety of roles in your everyday life, so too do you perform a variety of roles in your everyday writing. For each writing occasion, you should select your writer’s stance toward your topic and audience. That stance should serve your purpose. Here are some basic questions by which to contemplate your writer’s stance.

- How can you establish your credibility? An audience wants assurance that you know about what you are writing and that you know how to write.
- How can you establish your integrity? An audience also wants assurance that you are truthful about what you write and that you are honorable.
- Which tone of voice will you assume? Should you approach your topic with an impartial tone? a passionate tone? or a humorous tone? Should you approach your audience with a formal and distant tone? or a conversational and intimate tone? Should you write up to the audience? down to the audience? or on equal footing with the audience?

Topic

For some writing occasions, your subject is given; for others, it is not. If you have occasion to select your own subject, and from there your own topic, select a topic that fits the occasion—that fits the specified purpose of a university assignment, for example—and that promises to engage, and improve, you and your audience.

Selecting such a topic, though, requires forethought. You should keep in mind deadlines, and you should survey the kinds of research material available to you if research is part of the assignment. A topic that demands more time or research than you can supply it is unlikely to prove meaningful.

If you have selected your subject but have not yet selected your narrower topic, refer to a reputable grammar handbook or website. Review the narrowing strategies described there—for example, asking yourself systematic questions, drawing diagrams, undertaking some initial research, discussing your subject with others—and then apply the most pertinent strategies to your subject. Because such strategies, diligently applied, can reveal a wealth of topics associated with any given subject, do not select your topic in haste.

In fact, those very same strategies that might reveal your topic to you can also help you to know and then to further refine your topic.
Audience
Because your audience affects how you select and refine your writer’s stance, your topic, and your purpose, you should attempt an audience analysis for every academic, professional, and civic writing occasion.

Such audience analysis is not without complications, however. Sometimes one audience might read in different ways for different purposes. University professors are a useful example of this kind of audience: they read to encourage but also to evaluate. At other times, one written text might have different audiences, perhaps primary and secondary audiences, each with different characteristics, including different reasons for reading. There can be other complications, too.

Audience analysis is, nonetheless, worth the effort. The more fully you understand your audience, and the more accurately you apply what you know, the better your chances of meeting your various obligations to the writing occasion and thereby accomplishing your purpose for writing. Here are some questions by which you can conduct an audience analysis.

- Who is your audience by way of age, gender, education, and income?
- Which beliefs and attitudes are important to your audience?
- To what degree is your audience a sophisticated readership?
- Why is your audience interested in your topic?
- What does your audience know about your topic? What else should it know?
- Which aspects of your topic might evoke audience resistance, even hostility?
- What do you wish to accomplish by presenting your topic to this audience?

Purpose
Your purpose is what you wish to accomplish. For some writing occasions, your purpose might be given; an assignment might instruct you to analyze, to evaluate, or to persuade. If such is the case, you should abide by that purpose.

For other writing occasions, your subject might be given but your purpose left to you. Even as you begin to weigh how to narrow your subject, how to analyze your audience, and how to present yourself to that audience, you should also begin to weigh which one or more purposes you wish to accomplish. Here is a list of common purposes.

- to describe
- to define
- to analyze
- to explain
- to evaluate
- to propose
- to recommend
- to request
- to call to action
- to argue
- to persuade
- to entertain
The idea of purpose can be as complicated as the ideas of writer, topic, and audience, especially when you write for university classes, where you might find that every writing occasion suggests multiple purposes. You write to learn about your topic, of course, and you write to favorably impress your professor, who might ask you to address a largely imaginary audience by demonstrating your power to explain, or to persuade, or to entertain—or to do all three at once!

If you learn to address such complex writing occasions during your university years, and if you learn to do it well, whatever professional or civic writing you must do beyond your university years will seem more challenge than chore.

6. Writing Standards: Arrangement

Students provide a context for what they write and establish why their topic is important. They use arrangement strategies that signal and support their purpose and that result in coherent and fluent thought within and among sentences and paragraphs.

A fortunately organized essay serves the writing occasion, especially audience and purpose. It clarifies ideas and the relationships among them. It establishes and then meets its intentions. It enlightens and pleases its audience and thereby accomplishes what it must.

As you plan, write, and revise, you should consider and reconsider arrangement, understanding that even though your essay should indeed be your own, it should also make use of conventional arrangement principles and patterns whenever they further your purpose.

For example, your audience is more likely to give your essay its due if you establish early in your essay why your topic is important to that audience. Try to set your topic within a context, or to approach it from a perspective, that promises your audience a worthwhile reading experience. The greater the promise, the more probable your audience will give your essay a thoughtful reading—though that promise, finally, must be fulfilled by coherent and fluent writing. The ideas within and among sentences and paragraphs must demonstrate a logical, comprehensible, and purposeful fit.

Transitional Devices

Transitional devices are words and phrases that make explicit how the parts of an essay fit together. Consequently, they can help you to understand your topic, to clarify your purpose, and to guide your audience. They can indicate sequence (first, second, third, finally), time (before, now, soon, afterward), place (below, here, above), examples (for example, for instance, such as), cause and effect (so, because, therefore), and many other relationships. Learn to use the full range of transitional devices and thereby avoid writing that seems to lurch without rhyme or reason from part to part of your essay.

Arrangement Patterns

Certain arrangement patterns customarily align themselves with certain purposes for writing because those patterns help to accomplish those purposes. Here are a few examples.

If your purpose is to entertain your audience with a story or to inform your audience about how something works, how something proceeds, or how something can be accomplished, consider a chronological pattern so that your information unfolds according to what happens first, what happens second, what happens third, and so forth.

If your purpose is to inform your audience about how something looks or how something is organized, consider a spatial pattern instead so that your description unfolds according to how the eye might observe space: from top to bottom or bottom to top, for example; from one side to the other; from one corner to the other; or from north to east to south to west.
Because academic writing is usually more abstract than narrative and descriptive patterns allow, academic writing typically requires arrangement patterns based more on logical patterns than on chronological or spatial patterns.

The most common logical pattern is an **assertion followed by an example or other evidence**. An essay that evaluates might make a series of assertions about the subject being evaluated. Without examples or other evidence, however, the assertions will seem arbitrary because unproven; and so the evaluation, weak.

Another common logical pattern is a **problem followed by a solution**. An essay that proposes, recommends, requests, or calls to action must first establish that a problem exists and that the problem is of concern to the audience. Only then will the audience be prepared to consider one or more solutions to that problem. Incidentally, an audience expects a writer to demonstrate how a proposal, a recommendation, a request, or a call to action will in fact solve the problem. That demonstration should emphasize how the solution will be effective, efficient, and economical.

A third common logical pattern studies **causes and effects**: why something happens, what its results are, and how those results become, in turn, causes. The study might limit itself to an analysis of causes or to an analysis of effects. Or it might move from causes to effects or from effects to causes. For example, an essay that proposes a solution might first establish the unwanted effects of a particular problem, then analyze the causes of that problem, and finally propose how to eliminate one or more of those causes, thereby eliminating or reducing the problem.

These arrangement patterns and others are conventional because they reflect the basic movements of thought by which we order the world and render it meaningful. They are also highly adaptable. They can be used by themselves or in combination with other patterns. And they can be used to delight, instruct, or move an audience.

Because dazzling ideas hidden in a thicket of words remain hidden, your obligations to the writing occasion, especially to audience and purpose, ask that you give thoughtful and sustained attention to arrangement.

### 7. Writing Standards: Elaboration

*Students understand that writer, topic, audience, and purpose determine the kind and degree of elaboration. They select and pace their explanations, examples, and evidence accordingly.*

Writers and readers often disagree about how much elaboration is enough elaboration. Whereas many writers, especially inexperienced writers, hope that the less written the better, many readers, especially experienced readers, hope for more: more explanation, examples, and evidence. Those readers have come to realize that in more elaboration lies greater understanding and pleasure.

And yet more is not always better. Even those readers who enjoy more are not likely to enjoy reading only more of what they already know. Sometimes, such is the result, though, when writers do not understand how to elaborate or how much to elaborate.

If you have selected your subject but have not yet selected your narrower topic, review the narrowing strategies mentioned on page 11. You will find that these narrowing strategies double as elaboration strategies. In other words, as you narrow your subject to a topic, that topic begins to indicate how you might elaborate because it begins to indicate what information will be relevant and irrelevant to your essay.

The arrangement patterns work in much the same way. If you have selected a subject about which you seem to have little to write, consider your subject by way of those patterns. The chronological pattern might suggest that you develop your subject according to how your subject works; the spatial pattern, according to how your subject looks or how your subject is organized. The other patterns might suggest that you develop your subject by defining it in its own terms or by comparing it to something else; by analyzing its primary causes and effects; or by arguing that your subject either is a problem or, on the other hand, might solve a problem.
These are some of the many strategies that accomplished writers use when they wish to find something useful to write about a subject.

Ideally, though, you should consider how to elaborate and how much to elaborate as two closely linked questions best addressed through the intricate relationships among the writer, topic, audience, and purpose. For example, while you might consider narrowing your essay to just a definition of your subject, a subsequent audience analysis might convince you that your audience already has a sufficient definition of your subject. You might therefore narrow your subject in another way—perhaps your audience would find an essay that analyzes the causes of your subject more beneficial—or at least define your subject in such a new way that you invite your audience to see your subject with fresh eyes.

Not only can audience analysis prevent you from wasting your efforts on the wrong kind of elaboration, such as merely repeating what your audience already knows, but audience analysis can also help you to decide how much elaboration is enough elaboration. How much depends on what your audience already knows and what it needs to know, how sophisticated your audience is, and what you hope to accomplish with your audience. If your purpose suggests that you must revisit familiar ground before you break new ground, quicken the pace of what you write until you reach that new ground—and then slow the pace appropriately, thereby assuring yourself that your audience will not read about that new ground and reply, “What do you mean?” or “Where is your evidence?” There are no more certain signs of failed purpose than those two questions.

If everything you know about the writing occasion still leaves you uncertain about how much elaboration is enough, err on the side of caution by writing more rather than less.

8. Writing Standards: Synthesis

Students gather, evaluate, and synthesize research material so that they are well informed about their topic, audience, and purpose; so that they can draw accurate inferences and provide accurate and useful explanations, examples, and evidence; and so that they can establish their credibility as writers. They know why and how to cite sources, and they summarize, paraphrase, and quote appropriately.

Synthesis joins parts to create a whole that is greater than the sum of those parts. All accomplished writing therefore relies on synthesis: an artful joining of writer, topic, audience, and purpose.

In academic writing, synthesis oftentimes joins the writer’s insights to the insights of others, usually experts, so that the writer can claim a degree of expertise about the topic under consideration and thereby advance the purpose for writing. Writing that incorporates the insights of others requires a thoughtful reading of those insights, an accurate inferring from and reporting of those insights, and an appropriate balance struck between those insights and the insights of the writer. Such writing frequently requires research, too.

Research Topic

Selecting a research topic demands more forethought than selecting any other kind of topic. You should keep in mind deadlines, remember—deadlines for research, writing, consultation with others, further research, and further writing—and you should survey the kinds of research material available to you. Again, a topic that demands more time or research than you can supply is unlikely to prove meaningful.

As is always true, you should choose a topic that fits the occasion and that promises to engage, and improve, you and your audience. If you have selected your research subject but have not yet selected your narrower topic, review
the narrowing strategies mentioned on page 11 and then, as always, apply the most pertinent strategies to your subject. Because initial research can lead you to your topic, consult specialized encyclopedias and websites, browse through books and journals devoted to your subject, and discuss your early ideas with others. When the time seems ripe, try to fashion your topic into a research question. Such a question not only will guide your research but also will remind you of your topic and perhaps suggest a suitable audience and purpose.

Research

By its very nature, research equips you with facts, concepts, principles, insights, and knowledge. It can help you to answer your research question, but it might also lead you to rephrase that question. Such refining and reformulating of topic is not cause for despair but instead illustrates the advantageous give-and-take between the research topic and the research itself. The more you learn and the more you consider, the greater your chances for a clearer, more sophisticated, and more meaningful topic.

Research is not necessarily a product of library work. Site visits, interviews, surveys, and experiments represent other forms of research. Nonetheless, library work is usually essential to research and, depending on the research question, may be the predominant or even the sole means of research. It is therefore crucial that you know what the library offers and understand how the library is arranged so that you can make effective and efficient use of library resources—especially the reference works, the research databases, and the online book catalogs—when you collect research material.

Because the methods by which you collect and use research material will influence the very nature of, and the very reaction to, what you write, you should collect a sufficient amount of material, evaluate that material, take scrupulously accurate notes, and then synthesize that material so that it serves your writer’s stance, your topic, your audience, and your purpose.

For example, your research material should not raise the suspicions of your audience. It should be authoritative, credible, and appropriate to your overall purpose. If you collect your material from among reputable magazines, newspapers, journals, and publishing companies, you can generally rest assured that what you collect is in fact authoritative and credible. If you collect your material from among websites, however, you can expect to find material that is reputable and material that is not, some material that has met rigorous standards of excellence, but much that has not. Before you use the material that you collect, evaluate it. Make sure that it is well known and respected, that it is accurate by current standards, and above all that it will serve your reason for writing.

Research Notes

Nor should your use of research material raise the suspicions of your audience. The notes that you write as you study the material must be exact. Record the author’s name, the title, and the complete publication information for each promising source that you consult. After that, write notes about that source in the form of a summary or paraphrase, recording page numbers whenever appropriate.

A summary briefly but accurately restates facts, concepts, principles, and insights in your own words. Because it is a concise rendering, often dramatically concise, a summary might restate an entire source in just one accurate paragraph, or one accurate sentence, or even one accurate phrase. Write a summary for material that will be of secondary importance to your project.

A paraphrase accurately restates facts, concepts, principles, and insights in your own words, too—but at a slower, much more deliberate pace. Because it is a fuller rendering than the summary, a paraphrase allows for a more comprehensive account of the source, especially for far greater detail. Write a paraphrase for material that will be of primary importance to your project.
Whether summary or paraphrase, your notes should include what they must include, neither more than that nor less. They should heighten your engagement with your research material; represent the essence of that material purposefully, honestly, and clearly; and help you to envision how all of your material, when joined together, will serve your intentions.

If, on occasion, you have reason to borrow an author’s actual words—whether a borrowed phrase, or sentence, or group of sentences—remember to signal such borrowing with direct quotation marks. When your notes fail to distinguish your words from an author’s words, such confusion will probably find its way into your finished research essay, too, the result of which could be a charge of plagiarism filed against you.

Research Synthesis

Accomplished research writing, like all accomplished writing, relies on synthesis, especially on synthesis that joins the writer’s insights to the insights of others. Such writing obligates the writer to establish a clear purpose for writing and to satisfy that purpose, in part, by drawing upon the testimony of experts. That testimony might provide the writer useful explanations and examples, for instance, or useful claims and evidence.

But that testimony must be skillfully incorporated into the essay. It must not be used so ineffectively that the essay becomes merely a series of unrelated or, even worse, purposeless references to, or borrowings from, research material.

The following principles will help you to achieve the kind of synthesis that signals accomplished essay writing and writers.

• Develop sensible and sharply drawn relationships among your writer’s stance, your topic, your audience, and your purpose. Assure yourself that your research material serves those relationships and does not instead confuse or otherwise weaken them. Do not allow research material to dominate your essay or to dictate its direction.

• Join your insights to the insights of others so that your audience can readily distinguish between the two and can readily understand how the insights of others further your purpose for writing. Use suitable transitional devices and arrangement patterns to produce coherent and fluent writing.

• Summarize and paraphrase research material appropriately, according to your purpose. Patiently introduce each summary and paraphrase and then explain when necessary what each summary and paraphrase means, how you draw the inferences that you draw, and why each summary and paraphrase is important to your essay. Demonstrate not just your ability to report but also your capacity to understand.

• Use direct quotations only when they convey ideas unforgettably, succinctly, or powerfully. Follow the appropriate quotation conventions, too. As with the summary and paraphrase, introduce each direct quotation and then explain what the direct quotation means, how you draw the inferences that you draw, and why the quotation is important to your essay.

• Abide by the guidelines for honest academic writing and thereby avoid the charge of plagiarism. Never claim, or even suggest, that the words, facts, concepts, principles, or insights of another are your own. Instead, always use quotation marks with any word, phrase, or sentence that you borrow from someone else. And always acknowledge your debt to the experts who help you to establish your credibility as a writer. Give them credit whenever credit is due them. Learn why and how you should cite all knowledge that is not common knowledge whenever you summarize, paraphrase, or quote.

Because research poorly conducted can cost you time wasted and, worse, credibility lost, you should understand the nature and purpose of research and research writing before you proceed with your own.
9. Writing Standards: Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling

Students understand that effective grammar, punctuation, and spelling help them to write clearly and credibly—and so help them to achieve their purpose. They apply this understanding to what they write, abiding by the conventions of standard written English.

There is a time and place for everything, which is particularly true of grammar, punctuation, and spelling. These three concerns should not be your chief concerns when you begin to address a new writing occasion. However, the closer you approach the final draft, the more you should scrutinize your essay for errors. Writing laced with errors cannot soar. Nor can it be as articulate or accomplished as it otherwise might have been. And even if some errors do not leave your audience perplexed, they do leave your audience distracted, perhaps aggravated, thereby diminishing your credibility and undermining your very purpose for writing.

What follows are explanations of and remedies for some of the most persistent errors in student writing at Castleton University. The remedies are sometimes rudimentary, foregoing the subtleties and the exceptions for clarity. Once you understand, and can demonstrate, these fundamental principles of standard written English, you will have begun in earnest the arduous yet valuable study that leads to accomplishment in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

A. Grammar

I. Subjects and verbs

A verb typically names activity in a sentence, but not always. The most dependable way to identify a verb is to consider its form rather than its meaning.

Every verb can take two easily recognized forms: the -s form (the verb ends with the letter s or the letters es) and the -ing form (the verb ends with the letters ing).

Because the word establish can take both forms (he establishes; he is establishing), that word is a verb.

Because the word provide can take both forms (she provides; she is providing), that word is a verb, too.

If a word cannot take both forms, that word is not a verb.

Every verb can take other forms, as well. A verb changes forms to convey agreement with its subject and to convey appropriate verb tense.

a. Agreement – A present-tense verb must agree with its subject by person and number. To identify the subject of a sentence, ask who or what . . . followed by the verb. Here is one example.

Dr. Selah Gridley and Dr. Theodore Woodward established the Castleton Medical Academy in 1818.

This sentence contains the verb establish. The answer to the question who established? is the subject of the sentence: Dr. Selah Gridley and Dr. Theodore Woodward. Here is a second example.

They provided a formal education and apprenticeships for medical students.

This sentence contains the verb provide. The answer to the question who provided? is the subject of the sentence: They.

1) So that a present-tense verb agrees with its subject by person, use the -s form of the verb if the subject is third-person singular (he, she, it, Dr. Gridley, the academy, and so on). Otherwise, use the base form of the verb, which takes no ending. Here are the present-tense forms of the verb dissect.
2) So that a present-tense verb agrees with its subject by number, use a singular verb form with a singular subject and a plural verb form with a plural subject. This principle is usually simple enough to apply, but it is not without some complications. The following guidelines will help you to avoid the errors that sometimes result from those complications.

- Indefinite pronouns that end in –one, –body, or –thing are singular. If they function as subjects, they require singular verb forms.

  \[ \text{subject} \rightarrow \text{verb} \]
  Everyone understands how primitive medical study was in the early nineteenth century.

- Collective nouns, such as faculty and crowd, name a group of individuals or things. If collective nouns function as subjects, they require singular verb forms when they emphasize the group but plural verb forms when they emphasize the individuals or things within the group.

  \[ \text{subject} \rightarrow \text{verb} \]
  Today’s medical-school faculty knows remarkably more about surgery, obstetrics, anatomy, physiology, and chemistry than its nineteenth-century counterpart.

  \[ \text{subject} \rightarrow \text{verb} \]
  Today’s medical-school faculty know remarkably more about surgery, obstetrics, anatomy, physiology, and chemistry than their nineteenth-century counterparts.

- When a sentence begins with the words there is, there are, there was, or there were, the subject follows the verb with which it should agree.

  \[ \text{verb} \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \text{subject} \]
  In addition, there are now very precise instruments with which to perform animal and human dissections.

- When a subject and verb are separated by other words, the verb should agree with the subject, not with any of those other words.

  \[ \text{subject} \rightarrow \rightarrow \rightarrow \text{verb} \]
  And medical students who wish to heal others no longer practice leeching.

- When the subject is two nouns joined by the word and, the verb usually should take the plural form.

  \[ \text{subject} \rightarrow \text{verb} \]
  The shovel and the lantern are also unnecessary now because midnight digs in the graveyard are unnecessary now too.

- When the subject is two nouns joined by the word or or nor, however, the verb should agree with the noun nearer to it.

  \[ \text{subject} \rightarrow \text{verb} \]
  Neither faculty nor students have to steal cadavers in the name of medicine.
b. Verb tenses – The tense of a verb signals time. Most frequently, it signals when the activity named by a verb occurs. To convey changes in tense, a verb changes form. Here are the verb-tense forms for the regular verb dissect. Note that the progressive tenses require a form of the word be before the main verb. The perfect tenses require a form of the word have before the main verb.

- **simple present tense**: I dissect (current or habitual activity)
- **present progressive tense**: I am dissecting (ongoing current activity)
- **present perfect tense**: I have dissected (past activity still ongoing or now completed)
- **present perfect progressive tense**: I have been dissecting (past activity still ongoing)

- **simple past tense**: I dissected (past activity now completed)
- **past progressive tense**: I was dissecting (ongoing activity in the past but now completed)
- **past perfect tense**: I had dissected (past activity completed before another past activity)
- **past perfect progressive tense**: I had been dissecting (ongoing activity in the past completed before another past activity)

- **simple future tense**: I will dissect (activity not yet begun)
- **future progressive tense**: I will be dissecting (ongoing activity in the future)
- **future perfect tense**: I will have dissected (future activity completed before another future activity)
- **future perfect progressive tense**: I will have been dissecting (ongoing activity in the future completed before some specified future time)

1) Verb-tense errors sometimes result from incorrect verb forms. To reduce the possibility of such errors, remember to attach the letter *d* or the letters *ed* to the base of regular verbs in simple past tense and in the three perfect tenses.

2) Whereas regular verbs take the same –*d* or –*ed* ending in simple past tense and in the three perfect tenses, irregular verbs do not. Instead, irregular verbs indicate the simple past tense and the three perfect tenses by other less predictable means, such as by internal spelling changes (the past tense of *eat* is *ate*; the past perfect tense of *begin* is *had begun*). To avoid errors like *I seen* and *I had ate*, consult a reputable grammar handbook, grammar website, or dictionary whenever you are uncertain about irregular verb forms.

3) Verb-tense errors also sometimes result from unconventional use of tenses. Write in the simple present tense to convey facts and general truths; to analyze literature and film; and to report or consider an author’s ideas.

4) Because the relationships among verb tenses can be quite complicated, the exact use of verb tenses is essential to clear and credible writing. Here are some fundamental tense sequences.

If you wish to express the relationship between two activities that occur at approximately the same time, refer to both activities in a present-tense form, or a past-tense form, or a future-tense form. For example, to express the relationship between two present activities, use the simple present-tense form to signal one activity and the most appropriate of the four present-tense forms to signal the other activity.

- **simple present**
  When today’s medical-school faculty *perform* surgery, their patients *expect* to survive the experience.

- **simple present**
If you wish to express the relationship between two activities, the first of which precedes the second, you might use the simple past-tense form for the first and the simple present-tense form for the second.

Patients in the nineteenth century, however, often died gruesome deaths during the simplest procedures, which we find unthinkable today.

Or you might use the past-perfect-tense form for the first and the simple past-tense form for the second.

Even patients who had lived healthy and virtuous lives fell victim to barbarous nineteenth-century methods and instruments.

Or you might use the simple present-tense form for the first and the simple future-tense form for the second.

The history of the Castleton Medical Academy relates closely to the history of Castleton University, and the two will remain closely related in the local imagination.

Learn the verb-tense forms, understand what they mean, and use them accurately in your writing.

c. Verb shifts - Whenever verbs in a sentence or paragraph name two or more activities, those verbs may require different tenses, depending on whether the activities occur at the same or different times. As long as the tense shifts serve logic and clarity, they are appropriate, even necessary.

The most common error associated with verb tenses, however, is the needless, often random shifting back and forth among the tenses. Because a thoughtfully composed sequence of verb tenses requires careful attention to larger plan and smaller detail, develop a suitable, well-defined overall sense of time for what you write, and then write steadfastly according to that sense of time, shifting tenses only when necessary for logic and clarity. Throughout the following paragraph, the overall sense of time is past tense.

In 1821, Dr. Gridley and Dr. Woodward oversaw the construction of the new building that would house the Castleton Medical Academy. During their stay at the academy, students learned surgery, anatomy, and physiology. They also learned to perform human and animal dissections. Because human cadavers were scarce in Castleton, members of the academy would make illegal excavations at surrounding graveyards. They could earn fifteen dollars for each cadaver.

II. Pronouns

A pronoun (I, you, he, she, it, they, him, her, them, someone, who, which, that, and this, among many others) stands in place of a word or group of words, oftentimes a noun or noun phrase, so that the word or group of words need not be repeated within and among sentences.

The most infamous grave-robbing dig associated with the Castleton Medical Academy was the Hubbardton Raid. It happened in 1830.
The word or group of words that the pronoun stands for is the **antecedent**. In this example, *Hubbardton Raid* is the antecedent of the pronoun *it*. The pronoun *it* stands for *Hubbardton Raid* so that *Hubbardton Raid* need not be repeated.

**a. Agreement** – A pronoun must agree with its antecedent by gender and number.

1) So that a pronoun agrees with its antecedent by gender, use a masculine pronoun with a masculine antecedent and a feminine pronoun with a feminine antecedent.

The medical students robbed the body of a Hubbardton woman buried just days before.  
The **dean** of the academy henceforth found **himself** in unexpected trouble.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>antecedent</th>
<th>pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hubbardton</td>
<td>raid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If, however, the antecedent is singular but neither clearly masculine nor clearly feminine, you might refer back to that antecedent with the expression *he or she* or with the expression *his or her*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>antecedent</th>
<th>pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each **member** of the victim’s family wanted **his or her** vengeance.

This solution is acceptable, though many readers find the expression *his or her* clumsy, intrusive, and tiresome. If that attitude seems true of your audience, you might instead switch the antecedent to its plural form and then refer back to that antecedent with a plural pronoun.

**Members** of the victim’s family wanted **their** vengeance.

This solution eliminates the expression *his or her*, but it requires a plural point of view even when a singular point of view might be more appropriate.

If your sense of subject and purpose counsels a singular rather than a plural point of view, you might simply eliminate the troublesome pronoun.

Each member of the victim’s family wanted vengeance.

This solution has much to recommend it, but it is not always available. Nor are these the only solutions. Choose the solution that best suits you, your audience, and your purpose.

2) So that a pronoun agrees with its antecedent by number, use a singular pronoun with a singular antecedent and a plural pronoun with a plural antecedent. Again, this principle is usually simple enough to apply but not without some complications. The following guidelines will help you to avoid the errors that sometimes result from those complications.

- Indefinite pronouns that end in –*one, –body, or –thing* are singular. If they function as antecedents, they require singular pronouns.

  Word of the raid spread throughout the town of Hubbardton. All work ceased. **Everything** came to its conclusion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>antecedent</th>
<th>pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hubbardton</td>
<td>raid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Collective nouns, such as *faculty* and *crowd*, name a group of individuals or things. If collective nouns function as antecedents, they require singular pronouns when they emphasize the group but plural pronouns when they emphasize the individuals or things within the group.
Soon a crowd of three hundred angry citizens arrived outside the medical academy doors and demanded that the body be returned. The crowd raised its collective voice.

When the antecedent is two nouns joined by the word and, the pronoun usually should take the plural form.

The dean of the academy and one student tried to deceive their accusers. The dean hoped to hold back the crowd while the student hid the body.

- When the antecedent is two nouns joined by the word or or nor, however, the pronoun should agree with the noun nearer to it.

Neither the dean nor the student achieved what he intended. When the townspeople finally did search the academy, they discovered the body hidden under some floorboards.

When the Castleton Medical Academy closed in 1862, neither the academy faculty nor the townspeople of Castleton wanted to see their academy building fall to ruin. In 1865, the building was moved across the street to Castleton Seminary, where it served as the chapel.

B. Punctuation

I. Run-on sentences

One frequently made punctuation error is the run-on sentence. This error can annoy or otherwise distract your audience and, even worse, can interfere with the meaning that you wish to convey.

A run-on sentence occurs when one independent clause, or complete sentence, follows directly after another with no punctuation or connective word between them.

Run-on sentence:

 independent clause  independent clause
[A fire consumed the old seminary building at Castleton Normal School in 1924] [the cause was improper wiring.]

There are a variety of methods to correct the run-on sentence. The method you choose should depend in part on your audience and purpose but also on the relationship between the independent clauses.

- If the relationship between the independent clauses is obvious or easily inferred, you might use a period to separate the clauses, or you might use a semi-colon to join the clauses.

Run-on sentence corrected:

A fire consumed the old seminary building at Castleton Normal School in 1924. The cause was improper wiring.
Run-on sentence corrected:

A fire consumed the old seminary building at Castleton Normal School in 1924, the cause was improper wiring.

- If the relationship between the independent clauses is not obvious or easily inferred, however, you might instead use a connective word to join the clauses and thereby establish a clear relationship between them.

A **coordinating conjunction** is one type of connective word; a **conjunctive adverb** is another.

For example, you might use a comma before a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, for, but, yet, and so).

Run-on sentence:

independent clause  independent clause
[The fire spread during a holiday recess]  [no one was in the building.]

Run-on sentence corrected:

The fire spread during a holiday recess, **so** no one was in the building.

Or you might use a semi-colon and a comma with a conjunctive adverb (consequently, furthermore, however, meanwhile, nonetheless, then, and therefore, among others).

Run-on sentence corrected:

The fire spread during a holiday recess; **consequently**, no one was in the building.

**II. Comma splices**

Another frequently made punctuation error is the comma splice. Like the run-on sentence, the comma splice can annoy or otherwise distract your audience and can interfere with the meaning that you wish to convey.

A comma splice occurs when one independent clause, or complete sentence, follows directly after another with only a comma between them. That comma is the difference between a run-on sentence and a comma splice. By itself, the comma is insufficient for joining independent clauses.

Run-on sentence:

independent clause  independent clause
[The fire moved quickly]  [it threatened the chapel next to the old seminary building.]

Comma splice:

[The fire moved quickly], [it threatened the chapel next to the old seminary building.]

There are a variety of methods to correct the comma splice. Once again, the method you choose should depend in part on your audience and purpose but also on the relationship between the independent clauses.
• If the relationship between the independent clauses is obvious or easily inferred, you might replace the comma with a period to separate the clauses, or you might replace the comma with a semi-colon to join the clauses.

Comma splice corrected:

The fire moved quickly. It threatened the chapel next to the old seminary building.

Comma splice corrected:

The fire moved quickly; it threatened the chapel next to the old seminary building.

• If the relationship between the independent clauses is not obvious or easily inferred, however, you might instead use a connective word to join the clauses and thereby establish a clear relationship between them. A coordinating conjunction is one type of connective word; a conjunctive adverb is another.

For example, you might use the comma before a coordinating conjunction (and, or, nor, for, but, yet, and so).

Comma splice:

[The fire would have consumed the chapel too], [members of the fire brigade risked their lives to stop the destruction.]

Comma splice corrected:

The fire would have consumed the chapel too, but members of the fire brigade risked their lives to stop the destruction.

Or you might use the comma with a semi-colon and a conjunctive adverb (consequently, furthermore, however, meanwhile, nonetheless, then, and therefore, among others).

Comma splice corrected:

The fire would have consumed the chapel too; however, members of the fire brigade risked their lives to stop the destruction.

III. Sentence fragments

Even though the sentence fragment is a very different error from the run-on sentence and comma splice, all three errors result from a basic misunderstanding of sentence structure and punctuation, just as all three can diminish the quality of what you write and therefore your credibility as a writer.

The sentence fragment occurs when a phrase or a clause that does not convey a complete idea is punctuated as if it were a sentence. Although such a phrase or clause may look like a sentence, a sentence in fact requires a subject and verb that express a complete idea.
Sentence fragment without a subject: Caused $150,000 damage.

Sentence fragment without a verb: The early-morning blaze.

Sentence fragment without a complete idea: Before it ran its course.

Sentence fragments corrected: The early-morning blaze caused $150,000 damage before it ran its course.

There are two efficient and effective methods to correct the sentence fragment. The method you choose should depend in part on your audience and purpose but also on the sentences that precede and follow the sentence fragment.

- If one of the sentences that precede and follow the sentence fragment is closely related to that fragment, you might join the fragment to that sentence.

  sentence fragment
  Sentence fragment: [Even though the school reopened.] All that was left was the chapel.

  Sentence fragment corrected: Even though the school reopened, all that was left was the chapel.

- If, however, the fragment is not closely related to either of the sentences that precede and follow it, you might instead turn that fragment into a sentence by adding a subject or verb or by otherwise completing the idea.

  Sentence fragment:
  
  Dr. Caroline Woodruff, then the principal of Castleton Normal School, vowed to rebuild the school and to keep the school in the town of Castleton. [Relying on the goodwill of the townspeople.] The town did not want the normal school moved to Rutland.

  Sentence fragment corrected:
  
  Dr. Caroline Woodruff, then the principal of Castleton Normal School, vowed to rebuild the school and to keep the school in the town of Castleton. She relied on the goodwill of the townspeople. The town did not want the normal school moved to Rutland.

IV. Commas

The primary purpose of the comma is to help you convey what you mean to your audience. The comma is therefore another way to prevent your audience from misreading what you intend. Here are three instances when you should use the comma.
a. **Compound sentences** – A sentence that includes two independent clauses is a compound sentence. If you decide to join two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction (*and, or, nor, for, but, yet, and so*), place a comma before that conjunction.

Compound sentence:

[Castleton Normal School and the town of Castleton hoped to raise $10,000 to keep the school in town], **but** [the future of the school was determined by the legislature].

b. **Items in a series** – Whenever a sentence includes a list of three or more simple items, join each item to the others with a comma. Although some grammar handbooks consider the comma between the last two items unnecessary, omitting it can sometimes cause your audience uncertainty. Consequently, the best strategy is to retain that comma.

Items in a series:

The state legislature concluded that Castleton Normal School should remain in Castleton because the school and town had demonstrated generosity, determination, and pride.

c. **Introductory elements** – Whenever an independent clause follows an introductory phrase or clause, separate the introductory element from the independent clause with a comma. That comma thereby eliminates any momentary audience confusion that might otherwise result from a clash of sentence parts. Some grammar handbooks recommend omitting the comma if the introductory phrase is short. However, placing a comma after a short introductory phrase is never incorrect.

Introductory element:

[In the 1925 Castleton Normal School yearbook], **[one can find pictures of the old seminary building]**.

Introductory element:

[Because they reminded all who viewed them about the hope that grows from despair], **[these pictures had a powerful impact on the class of 1925]**.

V. **Apostrophes** – The apostrophe indicates the omission of letters (*the town didn’t want*) or numbers (*class of ’25*), and it indicates the possessive case (*Dr. Woodruff’s private library*). The most frequently made apostrophe error is the missing or misplaced possessive apostrophe.

a. **Possessive apostrophes and nouns** – The possessive case usually establishes ownership, as it does in this sentence: *The fire ruined Dr. Woodruff’s private library, which included almost five hundred books*. The noun phrase *Dr. Woodruff’s private library* refers to the library owned by Dr. Woodruff or the library of Dr. Woodruff. But the possessive case can establish other close relationships between one noun and another, too—for example, characteristics (*the fire brigade’s bravery*) and intentions (*Dr. Woodruff’s vow*).

Whenever you are unsure about adding a possessive apostrophe to the first noun in the noun phrase, consider whether you could rearrange that phrase into an *of* phrase: *the library of Dr. Woodruff, the bravery of the fire brigade, or the vow of Dr. Woodruff*. If you could, add the possessive apostrophe.
To do that, follow one of these two procedures.

• Attach an apostrophe and the letter s to singular nouns, even if they already end with the letter s, and to plural nouns that do not end with the letter s.

  singular
  Due to Dr. Woodruff’s tireless efforts on behalf of the school, a new building rose where the old seminary building had fallen.

  plural
  Dr. Woodruff noted that people’s love for the school was extraordinary.

• Attach just an apostrophe to plural nouns that do end with the letter s.

  plural
  Especially noteworthy was the citizens’ generous contributions of money and labor.

b. Possessive apostrophes and indefinite pronouns – Another class of words that establishes ownership by way of the possessive apostrophe is the indefinite pronoun (including anybody, everyone, nobody, and somebody).

To mark the possessive case of any indefinite pronoun that ends with –body or –one, attach an apostrophe and the letter s.

  With everyone’s support, the school survived.

Do not, however, use the possessive apostrophe with a possessive pronoun (its, his, hers, yours, theirs, and ours, for instance). The possessive pronoun already conveys the possessive case and so does not require an apostrophe.

  Later in her career, Dr. Woodruff became president of the Vermont State Teachers’ Association and president of the National Education Association.

  Eventually, the new building was named Woodruff Hall in her honor.

C. Spelling

  I. Dictionaries and spell checkers

  Because you have spent substantial time reading, writing, and speaking since you were young, you have an abundant knowledge of words.

  That knowledge affects how you spell, not just in the way you spell the vast majority of words correctly but also in the way you know the words that seem misspelled.

  The best way to confirm that a word is misspelled and then to correct it is to turn to a dictionary. A dictionary offers correct spellings and correct pronunciations. In addition, a dictionary sometimes lists the various endings that a word can take if the word changes number or tense; and it sometimes provides word meanings and origins, synonyms, and usage advice. For these reasons, a dictionary is indispensable for the accomplished writer.

  Although a computer spell checker is often called indispensable, too—and perhaps it is, in a way—a typical spell checker is not without shortcomings. It offers you no information other than some possibilities for correcting the misspelled word, nor does it instruct you how to correct misspelled words not listed in its dictionary. More important, it does not indicate words spelled correctly but used incorrectly. If you have written their when you should have written they’re, or if you have written defiantly when you should have written definitely, a spell checker will not indicate those errors.
II. Commonly misused or misspelled words

A small number of words causes a large number of problems. Some of those words are listed below. Study the list carefully, and learn to use and spell the words correctly.

**accept** (verb) – to take what is given; to receive; to agree to; to believe in

**except** (verb) – to leave out or take out; to exclude

**adapt** (verb) – to make fit by changing; to adjust

**adopt** (verb) – to take into one’s own family; to use as one’s own

**advice** (noun) – an opinion, a suggestion, counsel

**advise** (verb) – to give an opinion, a suggestion, counsel

**affect** (verb) – to influence; to stir the emotions; (noun) – a feeling or emotion

**effect** (noun) – a result or a consequence; (verb) – to bring about; to cause

**can** (verb) – to know how to; to be able to

**may** (verb) – to have permission to

**could of** (verb) – nonstandard for *could have or could’ve*

**good** (adjective) – enjoyable, desirable, pleasant, happy

**well** (adverb) – in a pleasing, satisfactory, friendly, or skillful manner

**its** (possessive pronoun) – of, belonging to, made, or done by it

**it’s** (contraction) – shortened form of *it is*

**lay** (verb) – to put, to place, to set something down: *lay, laid, laid*

**lie** (verb) – to recline, to rest on a horizontal surface: *lie, lay, lain*

**loose** (adjective) – unbound, not tied or fastened

**lose** (verb) – to misplace; to experience defeat; to suffer the loss of

**passed** (verb)—the past tense form of *pass*

**past** (adjective)—gone by; (noun)—the time that has gone by

**set** (verb) – to place or put something

**sit** (verb) – to be seated, to take a seat
should of (verb) – nonstandard for should have or should’ve

than (conjunction) – expresses a difference or comparison
then (adverb) – expresses a time relationship

to (preposition) – often shows direction, meaning toward
too (adverb) – in addition to, also; excessive
two (noun) – the number between one and three

their (possessive pronoun) – of, belonging to, made, or done by them
there (adverb) – refers to a place, the opposite of here
they’re (contraction) – shortened form of they are

who’s (contraction) – shortened form of who is
whose (possessive pronoun) – of, belonging to, made, or done by whom

would of – nonstandard for would have or would’ve

your (possessive pronoun) – of, belonging to, made, or done by you
you’re (contraction) – shortened form of you are
10. Writing Standards Scoring Guide

Pass with Distinction

An essay that earns a Pass with Distinction presents a cogent, well-articulated analysis of the topic and demonstrates near mastery of the five writing standards. A typical essay in this category

- addresses audience and purpose insightfully, convincingly, and confidently
- is coherently and fluently arranged
- selects and paces elaboration precisely
- synthesizes research material skillfully whenever necessary
- displays superior abilities with grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Pass

An essay that earns a Pass presents a competent analysis of the topic and demonstrates adequate control of the five writing standards. A typical essay in this category

- addresses audience and purpose suitably
- is appropriately arranged
- selects and paces elaboration sufficiently
- synthesizes research material acceptably whenever necessary
- displays control of grammar, punctuation, and spelling, but may have some flaws.

No Pass

An essay that earns a No Pass presents a weak analysis of the topic and demonstrates poor control of the five writing standards. A typical essay in this category exhibits one or more of the following characteristics. It

- addresses audience and purpose unsuitably
- is inappropriately arranged or otherwise disorganized
- selects and paces elaboration insufficiently
- synthesizes any research material unacceptably
- displays numerous errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
11. Sample Essays

The following culminating essays respond to this statement: “History tells us that there is no such thing as progress. Life in today’s world is no better than it was 100 or 200 years ago.”

The first essay illustrates writing that would earn a Pass with Distinction; the second, writing that would earn a Pass; and the third, writing that would earn a No Pass.

The brief evaluative remarks at the conclusion of each essay explain why.

Pass with Distinction

I strongly disagree with the statement which claims, “History tells us that there is no such thing as progress.” In my opinion history is the story of man’s progress. Man came into this world with absolutely nothing. Over time he has made many intellectual advancements that have helped his quality of life improve with each successive year, decade, and century. No one who lived in the year 1910 would say that no progress has been made between then and today. So much has changed in our world that it is hard for someone who is alive today to have any idea how hard life was in 1910. Perhaps the best way to begin to look at the progress we have made is to focus on three specific fields. The fields of medicine, science, and technology have all made extraordinary progress in the past 100 years and shape the way in which we live our lives today.

In the last 100 years the field of medicine has arguably advanced more than in any other century in history. Doctors today have more education, more experience, and more resources than ever before. Inventions like x-ray machines, respirators and defibrillators are tools which help doctors do their jobs more effectively. Many diseases which were untreatable 100 years ago can be treated with antibiotics, or other readily available drugs. Organs can now be replicated by machines such as pacemakers, or transplanted from donors with much less risk than ever before. Machines have even been invented that can support life after the mind has died. All of these examples are evidence of why life expectancy today is much higher than it has ever been in the past. People can live with diseases which can often be treated with drugs or surgery. Overall the field of medicine has helped to improve the quality of life for many people and make today’s world undoubtedly better (in this aspect) than it was 100 years ago.

The field of science has also made tremendous advancements, often working hand-in-hand with the field of medicine to make our lives better. For example, the machine that supports life even after the mind has failed would not have been possible without science. Similarly, discoveries about DNA have helped to make advancements in medicine and other fields as well. The criminal justice system uses DNA to place suspects at crime scenes, and because everyone’s DNA is different, the justice system can make sure that it does not put innocent people in prison. Science has helped us to accomplish other amazing feats such as space travel. 100 years ago people would have thought that it was completely ridiculous to think about men walking on the moon . . . but we did it. Space travel has taught us more about not only our own planet, but about the solar system and galaxy we live in. Knowledge about space has also enabled us to put satellites into orbit, which among other things allows us to have satellite TV, GPS, and more accurate weather reporting. Science is involved in basically every advancement that makes our lives in today’s world easier than life 100 years ago.

Many aspects of technology have revolutionized life in the last 100 years. For example, many tasks that needed to be done by hand 100 years ago can now be done by machines more quickly and efficiently. Everything from washing clothes and dishes to producing goods for purchase can now be done by machines. These advancements mean that people have more leisure time now than they had 100 years ago. People do not need to work as hard. Also, the efficiency of machines in production and industry segments of business means that not only are there more goods available for purchase, but prices are lower. Other aspects of life such as transportation have improved as well. Cars are more available, reliable, and fuel efficient today. Planes allow people to travel great distances in a relatively short amount of time. Buses and subways
provide public transportation, which allows a great number of people to travel rather inexpensively. Today people have much more freedom and opportunity to travel than they did 100 years ago. This allows for a better exchange of ideas, and more combining of cultures throughout the world. It would be difficult to talk technology today without referring to the Internet. The Internet has revolutionized everyday life from mail and communications to basic things like shopping. Television, cell phones, and microwaves are also important advancements that make our lives today better.

It is obvious that life in today's world is much better than it was 100 years ago. I have given examples of only a few of the important advancements that have been made in the fields of medicine, science, and technology. However, based on these few advancements there is more than enough evidence that we have made our lives better today than they were 100 years ago. If history has taught us anything it is that progress never stops and in the next 100 years we will continue to make advancements that will make life better than it is now.

Evaluative Remarks

This culminating essay demonstrates an assured sense of purpose from beginning to end. It conveys that purpose coherently and cogently to a general audience. The number and quality of examples provide abundant evidence that “life in today’s world is much better than it was 100 years ago,” though evidence near the end of paragraph four begins to create somewhat of a list-like effect. Grammar and punctuation serve audience and purpose admirably.

Pass

I have done my share of research and studying the past. The human race never learns and therefore never makes any progress.

There is no doubt that there have been untold technological advances over the past 100 years. But for each problem technology fixes, it makes another one in the process. 100-200 years ago there were no cars. Transportation was slow, food could not be transported without spoiling, and people did not leave home often. The creation of the internal combustion engine and the car quickly solved these problems. In the short term, that engine made life easier, but if you look into the future you see that now we are addicted to oil. We are so dependent on oil that without it, life as we know it would end. With more and more cars on the planet, pollution becomes more and more of a danger. By making it easier to travel we have allowed ourselves to become addicted to oil, which severely pollutes the Earth and which will run out very soon.

Humanity is always trying to make life and work easier. Machines in the workplace seem like progress. Machines are never late, they don’t eat or sleep and they are consistent in their work. But thousands of people have lost their professions because of machines. How many people know how to make barrels, baskets, rope, and pottery? How many blacksmiths are out there now? How many shoe makers? These jobs may seem trivial now, but they were once skilled professions. People had to learn for years how to properly produce such goods. Just imagine training for years how to make clocks, then, all of a sudden a machine can make them faster and cheaper than you, and you’re fired. Now what do you do? All you know is clock making. Sadly, you’ll end up working some job that pays minimum wage, and you and your family will have a difficult time living and paying the bills.

Humanity never looks too far into the future when making decisions. For example, our obsession with faster, easier food has caused an obesity problem. The world, especially America, is growing dangerously fat. We have children barely in their teens developing Type 2 diabetes! 50 years ago that would have been thought impossible. Healthy homemade food will always be better for you, even if it does take more time to prepare, but many of us have decided to choose other less nutritious diets, instead, without thinking about the effects on our health.
Our attitude toward medicine is like this, too. Don’t get me wrong. I am all for curing diseases, but just look at how many pills we take. It seems like 3 out of 5 kids are being diagnosed with ADD. But hey, that's OK. We have pills for that. Or what about depression? “Feeling blue? Just take two of these pills a day, and you’ll pick right up! Before taking this medicine consult with your doctor. Side effects include indigestion, vomiting, temporary blindness, and in very rare cases, death.” This attitude toward pills is just absolutely absurd! Of course kids find it difficult to pay attention: they’re kids. I’m not saying all kids don’t have ADD, but I am saying there aren’t as many as people think, so some of this pill taking is unnecessary. The same goes for depression; everyone will become depressed in their lives. That’s just natural, but the depression will eventually go away. You don’t need to take a pill to feel better. Let nature takes its course.

With its desire to make life easier humanity has replaced one problem with another. In order to travel farther and faster we are now addicted to oil and are killing the environment. In order to increase production levels we replaced humans with machines. Now we have fewer job opportunities and more and more people are stuck working minimum wage jobs. With the invention of fast food, we have become fat and lazy. We have become a planet of people who think everything can be fixed with a pill. Just step back and look at people now and 100 years ago. We traded little mobility, a smaller range of food selection, tedious and tiresome jobs, and poorer medicine for a polluted world, addiction to oil, obesity, and the strange idea that taking pills cures all. If you look at the grand scheme of things you will see that we have replaced one problem for another and therefore we are no better off than 100 or 200 years ago.

**Evaluative Remarks**

This culminating essay argues that “the human race never learns and therefore never makes any progress.” The essay is appealingly provocative, demonstrating a passionate purpose throughout, including a compelling conclusion. Some aspects of the essay signal better than average writing—but the introductory paragraph is rudimentary, the relationships among the body paragraphs could have been more strongly established with transitional devices, and the tone throughout paragraph five is uneven.

**No Pass**

I disagree that history tells us that there is no such thing as progress and that life in today’s world is no better than it was 100 or 200 years ago. During the past 100 years we have seen progress and breakthrough in the medical field, life expectancy continues to extend due to new discovery in medical breakthroughs. The way technology have improved allows people to communicate as well as other things never thought possible 100 years ago. The progression in the education system and the way people are able to access a higher education, has given more and more people a chance to become educated. Every day the world continues to progress regardless of what history tells us.

Throughout human existence all sorts of medical conditions have occurred. Some of these conditions are treatable, can be slowed down, and other are incurable. The breakthroughs that scientists and doctors have made throughout the past 100 or 200 years has allowed humans to remain on earth longer and also live a more comfortable life. People are able to access medical care today more efficiently than ever before. In some countries, health care and medical treatments are paid for by the government, people can see their local physician at any time. This type of access limits the number of serious injury’s and illnesses. I strongly believe that improvements in medicine will continue to progress during my lifetime and even after I have passed away.

Progression in technology has made human interaction more constant. Before telephone, email, and the speed at which people could travel at, human interaction and communication was limited to only those closest to you. Travel to see someone across the country could take weeks or months, 100 years ago. The progression in the automobiles and air travel has decreased travel time and increased time spent with one another. The invention of the computer as well as the Internet gives people the opportunity to communicate with friends and family even if they live halfway around the world.
All the innovation and progress that I have lived to see will sure continue to change through each generation.

Over the last 100 years education has been more accessible and readily available to most everyone in the United States. More people are being educated in both public and private institutions than ever before. Resources such as computers, better in-class technology, as well as highly qualified teachers has allowed students to get an education that might not have been available to their parents and grandparents. During the 1950’s and 1960’s people who finished high school and got their diploma, were often shipped off to the military or acquired manufacturing jobs. University was usually only for those who excelled in high school or for students who’s parents could afford to put them through university. Today, scholarships and federal grants have allowed more and more people to attend university and pursue a degree.

If there was no such thing as progress, then none of us would ever be able to experience breakthroughs in medicine and technology, as well as has access to higher education. Life would be different without progress, life would be dull without progress and the way we communicate or get treated when we are ill would be totally different.

Evaluative Remarks
This culminating essay is not without promise. For one, the writer’s purpose is fairly clear. For another, the body paragraphs demonstrate a degree of discipline and a sense of how to explain and illustrate ideas. The essay does not, however, exert adequate control of grammar and punctuation. Sentence difficulties abound: comma splices and agreement problems, for example. Noun forms and verb forms are too often incorrect, as well. This inadequate control undermines the writer’s efforts.

12. Campus Support Services

Academic Support Center
The Castleton Academic Support Center offers the following resources to assist students in improving their writing.

Tutoring

Writing Clinic – Both peer and professional writing tutors are available in the CASTLETON Academic Support Center
from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Tutors
are available on a drop-in, first-come-first-served basis and will work with students on academic papers, on other kinds of
writing assignments from CASTLETON University courses, and on resumes, cover letters, and application essays. All tutors
are specially trained in the CASTLETON writing standards and can help students at any stage of the writing process—from
brainstorming topics and refining ideas to revising a rough draft and fine-tuning grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Tutors
are not editors or proofreaders. They act more like coaches, helping students learn to identify their own mistakes and
develop stronger writing skills with practice and time.

Individual tutoring by appointment – Students who would like to establish a long-term tutorial relationship with one
particular tutor, who have special tutorial needs, or whose schedules make it difficult to come to the clinic should contact
the writing specialist at this telephone number: 468-1347.

Print Resources
There are many writing handbooks, workbooks, guides, and other reference materials available in the center. Students
may use these resources independently or in conjunction with tutoring.