

**Natomas Charter School
Performing and Fine Arts Academy**

Middle School Writer's Guide

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Writer's Guide

I. How Should My Paper Look?

During your time in middle school, you will be asked to do many writing assignments in both your academic and arts classes. When completing these writing assignments you should use the following format unless your teacher instructs you otherwise:

A. Author/Assignment Information

All written assignments should include the following information in order: your name, subject/period, and date. All the information should be written/typed in the upper right hand corner. The heading should look like this:

Kristina L. Smith Social Studies 8/Period 1 November 15, 2005

B. Bindings and Covers

No report binders or covers should be used unless your teacher tells you to do so. All papers should be stapled once in the upper left-hand corner.

C. Font

Papers should be typed (or handwritten in blue or black ink if allowed by your teacher) using only Times or Times New Roman fonts. Papers should be printed from your printer in black ink only.

D. Pictures/Illustrations

In general, pictures (such as clip art, magazine clippings or drawings) should not be included in papers unless your teacher tells you to do so.

E. Indenting and Spacing

The first sentence of all paragraphs should be indented ten spaces. All punctuation (periods, commas, colons, semicolons, etc.) should be followed by a space before the next word begins.

F. Line Spacing

All typed papers should be double-spaced.

G. Margins

Unless your teacher tells you otherwise, all papers should have one-inch margins all around (left, right, top, and bottom).

H. Paper

All assignments should be printed on standard 8.5 x 11” white paper.

I. Title

All papers should include a title. The title should be centered above the first body paragraph. The title should be no larger than 16-point type size, and should be no more than two lines long. The title **should not** be underlined.

a. Type Size

All papers should be printed in 12 point type size. The font size should be the same throughout the body of the paper. Titles may be printed in a larger size, but no larger than 16 point font.

II. Quoting Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism

The NCS-PFAA Student Handbook definition of Plagiarism:

Simply stated, plagiarism is the “taking of other” thoughts or words without due acknowledgement (*Random House Handbook*). This definition is applied to both published and unpublished material. **When borrowing any ideas or phrases of more than three words, appropriate documentation must be offered.**

Avoiding Plagiarism

- Plagiarism is the use of other peoples’ words or ideas without acknowledging whose words or ideas they were.
- Plagiarism is against the law.
- Plagiarism can earn you an “F” in the class or can get you expelled from a university.

Remember the days of doing a “report” in elementary school? If a student had a report on “The American Revolution” to do in elementary school, what’s the first thing many students did? Go to the encyclopedia, and start copying. Maybe the student took the encyclopedia’s words and changed them slightly. Is this legal? Ethical? **NO!!** It is plagiarism.

While you might think that “borrowing” another person’s words or ideas is harmless, it is the same thing as stealing song lyrics, music, and inventions. The words and ideas in

books and on the Internet are protected by copyright laws, which means the book, words, pictures or ideas are owned by the creator. Just like the shoes you are wearing today – somebody designed them, and if someone else created the same style shoe with a different name, that is copyright infringement, punishable by law.

How to Avoid Plagiarism

- Take copious notes on your note cards -- be certain to write down all publishing info & page numbers.
- Use quotation marks around **ANY** word or phrase that you get from your source.
- Use plentiful citations!
- In a research paper, you must have textual citations, which tells the book title and page number. You must also have a Works Cited page, which lists the title, author, publishing city, publishing company and publishing date.

III. Citations Within The Paper

The following information will tell you when and how to cite your source so that you will not ever plagiarize in your paper.

A. When and How To Cite Your Source

A. When do I need to cite a source?

You must cite a source when you use any facts or ideas that are not your own.

- This includes statistics. For example, there are less than 1000 grizzly bears left in the continental United States or the amount of rainfall in a certain biome is 23 cm/year.

B. Is there a time when I do not need to list a source of information?

If the information is common knowledge, you do not need to list your source. This includes information that **EVERYONE** knows. For example, virtually everyone knows or can easily find out that wolves are predators. Common knowledge also includes information that you find in 3 or more different sources that is exactly the same.

If you have **ANY** doubts about whether information is common knowledge, be safe and cite your source!!!

C. How can I paraphrase a source?

Paraphrasing means to restate something in your own words. In order to paraphrase correctly, make sure that you do **ALL** of the following:

- Accurately relay the information in the original text.
- Use your own words.
- Let the reader know the source of the information.
- **You must do more than change a few words or phrases.**
- **You must also do more than just rearrange the sentences.**

D. How do I cite a source?

If you share an idea that is not yours, as soon as you share it, cite your source (put the book's name and the page # in parentheses right after the quote or borrowed idea), even if you put the ideas in your own words. **For example:** Ancient Romans were tenacious in their desire to gain greater control of land (Smith, 59).

E. How do I use quotes?

If you cannot possibly say something in your own words as well as someone else did, then you may include a direct quote in your paper. The quotes should be used sparingly (if you are going to use quotes in your paper, use only one or two "golden quotes" – quotes that really make your point or say something of importance), and should always be in quotation marks. You should also cite the person in your paper. For example:

According to famous naturalist John Muir, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe."

(Note that I could not have possibly said that better if I had tried to use my own words.)

My Works Cited Page
Include all sources for your information

Book with one author:

Author (last name first)
Title of the book
Place of publication
Publisher

Books with two authors:

Authors (list first author last name first and then other authors first name first in order)
Title of the book
Place of publication
Publisher

Magazine or Periodical:

Author of Article
Title of Magazine or Periodical Article (in quotation marks)
Title of Magazine or Periodical (italicized or underlined)
Volume/issue number
Date of publication
Page numbers of the article

CD Rom:

Author of the work
Title of the CD
Place of manufacture
Company label
Date of release

Website:

Author's name
Title of the website (in quotation marks)
The date of the website article
Date you looked up the information
Website address

***Please note that web search engines like Yahoo, Google or Ask Jeeves are only places that **direct** you to useful websites. Therefore, it is inappropriate to list these search engines in your bibliography. It would be equivalent to saying that you got your information at the library. You need to be much more specific than that!!!

Newspaper or Periodical Article from an Online Source:

Author's name
Title of the Newspaper or Magazine Article (in quotes)
The date of publication
Page numbers of the article
Database name
Service name
Name of library whose service you accessed

