MACMURRAY COLLEGE

WRITING-SPEAKING HANDBOOK

**Prepared by Robert Seufert, Claire Jerry,
and Marti Templin**

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FOREWORD

To *MacMurray College Writing-Speaking Handbook*

This handbook is intended primarily to acquaint MacMurray College faculty with the principles and practices relating to reading, writing, and speaking in the three courses that constitute the College's rhetoric sequence. Its ultimate aim is to promote standards of greater uniformity and consistency in the areas of reading, writing, and speaking throughout the curriculum and to provide faculty with a basis on which to build student skills in these three areas. It will also give faculty some knowledge of what they have a right to expect from their students—at least of those who have passed through the MacMurray rhetoric sequence.

As one of the following documents indicates, it really does take the reinforcement and development of an entire college to produce a competent reader, writer, speaker, and reasoner. The goal of producing such students has characterized MacMurray College since its inception, and the present document is an additional tool provided to accomplish this goal. ***Faculty should feel free to photocopy any and all materials contained within this handbook that may be of use to them in their courses***.

At the present time, we have not elected to provide copies of the handbook for students, primarily because students receive virtually all of these documents during the course of the rhetoric sequence, and it seems more advisable to provide this material to them when it will best serve them. Much of this material may ultimately make its way to the Mac web page or other computer site, where students will be able to download what material they either have not received (as in the case of some transfers) or have lost. This approach may make it possible to avoid charging students for a handbook that may not survive their four years of college, but one that, in one form or another, should be readily available to them.

The compilers of this handbook welcome suggestion for improvement, so that subsequent editions will serve faculty even better than the present edition does. Special thanks to those members of the rhetoric staff whose contributions (often anonymously) grace the pages of this book.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

IT TAKES A COLLEGE

The three required courses in MacMurray's Rhetoric sequence help fulfill a number of the College's general education objectives, chief among them the ability to read critically and to write and speak with clarity and organization. The first of these courses, College Writing (Rhetoric 101), focuses especially on grammatical and organizational proficiency. College Writing and Research (Rhetoric 102) and Public Speaking (Rhetoric 103) build on these skills and develop more fully a student's proficiency in argumentation and research (especially in Rhetoric 102) and in public speaking (especially in Rhetoric 103). As a whole, the sequence enhances a student's ability to think analytically, to synthesize new knowledge, to make discriminating and ethical judgments, to clarify their own values, and to understand the world around them, which are also among the key objectives of MacMurray's general education program.

Rhetoric courses at MacMurray are systematic. The six-step *Writing to the Point* method that constitutes the core of MacMurray's Rhetoric 101 course is really just a systematic and efficient way to inculcate the fundamental principles of good expository writing: (1) unity (step 1), coherence (steps 2 and 3), development/detail (step 4), and clarity (steps 5 and 6). These same rhetorical virtues are expected in subsequent Rhetoric courses, IOCC and Cultural Studies courses, and other courses as well. Similarly, Rhetoric 102 provides an incremental, thesis-based method to foster research and documentation skills, and Rhetoric 103 offers a comparable method related to public speaking.

Should the principles learned in the Rhetoric sequence, including those relating to mechanics (spelling, grammar, and punctuation) and research (quotation rules, parenthetical reference, works cited format) be assumed and reinforced in other courses? Of course they should. It is unrealistic to assume that because students receive two required courses in writing that their writing will be error-free and coherent for the rest of their college career. This is as unrealistic as assuming that one course in public speaking will guarantee life-long speaking proficiency. The fact is that students can "squeak by" with a C- in their Rhetoric courses and still be promoted into more advanced courses. Furthermore, many students who do manage to achieve a C in their Rhetoric courses are subsequently brought down in flames when they reach the Junior Writing Proficiency Exam, a two-hour, upper-level exam in which students must demonstrate their ability to write and think at an acceptable college level. And, finally, reports from those involved in assessing the writing portfolios of seniors preparing to graduate does not always indicate an improvement in writing ability but, in some cases, a decline.

This unfortunate outcome may, of course, partly be explained by the fact that assignments become more demanding as students move up the academic ladder, and no doubt this is true. But it might also be explained by the fact that students are not being held to comparable standards of rhetorical and grammatical rigor in their post-Rhetoric courses and that they're not receiving the same level of correction and constructive criticism that they are in the earlier courses. Writing may suffer because students don't perceive that writing is as important as it was in the Rhetoric courses, and, as a result, whatever good habits they acquire during their first and second year undergo some slippage as they proceed through the college system.

In order to reverse this potentially negative flow, teachers in all courses that require writing and need to be vigilant in maintaining rigorous writing standards, sensitive to students' rhetorical and grammatical needs, supportive in providing constructive feedback for student improvement, and committed to referring students to the Learning Center for serious and recurrent problems. They should also provide opportunities for discussion and public speaking in their courses when it is feasible to do so, and weigh such elements in the determination of the student's course grade.

Are MacMurray teachers as a whole responsible for teaching writing and speaking skills? Of course they are. It takes a college to develop a college-level writer and speaker. Do they have the right to expect that students who have been through the Rhetoric sequence will bring an acceptable level of rhetorical ability upon which they can reasonably be expected to build? Of course they do.

The good news is that many MacMurray teachers already require considerable amounts of writing, research, and speaking in their courses and that they weigh these elements fairly heavily in their overall course grades. The bad news is that they do not always use the same criteria when responding to and evaluating such assignments, and this may lead to confusion among students about what constitutes college-level proficiency in any of these areas.

The main aim of the *MacMurray College Writing and Speaking Handbook* is to familiarize faculty with the principles and criteria inculcated in the Rhetoric sequence so that they may better frame their feedback on student writing and speaking in ways that are consistent with the principles and procedures taught at the College. MacMurray has long prided itself on its ability to produce graduates whose writing and speaking skills are comparable or superior to those of graduates of other institutions. Greater uniformity and consistency in the college as a whole can only improve those efforts.

RHETORIC AND GENERAL EDUCATION

Rhetoric 101 (College Writing) is usually the first of MacMurray's General Education courses encountered by students. It begins a sequence that also includes Rhetoric 102 (College Writing and Research) and Rhetoric 103 (Public Speaking), followed by three IOCC courses (Issues of Community and Conflict), as well as Cultural Studies, Quantitative Reasoning, and four Breadth Component courses. There is also a First Year Experience Seminar, taken during the student's first semester, and a Junior-Level Writing Proficiency Exam, meant to insure that upper division students are capable writers and reasoners. Together these courses are designed to fulfill the General Education Objectives of the College, which include (1) the ability to read critically, (2) the ability to speak and write with clarity and organization, (3) the ability to think reflectively and analytically, (4) the ability to reason quantitatively, (5) the ability to synthesize new knowledge, (6) the ability to make ethical and discriminating judgments, (7) the ability to clarify their own values, (8) the ability to understand the world around them, and (9) the ability to understand concepts and knowledge from many fields.

Rhetoric 101 (College Writing) addresses the first of these goals by requiring students to read and analyze essays about contemporary issues, and a novel often concerned with issues of cultural diversity. The limit for such sections is 20 students, which allows for plenty of group discussion, thus advancing the public speaking objective of the program. In this course students learn the so-called Kerrigan method of writing, which is nothing more than a practical step-by-step means of teaching students the principles of unity, coherence, development, and clarity expected in any college composition course. This fulfills the writing objective of the program and also enhances the student's ability to reason more effectively. Grammatical matters are also addressed in the course, especially for CSP (College Success Program) students, who receive one extra day of instruction per week, focusing primarily on grammar. There is also an honors section of Rhetoric 101, which is essentially similar to regular sections of the course except that some of the reading consists of short stories and poetry instead of essays.

Rhetoric 102 (College Writing and Research) assumes the reading, writing, and discussion skills taught in Rhetoric 101. It adds to those skills the students' ability to do library and computer research, to weigh opposing arguments, to construct a defensible argument, and to document the sources cited to support their points. Reading, research, and discussion here focus on a contemporary controversial issue, such as the environment, immigration, globalization, or civil rights. As in Rhetoric 101, instruction is incremental, in that every assignment is intended to contribute in some way to the 2000-to-2500-word research paper due at the end of the course. Some of us also require brief oral presentations in which students summarize the argument of their research papers. There is an honors section of Rhetoric 102, though no CSP section. The honors section has substantially the same requirements as regular 102 sections, but the research subject is drama, and students are required to perform oral interpretations of scenes from the plays studied, which encourage them to view the meaning of the plays from a different angle than the one afforded by traditional scholarly research. Once again, Rhetoric 102 sections are limited to 20 students, thus allowing ample opportunity for class discussion and plenty of feedback on student writing.

Rhetoric 103 (Public Speaking) focuses primarily on the second general education objective: to speak with clarity and organization. This course also requires students to read, reflect, analyze, and synthesize the information required for their own speeches and to analyze the speeches of others. Students present seven individual speeches, two impromptu and five extemporaneous. Instruction in this course is also incremental in that every assignment builds on the concepts learned and skills practiced in the previous speeches. Students also write between 35 and 40 critiques of speeches—their own, their peers, and two speeches outside of class. The self-evaluations are based on videotapes made of each extemporaneous speech. Sections of Rhetoric 103 are held to 20 students because of the time limitations for oral presentation.

These three courses form the foundation for intellectual and expressive skills that students will then build on in their IOCC, Cultural Studies, Quantitative Reasoning, and Breadth Component courses. Sometime during his or her junior year, the student is required to take and pass the **Junior-Level Writing Proficiency Exam** as well. This exam is given several times every year and is scored by faculty volunteers from various divisions of the College. Its aim is to insure that student writing and thinking skills have indeed been maintained and developed as students have continued through MacMurray's General Education Program. Students who fail the Writing Proficiency Exam are urged to visit Lori Pahde in the Learning Center or the Exam Coordinator for tutoring, or they may take the one-credit Rhetoric 301 course to brush up on their writing skills. The aim of this requirement is to insure that MacMurray College graduates are effective writers and reasoners.

SECTION TWO: READING AND WRITING

SOME TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE READING

One way to become a better writer is to become a more effective reader. Here are some tips to help you read more carefully and critically. The first fourteen are directed toward reading comprehension (understanding); the last five with critical reading (evaluation). Both skills are necessary if you are to get the most out of your reading time.

Section 1: Understanding

1. Buy a pencil and small, flexible ruler or a highlighter (preferably yellow).

2. Read introductions to a work, and any footnotes added to it. In addition, be sure to review study questions and any other supplementary material handed out by your teacher. These are provided to make the reading more accessible to you, so use them.

3. Underline or highlight key ideas or points in the reading, as well as especially important facts or examples (names, dates, places, statistics, *etc*.) Write in the margins any observations or notes that help you understand and remember the reading.

4. If the reading is a *narrative* (story), identify the main characters and try to understand what the ideas or values each character or group of characters represents. Often such ideas or values may be suggested by the relationships among the characters or the conflicts between them. The action or plot, consisting of the main events of the story, may also provide a key to the story's message or theme. Be on the lookout for such clues to the underlying meaning of the narrative.

5. If the reading is an *expository* work (an essay, for example, or a chapter of a textbook), look for the main point of the reading, and any subpoints that are especially relevant in establishing or supporting those points.

6. Be especially attentive to strategic positions in a reading. In an essay, for example, the main point is likely to be stated in the first and/or last paragraph. Subpoints are likely to appear at the beginning and/or end of paragraphs.

7. Be on the lookout for headings and subheadings in the reading (these are often set off from the rest of the text in some way and printed in bold-face type), as well as any illustrations or charts that the author or editor may provide. These are helpful, sometimes indispensable, tools to help you follow the flow of the argument.

8. Pay special attention to the connectives that appear in the reading (conjunctions like *but* and *because*, conjunctive adverbs like *furthermore*, and transitional expressions like *in contrast*). Often they appear at the beginning of paragraphs, and may signal a continuation or shift in the flow of an argument.

9. Look up unfamiliar words, names, and terms in a dictionary. The closer your dictionary is, the more you will be likely to use it.

10. If you come across an especially difficult or obscure paragraph or section, go over it a second time to make sure that you understand it before going on. It may at times be useful to read the passage out loud.

11. Don't, however, get bogged down in every detail of the reading. It's important to get an overview of the work as a whole, so that you don't lose sight of the author's main point. Getting such an overview may even clear up some of the problems you're having with difficult passages.

12. Jot down any questions you may have about the reading, and be sure to ask these questions during the next class period. Mark passages that you would like to bring us in class for explanation or discussion.

13. Try to summarize the reading briefly. This will help insure that you've grasp the main points.

14. If possible, read the work a second time.

Section 2: Evaluation

15. Learn what you can about the author of the work. Does the writing seem informed by a particular bias, whether religious, political, or philosophical? (This bias may not in itself be bad, but being aware of it can help you get a better perspective on the author's writing).

16. Evaluate the logic and organization of the work. Does the author stick to the point? Do the subpoints really relate to the main point? Does the author assume things to be true that are not self-evidently so?

17. Evaluate the evidence presented in the work. Is there enough of it? Is it relevant to the author's point(s)? Is there compelling counter-evidence that the author has failed to consider?

18. Does the author answer opposing arguments? Are there any that you can think of that the author fails to consider?

19. Are there any other factors that tend to weaken the effectiveness of the writing? Is it, for example, outdated?

Above all, reading is *not* a passive activity. You need to read actively if you want to get the most out of a work. A true reading is a dialogue or discussion between you and the author. It's a 50-50 proposition and a two-way street.

LANGUAGE GUIDELINES

In certain circumstances, any writing mistake can be serious, but some are generally considered more serious than others because they consistently detract from the readability of a written work by getting between the reader and the content of that work. Either they confuse the reader (as with mixed constructions), or they signal that the writer does not know the standards of written English (as with misspellings), or they suggest a demeaning attitude toward some readers (as with gender-biased or sexist language).

The kinds of errors we consider most serious are listed here. When they appear in student writing, they will receive the most serious penalties. In Rhetoric classes, they typically cost half a letter grade (5 percent) for each separate error.

To avoid errors, students should proofread carefully. Help in avoiding errors may be obtained from the student's instructor, other Rhetoric instructors, and the Learning Center staff, which can also provide tutorial assistance.

These are the most serious errors:

1. MIXED CONSTRUCTION: a sentence that begins in one way and ends in another so that the parts do not fit together grammatically. Examples:

a. By removing pollution regulations could cost many millions of dollars in resources.

Correct to: Removing pollution regulations could cost many millions of dollars in lost resources.

b. I have one other neighbor, Mr. X, owns his own clothing store.

Correct to: I have one other neighbor, Mr. X. who owns his own clothing store.

2. COMMA SPLICE: two separate sentences, separated only by a comma. Examples:

a. Then he really started sawing logs, he sounded like a lumberjack.

Correct to: Then he really started sawing logs. He sounded like a lumberjack.

Or correct to: Then he really started sawing logs; he sounded like a lumberjack.

b. The first actor was remarkable, however, the second was only an observer.

Correct to: The first actor was remarkable; however, the second was only an observer.

Or correct to: The first actor was remarkable. However, the second was only an observer.

3. RUN-ON SENTENCE/FUSED SENTENCE: two separate sentences with no punctuation separating them. Examples:

a. My major is physical education that is why I have so many physical education classes.

Correct to: My major is physical education. That is why I have so many physical education classes.

Or correct to: My major is physical education; that is why I have so many physical education classes.

b. It's like a virus they never can get rid of it when they want to.

Correct to: It's like a virus; they never can get rid of it when they want to.

Or correct to: It's like a virus. They never can get rid of it when they want to.

4. UNJUSTIFIABLE SENTENCE FRAGMENT: a group of words beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period (or semicolon) that does not satisfy the conditions necessary for a sentence (independent clause with subject and verb). Examples:

a. I also liked the decorations on the wall. For example, the illustration of a human brain.

Correct to: I also liked the decorations on the wall, for example, the illustration of the human brain.

b. You must know how to write. Something that I will need a lot of working on.

Correct to: Knowing how to write is something that I will need a lot of working on.

5. LACK OF AGREEMENT: failure of a verb to correspond in number (singular or plural) with its subject, or failure of a pronoun to correspond in number (singular or plural) with its antecedent (the noun to which it refers). Examples:

a. The grading system in the Chicago schools are very inadequate.

Correct to: The grading system in the Chicago schools is very inadequate.

b. A student might want to be number one in their class.

Correct to: A student might want to be number one in the class.

Or correct to: A student might want to be number one in her or his class.

6. NONSTANDARD USE OF VERB FORM OR PRONOUN. Examples:

a. The Tar heels have went over the century mark four times.	*Correct to:* The Tar Heels have gone over the century mark four times.
b. All was lost when him and his sister were captured.	*Correct to:* All was lost when he and his sister were captured.

7. GENDER-BIASED/SEXIST LANGUAGE: language that states or assumes that only one of the sexes is important; that one is inferior to the other; or that certain kinds of work, activity, or aspiration are restricted to men or to women. Examples:

a. A person learns more from his enemies than from his friends.	*Correct to:* People learn more from their enemies than from their friends.
	Or correct to: A person learns more from enemies than from friends.
b. Augustine suggests that man needs to love God, himself, and his neighbor.	*Correct to:* Augustine suggests that humans need to love God, themselves, and their neighbors.

8. EXCESSIVE MISSPELLING: an average of more than one misspelling (including apostrophe errors and typing errors) per 100 words. Examples:

alot, another words, liason, recieve, sweet-mate, suppose to	*Correct to:* a lot, in other words, liaison, receive, suitemate, supposed to

9. OMISSION OF KEY WORDS: Examples:

a. He rewards them for doing the day to day of the kingdom.	*Correct to:* He rewards them for doing the day to day work of the kingdom.
b. Here is the truck which the convict escaped.	*Correct to:* Here is the truck from which the convict escaped.

Comments on these guidelines are welcome. Please address the to:
Chair, English & Theatre Department
MacMurray College
Jacksonville, Illinois 62650

www.mac.edu

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GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGE WRITING

Most of the writing that you will do in college will serve one of two basic purposes: (1) to inform or explain or (2) to convince or persuade. Sometimes it is intended to fulfill both purposes at once. A good piece of expository writing will inevitably possess the four following characteristics: (1) unity (having one main idea or point), (2) coherence (sticking to the point and presenting it in a logical way), (3) development (offering plenty of relevant detail, often in the form of evidence, to support and illustrate the point), and (4) clarity (providing understandable and error-free writing, as well as appropriate connecting words, to make the meaning and continuity of your presentation clear to the reader).

Here are some tips for insuring that, formally at least, your writing will be acceptable at the college level.

Understanding the Assignment

First of all, make sure that you have read carefully and understood fully the assignment you have been given. Some assignments may simply ask a single question and your thesis (main point) would then take the form of an answer to that question. At other times, your subject may consist of a series of related questions, in which case you must be sure to understand each of those questions completely and respond to all of them fully. Misunderstanding or failure to respond fully to all parts of the assignment has often caused even a well-written paper to go seriously off track. Even in the case of an assignment with more than one part, it is helpful to formulate a single thesis sentence that will allow you to view the entire assignment from some sort of unified vantage point.

Formulating a Thesis

Once you understand the assignment, it is time to formulate your thesis sentence. The grammatical subject of this sentence should be the topic about which you have been asked to write (like the Brady Bill or censorship), and the predicate should be the point that you have to make about that subject (like *The Brady Bill saves lives* or *Censorship promotes narrow-mindedness*). This thesis should take the form of a short, simple declarative sentence and should make a point that is capable of fuller explanation or development. A sentence like *The Brady Bill became law in 1993* or *Censorship is addressed in the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution* would not serve as an acceptable thesis because the statement is a simple fact about which no further explanation is required.

The thesis is all-important. Everything in your paper should relate not just to the topic but to the point about the topic as well. So if your point is that *The Brady Bill saves lives*, everything in the paper must relate to that point. Information about Jim Brady's life or the legislative history of the Brady Bill would not be relevant to that point, and should not be included in a paper with that thesis.

Devising Subpoints

Once you have formulated your thesis, you need to ask yourself why you believe this thesis to be true. Your answers will supply you with the subpoints that serve to back up the claim you have made in your thesis. For example, why does the Brady Bill save lives? Or how does censorship promote narrow-mindedness? Make sure that each of the answers you provide takes the form of a declarative sentence, just as your thesis did. Also, be sure that your subpoints really do support and illustrate the claim made in your thesis and that each of your subpoints really is different from the other subpoints that you have provided. What you really want is at least three or four separate but convincing reasons to explain why your thesis should be believed. It is often very useful to outline the subpoints underneath the thesis before you start writing your paper so that you are able to check for such features as relevance to the thesis and unwanted repetition of an idea. Be especially careful not to let your paper drift away from the thesis as you do this.

Your subpoints will normally serve as the first sentences for each of the paragraphs that constitute the body of your paper. Focus on only one subpoint per paragraph. You will know you have come to the end of the paragraph when you have provided all of the evidence necessary to support the subpoint you've been developing. Your next subpoint will serve as the first sentence of your next paragraph.

Providing Evidence

To complete the body of your paragraph you will need to focus on providing detailed information to support and illustrate the claims made in your subpoints. This information should be specific and concrete detail taken from the real world of experience or scholarly research and should not merely consist of made-up examples or vague generalizations about "the typical gun-owner" or "a censored book" (to use our previous examples about the Brady Bill and censorship). Statistics, historical dates and events, incidents and examples of things that really happened, quotations derived from recognized authorities in the field you are writing about: all of these constitute appropriate kinds of material with which you can successfully develop your points.

You can truly inform or convince a reader of the truth of a point you are making only if you connect that point to the particular world of real experience. This is what newspaper reporters and trial lawyers do every day, and it's what you need to do if you hope to achieve the goals of your paper.

Supplying Connections

By this point in your writing you should have made a fairly solid case for or presentation of your thesis. What now remains is to make sure that your readers can follow your presentation as clearly and smoothly as possible. Confusing or distracting sentences or paragraphs will cause the reader to give up on your paper in frustration or disgust without ever having understood the argument. You can avoid such a reaction in two ways. First, provide the necessary links to get from one idea to the next in your paper. For example, if the point you are making in a sentence is an addition to the point you have just made, use a connecting expression like *In addition*, *Moreover*, or simply *And* (yes, you may legitimately start a sentence with *And*). If your next

point is similar to the first, a word like “Similarly’ or “Likewise” will do. If it is different, try *But* or *In contrast*. Writers often use *But* to return to their main thesis after presenting opposing views. If you draw a logical conclusion to what you have been saying, you might use *Therefore* or *In conclusion* or *Thus*. These connectives are like the mortar that holds the bricks of your essay together.

Proofreading

The second way to avoid distracting or confusing a reader is careful proofreading. Imprecise, error-filled writing can turn even a brilliantly reasoned argument into an incoherent and unpalatable mess. You can avoid this unfortunate fate by means of several thorough and rigorous proofreadings. Have your *Language Guidelines*, dictionary, and handbook (if you own one) beside you while you are rereading your essay and be sure to correct all errors and rephrase all confusing passages before submitting the final draft to your teacher. Be especially on the lookout for errors that you habitually make (you will probably find these marked in red ink on earlier papers that you have submitted to your teacher). Such proofreading may seem tedious at first, but the more conscientiously you proofread, the more automatic and natural this process will become—and the fewer errors you will need to correct. Use your computer’s spellcheck and grammar check, but don’t count on them to find everything. They are no substitute for careful proofreading. Reading a paper aloud is sometimes an effective way to detect errors as well.

What about Style?

Sometimes students have been praised in high school for having a fluent writing style or for being creative writers. The unintended and unfortunate result of such praise is that such students often come to think that a fluent style and fertile imagination are all that constitutes effective writing. As a result, students have often poured so much energy into those aspects of their writing that they have neglected the fundamentals: unity, coherence, development, and clarity. These students are sometimes perturbed to see college teachers requiring of them the kind of logical rigor not expected in high school and mistake early classroom exercises for mature and full-fledged papers. Don’t be one of those students. Their conviction that they already know everything there is to know about writing renders them impervious to learning anything new.

Please don’t misunderstand. We welcome your creativity and hope that your writing style will develop and mature in the years you spend at MacMurray. Nevertheless, if the fundamental aim of college is to help you think more effectively, the fundamental aim of its writing program must be to help you communicate more logically and clearly, and that is consequently the primary focus of college writing.

Finally

It is worth noting that these principles and procedures are not peculiar to MacMurray’s rhetoric sequence, but are fundamentals on which college writing across the nation is built. The reason is that they form the necessary foundation for all good expository writing. One of the best ways to achieve unity in a paper is by having a good thesis. Coherence is effectively fostered by

providing appropriate subpoints. Development derives from detail—the kind of specific and concrete evidence and illustrations that are the backbone of effective writing. And clarity owes a great deal to well-chosen connectives and correctly written sentences.

There is, of course, more to learn about college writing, but these fundamentals will see you through your general education courses, your major courses, the junior writing proficiency exam, and beyond into your professional and civic life.

SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES

Introduction:

- Include a thesis sentence (topic and the point you wish to make about the topic).
- State at least 3 or 4 subpoints that back up your thesis statement.

Body:

- Use at least one separate paragraph for each of your 3 or 4 subpoints.
- Begin each new paragraph with a sentence that expresses the subpoint.
- Back up each subpoint with specific examples.

Conclusion:

- Briefly summarize the paper content.
- Provide a link back to the introductory comments.
- Provide an idea for the reader to remember.

P.S. Proofread or have a friend proofread!

English & Theatre Department, MacMurray College
Jacksonville, Illinois 62650 www.mac.edu

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THE SIX STEPS

All sections of Rhetoric 101 employ a 6-step method of teaching writing, sometimes called the Kerrigan or Kerrigan-Metcalf method. But it should be noted that this method is simply a systematic and incremental way of teaching students to write with (1) unity, (2) coherence, (3) detailed development, and (4) clarity, which, as was stated in the Guidelines for College Writing that precedes this document, are the basic goals of all good expository writing. While the form itself is not applicable to *all* college writing assignments, it is hoped that the principles that it inculcates will be. The following list of the steps is primarily derived from Allan A. Metcalf's *Essentials of Writing to the Point* (page 95).

STEP 1: Write a sentence stating an opinion that will require further explanation (a thesis sentence; this step promotes unity).

STEP 2: Write three or four additional sentences explaining how or why the Step 1 sentence is true. To explain how, give examples, parts of the whole, sequence or chronology; to explain why, give reasons (causes) (subpoints; this step promotes unity and coherence).

STEP 3: Write four or more additional sentences about each of the three or four sentences of Step 2 (body of each subpoint paragraph; this step promotes unity, coherence, and development).

STEP 4: Go into detail in the four or more sentences of step 3. Make them as specific as possible. Make them concrete. Use examples and facts. Say a lot about a little, not a little about a lot (detail; this promotes development).

STEP 5: Change the first sentence of each new paragraph, starting with paragraph 2, so that it connects with the paragraph before it. Add key words to connect topics and connective words to connect ideas (paragraph connections; this promotes clarity by reinforcing the flow of the argument).

STEP 6: Make sure every sentence is connected to the one before it by a pronoun, key word, or associated word to connect the topic; by a connective word to connect the idea; or by both (sentence connections; this promotes clarity by reinforcing the flow of the argument).

NOTE: Step 3 also requires the writer to conclude the theme with a rounding-off sentence in a separate paragraph (restatement of thesis; this reinforces unity).

THE KERRIGAN FORMAT: SAMPLE

What follows is ***not*** advanced as a college-level paper. It is simply a sample of the format students are asked to follow when writing their Rhetoric 101 papers. They are required to submit a sentence-outline along with each paper. The thesis (or Step 1 sentence) is preceded by an *X*; the subpoints (Step 2 sentences) are preceded by a *1*, *2*, *3*, and so forth. Students are asked to repeat this letter-number pattern below the dotted line separating their outline from their actual essay to insure that they adhere to the structure proposed in the outline. When students leave Rhetoric 101, they are no longer required to retain the *X123* markers, but it is assumed by then that they will have absorbed the organization principles behind them. The sample is taken from page 45 of Allan A. Metcalf's *Essentials of Writing to the Point*.

*

X. Children imitate their parents.

1. Children imitate their parents' actions.

2. Children imitate their parents' words.

3. Children imitate their parents' beliefs.

X. Children imitate their parents.

1. Children imitate their parents' actions. For example, when her mother, a teacher, sat down to grade papers, seven-year-old Agnes brought some sheets of notebook paper and her own red pen to the table and began scribbling in the margins and writing A's and B's at the top of the pages. When the mother took a break to get a glass of iced tea, the daughter got up from the table and fixed her own glass with the same ice cubes and squeeze-bottle lemon (but no sugar) as her mother. Another example is that of three-year-old Susan, who sees her father drive home from work and then rushes out to the backyard where her battery-powered pink toy convertible is plugged in. She takes it gently around curves, remembering her father's own cautious driving.

2. Children imitate not only their parents' actions but also their parents' words.

For example, one-year-old Arnold's vocabulary included the words *mama*, *dada*, and *kitty*, all of which his parents had endlessly said to him. The word *kitty* at first was a simple *ee* sound, but it developed into *kee* and eventually into *kitty* as he attempted to sound like his parents. At age two, Arnold was trying to say *orange juice*, but it came out *ainu*. With continued effort to sound like his parents, in another year or two he was saying *orange juice*.

3. In addition to their parents' words, children also imitate their parents' beliefs. For example, thirteen-year-old Barbara shares her parents' beliefs about the environment. She calls her friend Kiki and says of her neighbors, "Aren't they gross? They don't even recycle their aluminum cans but just put them in the trash. And I heard them laughing about our compost pile. It's disgusting. If adults won't take care of the environment before it's too late, who will?" Earlier that evening, at a dinner of vegetable stew cooked in a solar oven, her mother and father had said the same thing about the neighbors. "The city should refuse to collect their trash," said her mother. "It's disgusting."

So whether it is actions, words, or beliefs, in many ways children imitate their parents.

CHECKLIST FOR RHETORIC 101 PAPERS

Paper Format _____

Thesis (Step 1) _____

Subpoints (Steps 2 and 3)

  Topic Sentences (Step 2) _____

  Support Sentences (Step 3) _____

  Rounding-Off Sentence (Step 3) _____

Detailed Development (Step 4) _____

Paragraph Connectives (Step 5) _____

Sentence Connectives (Step 6) _____

Language Guidelines Errors:
  Mixed Construction (***Mix***) _____

  Comma Splice (***CS***) _____

  Run-On (Fused) Sentence (***FS***) _____

  Unjustifiable Sentence Fragment (***Frag***) _____

    Subject-Verb (***SV Agr***) _____

    Pronoun-Antecedent (***PN Agr***) _____

  Nonstandard Use of Verb Form or Pronoun:
    Nonstandard Verb Form (***Nst V***) _____

    Nonstandard Pronoun (***Nst P***) _____

  Gender-Biased (Sexist) Language (***Sexist***) _____

  Excessive Misspelling (***Sp***) _____

  Omission of Key Words (***Om***) _____

Comments: Paper Grade _____

READING FOR THE POINT

This document is taken from Allan A. Metcalf's *Essentials of Writing to the Point* (page 103). It demonstrates that, just as effective reading can enhance effective writing, so too the acquisition of effective writing skills can enhance reading ability. It is, in a sense, the application of the 6-step method in reverse to reading (see *The Six Steps* in this handbook).

1. Look for the connections the author has made (Steps 5 and 6), especially the use of connective words to show the connection of ideas and the author's attitude toward them.

2. Look for the evidence—details, examples, facts—that the author has provided (Steps 3 and 4). What material gets the most attention and detail?

3. Look for the main subpoints (Step 2)—statements that summarize paragraphs, statements that tell the meaning of different items of evidence.

4. Look for a sentence that summarizes the entire work (Step 1)—one that covers all the subpoints and all the evidence. If there is no such sentence in the work, write one yourself.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

RESEARCH PAPERS

It is possible for a research paper to be merely a patchwork of quotations, showing only that you have read a variety of sources on a subject. At MacMurray, however, we usually ask for something different and more challenging: a paper that focuses on *your own opinion* about a subject, supporting your opinion with *evidence from published sources*.

I. OPINION (THESIS) AND SUPPORT

An opinion (also called a thesis), and evidence to support it, are the essence of a research paper, as taught in Rhetoric 102 and expected in other MacMurray courses.

Both the opinion and support are equally important. And they go together.

An opinion with no support is merely a preference. To say that *Women are smarter than men* or *Broccoli is good for you* just because "that's my opinion" is as useful as saying cake tastes better than ice cream.

Conversely, evidence without an opinion is merely trivia. You can present many facts about intelligence or broccoli, but unless you're writing an article for an encyclopedia, you are faced with the question: What do the facts add up to?

So we expect your research paper to have an opinion—your own opinion, based on your research—and published evidence to support it. The evidence must be connected to the opinion. If your opinion or thesis is that *Broccoli is good for you*, do not discuss how broccoli is grown, unless you can show that the way it is grown contributes to its nutritional value. In a good research paper, every sentence will relate to the opinion.

We call the main opinion of a research paper a *thesis*. When you begin a research paper, before you have gathered evidence, we call your opinion a *hypothesis*, that is, an opinion to be tested against the evidence and changed if necessary.

Formulating the hypothesis, gathering evidence, and determining the final thesis are discussed in our brochure *Guidelines for College Writing*. They are also discussed in the sections entitled "Research" and "MLA Papers" in the 4th edition of Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual*.

II. PRINCIPLES OF DOCUMENTATION

Documentation means explaining what your sources of information are, giving credit to them, and letting your reader know how to locate copies of them.

It is necessary for a research paper to follow certain forms of documentation, just as it is necessary for members of an athletic team to wear uniforms. But the main purpose of an athletic

team is to play a sport, not to wear a uniform. Similarly, the main purpose of a research paper is to make and support a point, not to follow a particular format. Learn the details of format so that you will not have to concentrate on them and will instead be able to focus on making and supporting your point.

The specifics of format discussed here are based on those of the Modern Language Association of America (MLA). Your instructor may want you to use some other format, such as that of the American Psychological Association (APA). If so, your instructor will refer you to specific guidelines for that format. Even so, the basic principles of documentation remain the same, so you may find this discussion useful.

You know your documentation is complete if you always notify your reader when you are using a source, and if you provide sufficient publication information so that the reader can always find an exact copy of the source you used.

A. Citing Sources

In MLA style, documentation involves *citing* and *listing*. Citing means announcing to your reader that you are using a source and telling exactly what page or pages you are using. Do this *even if you are not quoting* directly, that is, even if you are paraphrasing or summarizing in your own words rather than using the exact words of the source. The name or title you use in citing leads to an entry in the listing of Works Cited at the end of the paper.

You cite the source in your first sentence that makes use of the source. You name the author and then, at the end of that sentence, put the page number in parentheses. Here is an example:

> H. L. Mencken declared that women are far superior to men in certain kinds of intelligence (6).

The author's name lets your reader know that you are using a particular source, and the number in parentheses tells the page of the source. For sources from the World Wide Web, page numbers will differ depending on what printer you use, but give them anyway.

B. Introducing Sources

To name the author, or to give the title if the author is not known, satisfies the MLA requirement for citation. But it does not satisfy the reader's need for information about the source. Just as you would not bring a stranger into your home without introducing that person to your family, so you should not bring a source into your paper without a word or two of introduction. The example above cited H. L. Mencken. Who was that? Unless we are given more information, we don't really know if it's a man or a woman. It also helps to indicate the date, if the source is not a current publication. So let us revise that sample citation to say:

> Henry L. Mencken, a noted journalist and social critic of the early twentieth century, declared that woman are far superior to men in certain kinds of intelligence (6).

Here are some other examples of proper introductions:

> In a May 2000 article in *The Atlantic Monthly*, Christina Hoff Sommers, a staff member of the conservative American Enterprise Institute, argues that . . . (3).

> DeathPenalty.Net, a website maintained by organizations opposed to capital punishment, states on its home page that . . . (1).

> In his 1920 biography of his friend Leo Tolstoy, writer Maxim Gorky states that . . . (22).

Once you have introduced a source, you do not need to introduce it again. You can simply say something like *Mencken adds that . . . (6).* or *Also, according to Mencken, . . . (6).* If you make use of a different page of the source, put the number of that page in parentheses: *Mencken adds that . . . (14).*

C. Quotations and Quotation marks

There is possible confusion here. To include in your paper a quotation from a source does not mean that you look in the source for something that is already in quotation marks. No, it means that you use the exact words of the source in their exact order. And you *add your own quotation marks* to indicate that they are the exact words in the exact order. Here is a sentence from page 6 of Mencken's book:

> Women, in truth, are not only intelligent; they have almost a monopoly of certain of the subtler and more utile forms of intelligence.

In your own paper, introducing the quotation with your own words, you could write:

> Mencken says that women "have almost a monopoly of certain of the subtler and more utile forms of intelligence" (6).

All quotations must be preceded by a *lead-in*, an introductory phrase that prepares the reader for the quotation and ties that quotation explicitly to the point it is meant to illustrate. The lead-in may name the author or include some other useful introductory information. *Freestanding quotations*, that is, quotations without lead-ns, should be avoided. The preceding quotation from H. L. Mencken is introduced by a lead-in.

D. Please Double Space

everything in your paper, even the Works Cited.

E. Listing Works Cited

At the end of your paper, under the heading *Works Cited*, is your bibliography. It lists, in alphabetical order, all the sources you actually refer to, or cite, in your paper. Each entry begins with the author's last name, or, if the author is not known, with the title of the book or article. Note that the first line projects to the left, for ease of reference.

Specifications for Works Cited listings can get very detailed. You will find all the details in *A Pocket Style Manual* and other publications. Allan A. Metcalf's *Research to the Point* simplifies your decisions by assigning all entries to one of three basic forms. Choose the one that most closely fits each source.

The three formats are for printed sources, but they also work for electronic ones. If a source comes from the World Wide Web, *add* two things at the end of the entry: the exact date you looked at it and the Web page address (the URL).

F. Works Cited Formats

1. Book:

Last Name of Author, First Name or Names [if stated]. *Title of Book.* Edited by name of Editor of Book [if stated]. Edition of Book [if stated]. City of Publication: Name of Publishing Company, Year of Publication.

Example:

Mencken, H. L. *In Defense of Women*. Revised edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922.
Internet version of same book:

Mencken, H. L. *In Defense of Women*. Revised edition. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922. 20 June 2002 <http://encyclopediaindex.com/b/ndwmn11.htm>.

2. Article in Book or Collection:

Last name of Author of Article, First Name or Names [if stated]. "Title of Article." *Book in Which Article Is Found*. Edited by Name of Editor of Book. Edition of Book [if stated]. City of Publication: Name of Publishing Company, Year of Publication. Starting page-Ending page. Original publication information.

Example:

Brady, Judy. "I Want a Wife." *Current Issues and Enduring Questions*. Edited by Sylvan Barnet and Hugo Bedau. Fifth edition. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999. 91-93. Originally published 1971.

3. Article in Periodical:

Last name of Author, First Name or Names [if stated]. "Title of Article." *Title of Periodical* Volume.issue (Day Month Year): Starting page-Ending page.

Example:

Sommers, Christina Hoff. "The War Against Boys." *The Atlantic Monthly* 285.5 (May 2000): 59-74.

Internet version of the same article:

Sommers, Christina Hoff. "The War Against Boys." *The Atlantic Monthly* 285.5 (May 2000). 20 June 2002 29 <http://www.theatlantic.com/cgi bin/o/issues/2000/05/sommers.htm>.

Web article *without* print source:

American Civil Liberties Union. " 'English Only': From Its Inception, the United States Has Been a Multilingual Nation." *ACLU Briefing Paper* 6 (1996). 12 June 2001 <http://www.aclu.org/linrary/pbp6.html>.

III. COPIES OF SOURCES

Your instructor may require copies of all the pages you have cited in your paper. This is so that you, and your instructor, can check to make sure you have accurately used the source. It is especially important to provide printouts of World Wide Web sources, since Web pages change or disappear frequently. Each copied page should be highlighted to show exactly what information you used, and should be labeled at the top with the author's last name so that it can be connected to your citations and your list of works cited.

English & Theatre Department, MacMurray College
Jacksonville, Illinois 62650
www.mac.edu

July 2006 (reprint permission with credit)

DOCUMENTATION: QUOTATION, PARAPHRASE, SUMMARY

(Supplement to *Research Papers* brochure)

As previously noted, when you incorporate material from a printed source into your paper, you must inform your reader that you have done so. The standard means for doing this are quotation and citation.

When you use the ***exact wording*** of your source, you are **quoting**. Quoted material needs to appear in your paper *exactly* as it does in your source and should be prefaced by an introductory phrase (lead-in) of your own. The quotation itself is set off by quotation marks (" "). **Paraphrase** is the accurate reproduction of information derived from your source but ***placed entirely in your own words***. A **summary** is a ***condensed version of information contained in your source but put entirely in your own words***. **Paraphrases and summaries are not set off by quotation marks, but all quoted, paraphrased, and summarized material must be cited**.

Within the text of your paper citation takes the form of a parenthetical reference. If you have already mentioned the author's name in your lead-in, the parenthetical reference will include only the page number or numbers on which the material can be found. If you have not mentioned the author's name in your lead-in, the parenthetical reference contains the author's last name and the page number(s) on which the material referred to can be found. Here are some examples of these principles and procedures.

QUOTATION (with formal lead-in):

According to Brent Staples, "Virtually everybody seems to sense that a mugger wouldn't be warbling bright, sunny selections from Vivaldi's Four Seasons" (118).

QUOTATION (run into text):

Brent Staples indicates that, in order to overcome the negative stereotypes that people had formed of him, he would "whistle melodies from Beethoven and Vivaldi and the more popular classical composers" (118).

PARAPHRASE:

One African-American author even found himself whistling Vivaldi and Beethoven tunes to overcome the negative stereotypes that people had of him (Staples 118).

SUMMARY:

Staples claims that he was able to counteract the racist stereotype that New Yorkers had of him by whistling classical music while walking at night (116-118).

In addition to parenthetical references, which include the author's last name and the page number(s) on which the borrowed material may be found, you must also direct your reader to the source in which that material is contained. This is done on a separate works cited page, which appears at the end of your paper. Works are listed alphabetically by the last name of the author and full bibliographical information given, so that the source can be easily located. An example of a full citation for the Brent Staples essay referred to on the previous page would take the following form:

Works Cited

Staples, Brent. "Black Men and Public Space." *40 Model Essays: A Portable Anthology*. Ed. Jane E. Aaron. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005. 115-118.

There is certainly more to say about documentation, and this subject will be covered in depth in your Rhetoric 102 course. In the meantime, if you have any questions, I refer you to the section on using and documenting sources in the fifth edition of Diana Hacker=s *A Pocket Style Manual*. Since the MLA (Modern Language Association) style of documentation is taught in your Rhetoric courses, consult the table of contents in Hacker=s book for the section on MLA style. Note that MLA style is different from either APA style or Chicago style, also discussed within that book.

GRADING CHECKLIST FOR RESEARCH PAPER

___________	Double-pocketed folder		
___________	Two copies of paper		
___________	Proper format		
___________	Title page		
___________	Abstract		
___________	Text of paper	___________	Introduction
		___________	Thesis
		___________	Support section
		___________	Refutation section
		___________	Conclusion
		___________	Connectives
		___________	Lead-ins
		___________	Quotation, paraphrase, summary
		___________	Parenthetical references
		___________	Length (2000-2500 words)
___________	Works Cited page	___________	Number of sources
		___________	Citation format
___________	Photocopies	___________	Title pages
		___________	Cited pages
___________	Writing		

Paper Grade ___________

Your name ___________________________

A NOTE OF SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The APA (American Psychological Association) format is frequently used in the preparation of articles for scientific journals. Students who major in such areas as nursing or the natural and social sciences will become familiar with the approach as they read in their majors. However, professors in these areas should be prepared to adopt certain formalities of style such as avoiding the use of the first person (*I*, *we*, etc.), establishing a hypothesis, and applying the scientific method in the construction of papers. While the use of the pronoun *I* may be acceptable in a purely personal or autobiographical essay, it becomes increasingly less so as one approaches the objective orientation of the sciences. In scientific writing it should be eliminated. Some of the key differences in citing sources between MLA and APA style are provided on the following page of this handbook.

APA (AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION) STYLE

Some noticeable differences from MLA (Modern Language Association) Style

1. APA lead-ins are followed by the date.
   Example: According to Burns (2005),

2. If you have more than one source by the same author(s), list bibliographical entries by year, the earliest first.
   Examples: Burns, R. G. (2003); Burns, R. G. (2005).

3. If you have more than one source from the same year by an author, list the works alphabetically by the title. In the parentheses, following the year, add "a," "b," and so on. Use the same letters in the in-text citation.
   Examples (bibliographical): Burns, R. G. (2003a); Burns, R. G. (2003b).
   Examples (textual): According to Burns (2003b),

4. Provide initials rather than full first and middle names of authors.
   Examples: Collinwood, D.; Burns, R. G.

5. When page numbers are referred to (which they are less frequently in APA than in MLA Style), they are preceded with the letter "p." for a single page and "pp." for more than one page.
   Examples: p. 145; pp. 11-13.

6. The bibliographical (works cited) page in an APA-style paper is titled References.

7. Titles of books and periodicals are underlined or italicized (just as they are in MLA Style); titles of articles are ***not*** placed in quotation marks.
   Example: Primate language and cognition: Common ground.

8. The first is the only letter regularly capitalized in APA-style papers (in both titles and subtitles); others are capitalized as they would be in the normal course of writing.
   Example: Sign and culture: A reader for students of American Sign Language.

Note: For a more thorough and detailed introduction to APA Style, consult Hacker, APA Papers, *A Pocket Style* Manual, 4th ed., 155-182. APA Style is the approach to documentation favored in the social sciences, just as MLA Style is the approach favored in the humanities. If you are majoring in a field like psychology or social work (a social science), you should definitely hang on to the Hacker book since it may well save your having to buy another text about APA Style in one of the courses required for your major.

SECTION FOUR: SPEAKING AND DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION GRADE SHEET

Student's Name ___________________________________

GOOD	NEEDS WORK	
______	______	You brought the appropriate course materials (especially texts) to class
______	______	You seemed prepared for discussion (that is, you had apparently read and thought about the assignment)
______	______	You listened carefully to other students
______	______	You responded respectfully and productively to other students' comments
______	______	You allowed others their fair chance to speak
______	______	You volunteered observations about the assigned readings frequently and regularly
______	______	You showed serious interest in the issues raised by the readings
______	______	You volunteered questions about the readings
______	______	You offered direct references to the readings
______	______	You were able to cite page numbers and/or turn to specific passages in the text to support your points
______	______	You supported your opinions with reasons

Other Comments:

Discussion Grade (to date): __________

SECTION FIVE: THE JUNIOR WRITING PROFICIENCY EXAM

THE JUNIOR WRITING PROFICIENCY EXAM:
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What Is It?

A writing exam. You have two hours to write an essay on a topic presented to you at the start of the exam. The topic is different each time the exam is given, but it never requires special knowledge or preparation.

No minimum length is specified. You are not expected to spend the whole time writing as fast as you can. However, an essay shorter than about 500 words may not have enough detail to meet the standards.

Bring a pen and, if you wish, a dictionary. Those are the only tools you are allowed. You should be given a blue book to write in. We hope in the near future that all students will be able to write this exam on a computer. Under such circumstances, students will be allowed to use the computer's spellcheck and grammar check.

Who Should take It?

Students who have attained junior status (60 or more credits) are eligible to take the exam. You are not permitted to do so until then, because the exam covers writing and critical thinking skills that you have developed beyond the freshman Rhetoric and sophomore levels.

When?

The exam is given twice in the fall and once in the spring. You are permitted to take it as often as you need until you pass. But don't wait until your last semester—you do have to pass it before you can graduate. In fact, you're encouraged to take it during the first semester of your junior year to make sure that you'll have ample opportunity to pass it.

Why?

We require the exam to verify that you have met MacMurray's standards for writing. We declare it on your transcript: "Passed Junior Level Writing Proficiency Exam."

Why Me? I'm a Good Writer

Sorry, we make no exceptions based on good grades, English major, or professional writing experience. If you are good, you can easily pass the exam, and the transcript will certify it.

Do I Have to Use the Kerrigan 6-Step Method?

No. If you are acquainted with the six steps of *Essentials of Writing to the Point*, the book used in Rhetoric 101, that will certainly help you make a clear point, organize and develop it, support it with details, and provide appropriate transitions. But that is what is expected of any good expository writing, whether taught by Kerrigan's method or any other. You certainly are not expected to use the X123 outline of the Kerrigan method, though again if you happen to know it, you can keep it in mind.

May I Make Notes before I Write?

Yes. You have two hours. You would be wise to spend the first five minutes or so reading the assignment carefully and deciding how to respond, before you start your writing. You may also spend a few minutes outlining what you will write. Put the outline on the back page, and cross it out when you're done. The readers will ignore it in grading your essay.

May I Rewrite?

Yes, but that may take too much time. You can do just fine without rewriting. You may cross out and insert words and sentences, and the readers will not penalize you. Just make sure your corrections are easy to read.

Can I Get Help before the Exam?

Yes, you can get tutoring and practice at the Learning Center. But don't wait until the day of the exam!

How Is It Graded?

Faculty members from all departments on campus take turns reading the exams. Every exam is read by two different people. If they disagree on whether it passes or fails, it is given a third reader for a final decision is reached.

What Do the Readers Look for?

They look at five aspects of your writing:

1. Ideas: analysis and synthesis of thought, as suggested by the writing prompt.
2. Unity: a clear thesis, and keeping to that point throughout the essay.
3. Organization: clearly arranged, with transitions and connective words.
4. Development: reasons, examples, and details to support your point.
5. Style and mechanics: avoiding grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors.

What Is the Most Common Mistake that Leads to Failure?

Failure to follow the assignment—not answering the question but writing about something else.

What if I Don't Pass? What Can I Do to Pass Next Time?

You and your advisor will be notified if you do not pass the exam. You will then have an opportunity to review your essay and its grading at the Learning Center. Ask Mrs. Pahde. And see "Can I Get Help before the Exam?" You might also consider taking Rhetoric 301, a one-credit course that revisits and condenses much of the writing instruction contained in Rhetoric 101 and 102.

What if I Have Special Needs?

See Randy Myers, Director of Disability Support Services, if you need extra time or if you need to use the computer to type your essay.

What Are Some Sample Writing Prompts for this Exam?

First sample: ***Some people say that the main aim of a college education should be to prepare a person for a career. Do you agree or disagree?***

Sample example: ***What do you consider to be the single most important quality of a truly well educated person? Why?***

Third example: ***At one time or another we have all been required to do things that we did not want to do. Recount such an incident. Was the incident of value to you, or not?***

Other sample prompts and complete exams are available in the Learning Center. Ask Mrs. Pahde for them. **Notice: Once the exam begins, you must remain in the room until you have finished writing and have handed in your completed exam.**

JUNIOR WRITING PROFICIENCY SAMPLE EXAMINATION

Instructions:
1. **Write your essay in ink**. Place **ONLY YOUR NUMBER (NOT YOUR NAME)** on the cover of the bluebook or on your computer printout. **Do not write your name on the exam.**

2. Follow the standards of good writing taught in all your rhetoric or composition courses. Make sure that you state a clear thesis. Organize your essay well and develop your ideas through the use of specific and concrete details. Although the quality of your essay is more important than the number of words, you probably will not be able to write an adequately developed essay in fewer than 500 words.

3. Write an essay based on the subject of the prompt at the bottom of this page. Follow the instructions in that prompt very carefully. Do exactly what it asks you to do. **Be sure you have responded to all parts of the prompt.**

4. When you have finished your essay, go over it to make sure that it communicates clearly and directly to the reader. Also, proofread the essay so that you can eliminate errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

5. If you are writing this at a computer, you may use your computer's spellcheck and grammarcheck if you wish, but such aids are no substitute for your own careful attention to your grammar, punctuation, and spelling and may actually mislead you if used carelessly. You may also use a dictionary, if you like.

6. Complete your essay in two hours.

PROMPT FOR WRITING PROFICIENCY EXAM
Sample date, 2006

What do you consider to be the single most important quality of a truly well educated person? Why?

Note: You may, of course, use the pronouns **I** and **me** in this essay. Be sure to support and illustrate your claims with evidence drawn from your personal experience of college or the experience of others you have known or learned about.

CONCLUSION: WHAT SHOULD YOU EXPECT?

As a member of the MacMurray College faculty, you should be able to count on the following things after a student has passed through the rhetoric sequence:

- That students have mastered the 6-step Kerrigan method for generating acceptable college-level, thesis-based essays, which include the expository virtues of unity, coherence, development, and clarity

- That they be able to write acceptable papers that compare or contrast two subjects

- That they be able to write reasonably effective argumentative papers, including not only support for their thesis but refutation of views that oppose their thesis

- That they be reasonably proficient at research, using both paper and electronic sources

- That they be familiar with the basics of MLA documentation and will know where to locate information on the finer points of such documentation

- That they understand the key differences between MLA and APA styles of documentation and will know where to locate information on the finer points of APA documentation

- That they be able to demonstrate a reasonable level of grammatical correctness, especially in those areas addressed by the Language Guidelines (please see)

- That they understand that good reading is based on the same principles as good writing and be able to apply those principles to written texts

- That they have mastered the 11-step speech construction process and that they recognize the parallels between this process and the Kerrigan method

- That they demonstrate reasonable proficiency in each of the following types of speeches: demonstration/process, narrative, proposition of fact, proposition of value, and proposition of policy

- That they understand the basic principles and practices of effective discussion and be able to apply those principles, whether in a whole class or small group context

The Rhetoric staff will do its best to insure that students who have passed through out sequence of courses have attained the skills listed above. We, in turn, hope that you will reinforce and build on those skills in your classes, so that we can all be proud of the reading, writing, and speaking abilities of our graduates, as well their ability to think for themselves.