

## STYLE SHEET FOR PAPERS

### Format

1. You must title the paper. Titles are extremely brief synopses of your subject and/or argument. A good title introduces your topic or stance before the reader has completed a sentence, while a poor title stalls that process.
2. Please indicate the page number somewhere on each page.
3. One page contains approximately 250-300 words. Please do not get cute with margins and font sizes.
4. Unless otherwise instructed, you need not prepare a separate bibliography. I shall assume that your footnotes indicate your sources.

### Proofreading and presentation

A paper's presentation makes a statement about how much the author cared to submit it. An essay filled with typographical errors, misspellings, and other such detritus, however minor they may be, distances the reader from its content, much as an individual's breath infused with eau de moufette (skunkwater) suppresses the ardor of one's inamorata (see the collected works of Chuck Jones). Diligent proofreading will catch most if not all errors, thereby improving the reader's appreciation of your prose. Do not depend on your spell checker to bail you out; it does not catch homonyms. I expect that you will proofread your papers as if your grade depended on it, because, to some degree, it does.

### Some common errors to avoid

1. The indefinite opening pronoun, e.g., "Puritans worshiped God. This indicates that they were religious." To what does "This" refer? As a more general proposition, make the referents of your pronouns clear.
2. An overfondness for passive verbs. Some of my best verbs are passive, but a plethora of them can drug a reader to sleep. Moreover, the passive voice disguises agency, making it a favorite locution for politicians and bureaucrats, e.g., "Her identity was revealed," or "Mistakes were made." Who revealed her identity, and who made the mistakes?
3. Please do not use contractions (e.g., don't, they're. Note that possessives like "Jane's" are not contractions). Contractions are grammatically correct and can of course be quite useful, especially in speech, but, being an Old School pedant, I want you to present your material in a classically formal way before you commit vernacular.
4. The vanishing hyphen, often absent when using dates as adjectives, e.g.: "In the seventeenth century" is not hyphenated because "century" is a noun modified by "seventeenth," but the phrase "seventeenth-century New England" does require a hyphen because "seventeenth-century" is a compound adjective modifying "New England."
5. The misplaced modifier. When Roy Orbison sang that "Only the lonely know the way I feel tonight," he meant that true appreciation of his love-struck anguish is limited to a single class of people, "the lonely." Had he warbled, "The lonely only know the way I feel tonight," he would have meant that "the lonely" are capable solely of knowing how he felt (as opposed to taking any other action, for instance, ditching their self-pity and shaking their booties however they might). Had he lamented that "The lonely know only the way I feel tonight," he would have meant that "the lonely" know not many things but rather one exclusive thing: his pain. Had he crooned, "The lonely know the way only I feel tonight," he would have meant that the knowledge of the lonely about the throbbing dismay of rejection is restricted to the experience of a single individual—him. And had he intoned, "The lonely know the way I feel tonight only," he would have chronologically restricted the knowledge of the lonely to a specific time, "tonight." Note how moving a single word, "only," dramatically changes the sentence's meaning. Roy Orbison was a crafty grammarian as well as a superb torch singer, and he sang what he meant. You would do well to emulate his example, even if you cannot replicate his impossibly high tenor.

## Footnote form

Footnote styles vary across disciplines and even within them; there is no single absolutely correct form. For purposes of writing papers in this course, please use the following conventions, which reduce the information listed while allowing readers to find your sources. For further information (about how, for example, to cite multiple volume works), consult *A Manual of Style* (often referred to as the “Chicago Manual of Style”); Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*; or me. You can find bibliographic information for the reader in the “Table of Contents.”

To cite an article: Author’s name, “Title of article,” *Journal*, vol. # (date), page(s).

Example: David S. Lovejoy, “Roger Williams and George Fox: The Arrogance of Self-Righteousness,” *New England Quarterly*, 66 (1993), 199-225.

To cite a book: Author’s name, *Title* (place of publication, date), page(s).

Example: Edmund S. Morgan, *The Puritan Dilemma: The Story of John Winthrop* (Boston, 1958), 12.

To cite an internet source (though not preferred—use only selectively and carefully):  
Page or document name, URL, date accessed

Example: “Style Sheet for Papers,” [http://history.wisc.edu/cohen/Style\\_Sheet.pdf](http://history.wisc.edu/cohen/Style_Sheet.pdf), accessed October 5, 2011

## Editing comments

Here are a few of the symbols or words I may use in commenting on your papers:

awk. - awkward phrase or sentence structure

dangles - introductory phrase/clause does not match up with subject of sentence

frag. - fragment; incomplete sentence

run-on - run-on sentence

transition - the exposition shifts suddenly without the new subject’s being properly introduced or contextualized

v1 - you have failed to correct a problem pointed out in the paper’s earlier draft (version 1)

WC - poor or incorrect word choice

¶ - insert paragraph

^ or inverted ^ - insert word or words (phrases may be circled or enclosed in parentheses). I may also use arrows.

/ - through a capital letter, this symbol often means “use lower case.” More generally, it means “delete.”

✓ - good point; well said

∥ - phrases or clauses are not parallel.

≠ - does not equal (or is not equivalent to).

1<sup>st</sup> name - cite an individual’s first name when mentioning the person for the first time.

! - indicates astonishment/amazement/bewilderment at a statement and may express either appreciation or stupefaction.

A<sup>(n)</sup>rggh! - Factor of Frustration, where A is the coefficient of exasperation, and n the exponent expressing the number of times I beat my head against the wall in disbelief at what you have written.



- see “Some common errors to avoid,” §5, *supra*

## The Bottom Line

The instructor reserves the right to lower the grade of any paper filled to excess with errors of any sort (whether specifically identified above or not). The further instructor reserves sole authority to define “to excess.”