



Aboyne Academy
LAL
A JOINT APPROACH
TO
TECHNICAL SKILLS
IN LITERACY



Autumn 2012

FOREWORD

This booklet is intended as a reference guide for pupils, parents and staff detailing some of the fundamental rules of written English. There is also a section giving guidance on the Aboyne Academy preferred method of citing sources and avoiding plagiarism.

We hope all concerned will find the booklet helpful and supportive.

Further information and resources can be found on the school network (All programs/English/English Grammar Toolkit) or at <http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/knowledgeoflanguage/english>.

Capital Letters:

Everyone knows about capital letters at the beginning of sentences and for proper nouns but what about titles and sub-headings?

A general rule is that all the main words in a title should have capitals.

- e.g. News at Ten
Our Trip to Dalguise
A Visit from our Local Police Officer
The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas

Please note that although it seems fashionable nowadays to miss out capitals on titles of t.v. programmes, menus etc. these are not correct.

Writing Dialogue:

It's really simple! Just remember NEW speaker = NEW paragraph. No matter how little your new speaker says it must be a new paragraph.

- e.g. "Good morning, Jimmy," mum said, "would you like toast for breakfast?"
"No."
"No what?"
"No thank you mum. Can I have Cocoa Pops instead?"

N.B. Punctuation - like the question marks above - always goes inside the inverted commas.

To make things even simpler, think about a cartoon strip - every time there is a new speech "bubble" you would start a new paragraph.



Punctuation:

Parenthesis seems to give rise to some confusion. Should one use commas or dashes or brackets? All do the same job - separating additional information which is not absolutely necessary.

e.g. Charles, the Prince of Wales, is heir to the throne.

It is almost always the case that commas are best for this. We would recommend that the use of brackets is avoided as pupils become confused by them.

Colons are used

(1) to introduce a list

e.g. Please send me: a box of matches, three candles, an A4 writing pad and some coloured pencils.

(2) to introduce an example

e.g. There are many planets: Jupiter being the largest.

Semi-colons are used to indicate pauses longer than those indicated by a comma or to separate clauses which should already contain a comma.

e.g. Jane, a red-haired girl; Mary, a blonde; and Jackie, a brunette, all wanted to have wigs of different colours.

Apostrophes:

The first - and simplest - use of the apostrophe is when a letter or letters are missed out of a word. The apostrophe takes the place of omitted letter(s).

e.g. I am = I'm
 we have = we've
 cannot = can't

The second use of the apostrophe is to denote possession - brace yourself, this is where the confusion starts!

All you have to remember is the number of people or things which possess the object or quality in question. If it is ONE then the apostrophe goes before the - s.

- e.g. One boy's coat was left on the bus.
The door's hinges creaked as it opened.
The dog's collar was made of leather.

If more than one person or thing possesses the objects or qualities in question the apostrophe goes after the - s.

- e.g. Three boys' coats were left on the bus.
All the doors' hinges needed to be oiled.
Dogs' collars should never be too tight.

Exceptions to this very simple rule arise when a plural noun does not end in an - s.

- e.g. men
children
deer

These only require an - s to be added to show possession so the apostrophe comes before the - s.

- e.g. The men's cars were all parked beside one another.
The children's party started at one o'clock.
Many deer's antlers are hung at Mar Lodge.

Another complication arises with people's names like James, Mr. Jones, Robert Burns etc. Here - though it seems unsatisfactory - you have to decide whether or not to use an apostrophe depending upon what you would say.

- e.g. James's pencil case.....
Mr Jones's house.....
Robert Burns' poetry.....

Last - but not least - of the complications is 'its'. If there is an apostrophe in 'it's' it means 'it is'. If you want to indicate possession there is no apostrophe.

e.g. The dog hurt its paw.

N.B. Apostrophes become even more complicated when dealing with abbreviations. The simple rule is the same as that of possession e.g. The M.P's car was bright red. There is no apostrophe if you are writing in the plural e.g. Several MPs were forced to resign.

Paragraphing

When hand-writing material the first line of paragraphs should always be indented slightly. There is no need to miss a line/lines between hand-written paragraphs.

When word-processing, however, paragraphs are never indented and you should miss a line between them.

When you're writing a story/essay you should start a new paragraph when introducing a new character or the setting changes or time progresses.

As mentioned earlier note that, when writing dialogue, a new speaker always means a new paragraph.

Letter-writing

Despite the fact that most of our young people communicate via e-mail, text etc these days there remains a need for them to understand the conventions of letter-writing.

1. Letters addressed to **Dear Sir or Madam** should conclude with **Yours faithfully** NEVER Yours sincerely.
2. Letters addressed to **Dear Mr and Mrs Smith** - even if the recipient is unknown to the sender - should end with **Yours sincerely**.
3. Letters to close friends/family can be much more informal e.g. **Dear Jimmy** could end with 'love' or 'your pal' or 'best regards' etc.

Setting out a sender's address creates problems for some, also.

If a letter is hand-written the writer's address should be at the right of the page with a new line for each part of the address and with the date below.

So: -

10 Brimmond Place
Tarland
Aberdeenshire
AB34 5JN
22nd May 2010

NOTE the writer should NEVER include his/her name in such an address layout.

Business letters are most often word-processed and both the sender's and the recipient's addresses appear. Word-processed addresses are always blocked and the recipient's name is included. The date appears under the recipient's address.

So:

COMPARE THE MARKET,
POLICY RENEWALS,
INSURANCE HOUSE,
LIVERPOOL, L18 3TY.

MR ALEXANDER ORLOV,
MEERKAT MANOR,
THE VELDT,
SA12 1VP.

22nd May, 2010

All letters - both formal and informal start at the left hand side of the page. Business letters are blocked with a blank line between each paragraph.

e.g.

Dear Mr. Orlov,

It has come to our attention that you have not renewed your car insurance. If you are still the owner of vehicle CTM 500 you should contact your insurance broker without delay.

Should the vehicle no longer be in your possession please ensure that you notify the DVLA and, if appropriate, complete a SORN.

Yours sincerely,

J. T. Adams
Customer Services

Hand-written letters, by contrast, are indented NOT blocked - so the writer should not miss out lines between paragraphs.

So:-

Dear Mrs Smith,

I hope you are well and had a super summer holiday. I had a great time in Spain.

The weather was fabulous and we stayed in a great villa.

On one day we went to Barcelona. etc etc.

PLEASE note where the hand-written letter's 1st paragraph starts - under the space between "Dear" and the name of the recipient. Subsequent paragraphs start in line with the first.

Letters really should not be on lined paper - especially school paper with a margin!

SENTENCE STRUCTURE

As everyone knows the Experiences and Outcomes for writing demand a variation of sentence structure. Certainly, such variety adds hugely to the quality of work our young people produce.

Sentence length is an obvious starting point. Good writing includes sentences of varying lengths - used to create effect. Very short sentences can add impact while longer ones can be used to describe setting, characters etc.

e.g. Susan was exhausted. She rolled over in bed, pulling the duvet up to her ears and punching the pillow. She had to get some sleep. Tomorrow was important!

Lists almost always make for longer sentences.

e.g. He packed a towel, a warm jumper, a pair of spare trousers, his torch, sun cream, a sleeping bag and headed for the sleepover in Sean's tent.

Some sentences convey surprise, horror or are commands. These should always end with an exclamation mark.

e.g. My hotel room was enormous!
It's a snake!
Sit down this minute, you stupid boy!

Questions, too, have a dual role - some expect an answer, others don't - these latter sentences are rhetorical questions.

e.g. "How many sugars do you take?" This obviously requires an answer.

"How many times have I asked you to sit down, you stupid boy?" obviously doesn't!

Then there are groups of words which are not sentences at all BUT which can add much richness to writing. Remember a sentence to be a sentence MUST have a verb. But "non-sentences" - have a very important role to play in imaginative writing.

e.g. Creak! Was there someone on the stairs? Thud! In the next room? Scratch, scratch, scratch! At her bedroom door? Miaow!

MINI-TIPS

- When people write dates "the" and "of" are not included.

e.g. See you on ~~the~~ 15th ~~of~~ November.

- Numbers less than 10 in imaginative writing are written as words.

e.g. Four cars fell off the bridge.

Seven boys were called to the headmaster's office.

Numbers are acceptable in dates (see above) or addresses

e.g. 10 Downing Street.

- Abbreviations should be capital letters IF the words being abbreviated have capital letters.

e.g. B.B.C. stands for British Broadcasting Corporation.

BUT if the original wouldn't have capitals neither should the abbreviation e.g.

e.g. = for example

tv = television

PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism is using someone else's words and ideas and presenting them as if they were your own. Plagiarism is common problem in schools and is sometimes committed by accident.

All sources used have to be acknowledged when pupils write up their project that is they must say where they found the information.

Examples:

'I copied and pasted a paragraph from the Internet into my report without changing any words. Information on the web is free after all...'
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Answer: This is plagiarism.

Straight copying from any source - a book, a magazine or a website - without changing any words is cheating and the most commonly committed form of plagiarism.

'I used the ideas of an author and wrote them in my own words in my research but didn't acknowledge the source '.

Answer: This is plagiarism.

Using the ideas of another, even when you write them in your own words and don't say where the original idea came from, is also plagiarism.

I copied a diagram I liked from the Internet but put a note beside it to say where I'd copied it from.
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Answer: This is correct and not plagiarism.
--

This is referencing a source correctly. You didn't create the diagram but you've stated where you got it from.
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I copied a few lines of a paragraph from a newspaper article. I enclosed them in quotation marks and presented the information as a quote from a newspaper.

Answer: This is correct and not plagiarism.
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Another example of referencing a source of information correctly.

To avoid plagiarism, all sources of information, e.g. A website, podcast, encyclopaedia, book or conversation must be **referenced**. All sources of information have to be acknowledged when pupils write up their project that is they must say where they found the information. Remind students to keep a note of sources which they refer to as they go, as it can be tricky re tracing your steps at a later date.

This allows staff to check their work and see what information sources they have used. Acknowledging sources is called 'citing' or 'referencing' and this has to be written in a certain way (see below) so that staff can easily locate that source.

The information needed for referencing or citing does vary but for a book it is:-

the author,
year of publication,
title,
Place of publication & Publisher

Remember it is really important to get all the punctuation and italics in the correct places.

The bibliography is the list of all sources used for the project.

Here is an example:

Bibliography:

BP (2010) *BP at a glance*. Available at:

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Shell (2010) *The new energy future*. Available at:

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