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## How to Prepare a BOLD Applied Summary Paper

All paper assignments you prepare for the BOLD program ought to meet certain minimum standards for layout and style. This worksheet will discuss these basic requirements to help you prepare assured, professional papers for your modules. Follow these directions unless your professor or instructor specifically assigns something else.

### Presentation

In computer word-processing programs, use a 12-point font. Allow no more and no less than one-inch margins on all four sides of your paper. Do not justify your text along the right margin. **Double-space everything.** At the top left corner of the first page, identify your paper by typing your name, BOLD Class number, instructor's name, and, in the top right corner, the date. Double-space and center the title of your essay; *every* paper should have a title. Double space, indent five spaces, and begin. All paragraphs should start on a new double-spaced line, indented five. On all subsequent pages after the first page, put your last name and the page number in the top-left corner and double space before continuing. You need not number your opening page, nor include a title page unless instructed otherwise.

When quoting from an outside source, indicate who is speaking (or writing) and then enclose the quoted material within double quotation marks, like so: As Dr. Seuss has written, "I do not like green eggs and ham." Remember to leave the period inside the last quotation mark. Also, use quotation marks for article titles and italics for journals (e.g., "Bush's Best-Laid Plans" in Newsweek). Italicize all book, journal, or show titles, as you would in indicating that the above quote from Dr. Seuss came from *Green Eggs and Ham*.

### Paragraph and Organization

As mentioned above, there's a proper way to present a paragraph (double-spacing and indenting five spaces before beginning.) Beyond its visual presentation, however, paragraphs have a specific purpose in an essay. Each successful paragraph should contain no more and no less than one controlling idea, communicated in a **topic sentence**. The topic sentence ought to come at the beginning of the paragraph so that your reader understands the direction of the information that follows.

In subsequent sentences after the topic sentence of a paragraph, you should then provide **support**: details, facts, examples, or arguments that directly relate to the topic sentence. Remember that support for the claims of your paper will make those claims much easier for a

reader to grasp, which in turn will make your claims more persuasive. There is no standard length for a paragraph, although one-sentence paragraphs can't help but be under-supported, and paragraphs that go on at great length run the risk of incoherence (straying from the initial topic sentence to include tangential rather than directly relevant information). Watch, for instance, for signal words and phrases that suggest a new idea and hence, a new topic ("On the other hand," "Conversely," "Another reason," "Additionally," etc). Begin a new paragraph there.

A well-developed, well-organized, two or three page essay will probably have at least four or five paragraphs. Two paragraphs that serve specific functions within any good paper are the **introduction** and the **conclusion**. The introductory paragraph isn't constructed quite the same as any of the others in the paper. Rather, a good introduction ought to provide a general discussion of the problem or idea you wish to discuss in the paper, including the paper's focus. For example, if your paper is a response to a book, your introductory paragraph should identify the topic for discussion and present your paper's **thesis statement**, which will serve as the controlling idea for the remainder of the paper (in other words, all your topic-sentences – and the paragraphs to which they belong – ought to be claims of support for your thesis). The thesis becomes a kind of contract you make with the reader: this, in a sentence, is the "point" you're trying to get across with everything that follows.

The paragraph called the conclusion is more than a summary (which is why it isn't called a summary). True, you will need to summarize not only your arguments but also your thesis; beyond this, however, you ought to be prepared to draw some conclusion about the significance of the ideas you've just discussed. Sandwiched between the introduction and the conclusion is the **body** of your paper: your argument or support for the thesis statement. As its formal name implies, this section of the paper is the flesh of your essay, the way you make your reader see or feel that your thesis is, in fact, true.

## **Sentences**

Many people take a free-associative approach to their writing. In essence, they're **writing letters** to their teachers. You can do what you like with syntax in your letter writing, but here at college, you ought to curb your excessive or informal syntax. Here are some basic rules to remember in preparing papers for your classes.

- 1) Understand that every sentence, by definition, must include a **subject and a verb**. Remember that, in the wonderfully complex world of English grammar, verbs can dress up like nouns and vice versa. To figure out if your sentence has a legitimate subject and verb, try this: ask yourself what the action of the sentence is (verb), and after establishing this, ask yourself who or what is performing that action (subject). If you still need help, please contact the ARC.
- 2) Keep it **simple**. Particularly if you're having trouble identifying subjects and verbs in your sentences, don't stretch the boundaries. Write clear, concise sentences where there are fewer nouns and verbs to sift through to find the action and who or what is performing it.

- 3) Avoid **fragments, comma splices, and run-ons**. Fragments are incomplete sentences; they lack either a subject or a verb (see #1 above). Comma splices are improper use of the comma: connecting two complete sentences with a comma, instead of using the more traditional method of a period, two spaces, and a capital first letter. Complete sentences may be grammatically connected, by the way, using a semi-colon (;) – but don't abuse the privilege. Run-ons literally run two complete sentences together without any mark of punctuation at all.
- 4) Expect that you will not get everything right the first time. This is part of the letter-writing mentality of most students: they put their raw thoughts down on paper and never go back to refine them. The best writers **revise**—and not because they enjoy it, either. Make yourself do at least a second draft to clarify your sentences and your ideas and to reexamine the organization you've given your paper, from how you've ordered your main points in the body to where and why you've created paragraphs. Read your paper aloud to hear it in a new way. Budget enough time in the assignment process that you can let the first draft cool, which will give you a greater chance of truly revising, of seeing your ideas with a new perspective. In a sense, you're giving yourself a second opinion. Keep the ARC in mind, too, as an additional free resource to help you think through and “re-see” (revise) your work.

### **A Final Word to the Wise**

These guidelines are, as mentioned earlier, the bare minimum of what constitutes an effective college essay. If you have any other questions about writing standards, ways of improving your writing, or specific writing assignments or problems, please contact the ARC.

If you want to drop by the ARC, we are located on WJU's main campus, on top of the hill in Ignatius Hall, ground floor. We also offer help in other subjects and guidance in how to study, take tests and notes, and manage your time. If you are not able to visit the ARC, go online to <http://www.wju.edu/arc> where you will find helpful writing and study skills aids. Another suggestion: keep the lines of communication open with your professor or instructor, who will want to know (and will not hold it against you) if you want further clarification or an opportunity to express your ideas or anxieties.

Best wishes for a productive, successful career at WJU!