

# STUDENT SURVIVAL GUIDE



*English*  
Punctuation,  
Writing and  
Style!

EDITOR'S  
NOTE

*our top picks from student  
mistakes*

# Punctuation

is NOT always the same in French as in English and here are some common student mistakes.

**THE FRENCH  
QUOTATION MARK  
<< IS NEVER USED IN  
ENGLISH>>**

NO!!  
'

It is NEVER ever used anywhere except in math equations.

**YOU WILL NEED TO  
USE “THESE  
QUOTATION MARKS”  
ONLY**

“

”

If you cannot find them on your French keyboard please use the apostrophe twice ‘ + ‘ = ” which is acceptable.

# Commas

are not replacements for the word “and” in a sentence. Take for example the following:

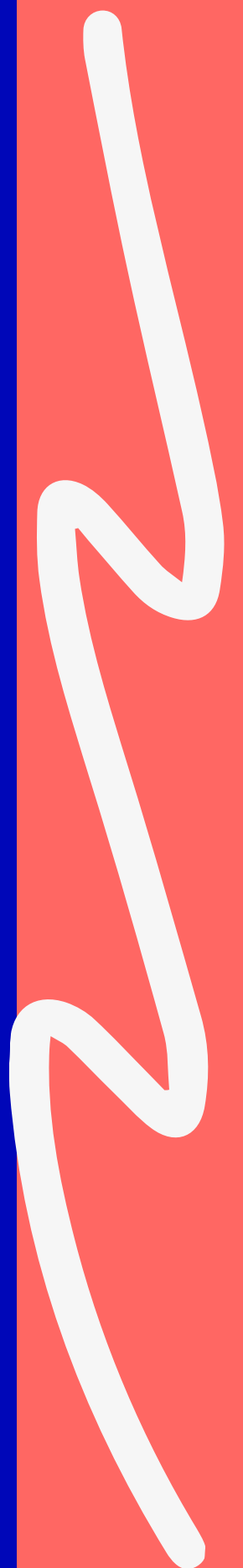
**“SHE ATE HER BREAD, CHEESE IN THE GARDEN.”**

This sentence is awkward and needs the comma deleted and replaced with the word “and” so that it reads:

**“SHE ATE HER BREAD AND CHEESE IN THE GARDEN.”**

When there are multiple items listed in a sentence, please use commas until the final item. At that point, remove the comma and add the word “and” for example:

**“THERE WERE PLENTY OF DRINKS OFFERED INCLUDING JUICE, COFFEE, TEA AND WATER.”**



# GENDER PRONOUNS

are not used generally unless you are speaking of someone specifically who is a man or a woman.

For example:

**“When a student goes home, ~~he does his work.~~”**

In this situation, we are not talking about a specific student who is a man, we are speaking of a hypothetical student, who could be male or female. So using masculine pronouns is incorrect.

## CORRECTION

**“When a student goes home, *they* do *their* work.”**

Even though “a student” is singular, you will use “their” and “they” as in this example, to be gender neutral.

# They / Their

Unlike French, English is rarely gendered and when speaking of generalities or concepts (even when it is a singular entity), we avoid gendering unless it is specifically about a man or a woman and that is why we use “they” or “their”.

## EXAMPLES

- A stressed person needs to learn to relax so they can enjoy their lives.
- If a citizen needs legal help, they can call a lawyer.
- A perfectionist obsesses about doing their best.

**When you are speaking about a particular individual who is a man or woman, use gendered language.**

## EXAMPLES

**“He is reliable and his helps is invaluable.”**

**“She needed a hero, so she became one.”**

**“Behind every great man is a woman rolling her eyes.”**

**“A man who is involved with his kids creates a lifelong impact, helping them become confident and strong.”**

# CAPITALIZATION

in English is not the same as in French. There are some rules to follow.

## Titles

of books, articles, songs, and even the titles of your essays, need to be capitalized fully, not just the first word. Exceptions include conjunctions and prepositions shorter than 5 letters (e.g., if, or, and) if they don't come at the start.

- **A Year in Paris**
- **Science in the Modern Age**
- **Cheaper by the Dozen**

All words of the title are capitalized unless they are short prepositions in the middle.

Nationalities, continents, countries, languages, days of the week, and months need to be capitalized.

## Examples:

**France** (not ~~france~~)

**English** (not ~~english~~)

**Africa** (not ~~africa~~)

**Canadian** (not ~~canadian~~)

**March** (not ~~march~~)

**May** (not ~~may~~)

**Saturday** (not ~~saturday~~)

**French** (not ~~french~~)

**America** (not ~~america~~)

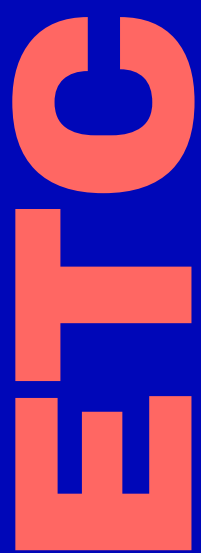
**Europe** (not ~~europe~~)

**British** (not ~~british~~)

**April** (not ~~april~~)

**Friday** (not ~~friday~~)

**Sunday** (not ~~sunday~~)



# **“ETC” IS NOT ACCEPTABLE IN YOUR WORK**

We do not write “etc...” for scholarly projects and we barely use it anywhere else except for casual communication amongst friends and occasionally in opinion pieces for effect.

## **WHY?**

It is considered rude and/or sloppy to not explain yourself fully in writing. You could easily add a few extra words versus adding “etc”. Please refrain from using “etc” on assignments at school.



# PARAGRAPHS AND WHY WE USE THEM

CONVEY  
ONE  
IDEA

**Paragraphs are used to convey one idea only.**

Each paragraph needs to deal with a single main idea or theme in order to digest the full content of your message whether that be an email, blog post or essay.

**Paragraphs make your writing easier to read.**

When readers see a large chunk of text, it turns people off.

Without paragraphs your text is hard to read.

EASY TO READ  
EASY TO READ  
**EASY TO READ**  
EASY TO READ  
EASY TO READ

**Topic sentence**

**Explanation**

There are many advantages to working abroad, but chief among them is the experience of being in a completely new environment. It is clear that people are attracted to the sense of adventure that comes from moving to a new land and being among new stimuli. In these environments, people have to learn a new language, adapt to a new culture, try new foods, and meet new types of people. All of this is tremendously exciting and provides a great opportunity for developing as a person and learning new things. People who spend a year or more living abroad usually feel that they have grown as a person during this critical experience.

**Example**

**Paragraphs help you organize and structure your thoughts.**

It easier for the writer to organize and streamline their writing with paragraphs.



# PARAGRAPHS

There are only two ways to create paragraphs in English.

## STYLE ONE: Create A Full Gap

**To create a paragraph you must leave a full gap where no lines are touching.**

As you can see here for example, there is a space. These gaps help the reader quickly and easily follow the ideas of the writer.

Gaps like this must, if you notice, have no lines touching. There is a clear space between the paragraphs, which creates visual ease.

## STYLE TWO: Create an Indentation

The second style of English paragraphs is to use an indentation. What do we mean by that?

It means you can keep your sentences stuck together but each paragraph must start slightly to the right, making a space on the left side of the page, as you can see here. This is the **ONLY** other way to make paragraphs.

Make sure you keep the indentation uniform and the same size.

# THIS FRENCH PARAGRAPH STYLE IS UNACCEPTABLE

NO!

## EXAMPLE OF WHAT NOT TO DO

Many students when writing in English seem to keep all their sentences stuck together like this.

There are gaps on the right side of the page and this appears strange to English speakers.

It is confusing and we cannot find your paragraphs. It is hard to read and follow, and additionally, it looks as if the writer does not know how to write and may not have gone to school.

We read from left to right thus we need to see the indent on the left. Option 1: indent on the left side. Option 2: create a full gap. There are no other options.

**What am I looking at here? Where are the paragraphs? What is this!**



# THE PEEL METHOD

The key to great writing is structure!

Whether it be an essay, an email or a report, the clarity and structure of your paragraphs matter.

## PEEL STANDS FOR:

- **POINT**
- **EXPLANATION**
- **EVIDENCE**
- **LINK**

The PEEL method helps structure your paragraphs, which in turn structures your entire written work and can be used for essays, reports, blogs and even emails.

You may not be able to change your English level overnight but you can gain points for structure which is usually 7 to 8 points out of 20.

CONTENT /8	
7-8	Richly augmented and clearly organized
5-6	Organized and effective, sufficient number of ideas and argument to respond to activity
3-4	Some arguments, but rudimentary and lacking articulation
1-2	Insufficient content, does not respond to the activity
LANGUAGE /12	
11-12	No grammar or vocabulary errors, precise and idiomatic
9-10	Overall precision of vocabulary, grammar and syntax, although some passages could be improved
7-8	No or few errors impeding comprehension, general effect obstructed at times by expression
5-6	Syntax and use of language makes for uncomfortable reading but ideas are conveyed nonetheless
3-4	Frequent grammatical errors and lacking vocabulary
1-2	Does not have the linguistic tools to convey a message

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## POINT

What is a point?

A point is what opens and starts your paragraph. It is the theme and main idea of your paragraph.

After reading your point, the reader should have a good idea of what the paragraph is going to be about.

Your point should grab the attention of the reader and compel them to read on.

Students are sometimes timid to make bold claims but you can and you should because the rest of the paragraph will support it.

- Students' lives are negatively effected because of the arbitrary nature of grades.
- Chat GPT is a useful tool to formulate written work.
- Social media is a waste of time and energy.
- Democracy can be a usurped by extremists.

# THE PEEL METHOD

The key to great writing is structure!

## PEEL STANDS FOR:

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## EVIDENCE

What is considered evidence?

Anything that can help support your point as long as it is true!

This can be examples, statements from experts, statistics, studies, research, opinions, dates and places if that helps.

## Examples of Evidence

- Seventy percent of the students said that they were stressed.
- Professors at Sorbonne University have noted that close to every student has used ChatGPT.
- Experts say that if one does not get a good night's sleep, it negatively effects the brain.
- French teachers complain that French students' grammar level is worsening every year.



# THE PEEL METHOD

The key to great writing is structure!

## PEEL STANDS FOR:

- **POINT**
- **EXPLANATION**
- **EVIDENCE**
- **LINK**

## EXPLAIN

After your BIG POWERFUL point, you will need to explain your evidence and your position.

Not everyone sees things as you do and that is where you need to explain the context and convince the reader.

You might not need more than two sentences explaining things, but it is important to make things clear.

## Examples of Explanation

- Students stress because they receive large amounts of work and want perfect grades.
- Although Apple products are expensive, people enjoy the ease and style.
- Social media is a bit of a contradiction because it attracts people who feel isolated and want a connection. However, they end up feeling even more isolated.



# EXAMPLE OF PEEL

Let's start with an outline for your paragraph based on an essay topic.

Essay Topic: Should students have to wear a school uniform?

## **Point:**

- School uniforms help create a sense of unity amongst students.

## **Evidence:**

- Sixty percent of students say they would like a school uniform.
- President Jones stated that, "I would definitely support a school uniform to unify students."
- Research supports uniform use as it allows students to focus on work.

## **Explain:**

- Uniforms limit competition amongst students based on appearances.
- When students all look the same, they feel a common sense of meaning and purpose.
- Who has richer parents or more fashion sense, should not have any place at school.

## **Link:**

- Uniforms clearly can unite students thus they should be considered.

# PEEL PARAGRAPH

Here is an example of a paragraph structured with PEEL.

The key to a good essay is planning and preperation. If you spend the majority of your time on your planning, when you come to writing your essay it is only a matter of turning your thoughts into full, coherent and well-written sentences. One teacher has noted that, “Planning is the most essential part of the writing process as it in this stage that one fully organizes one’s thoughts and ideas”. Too many students skip the planning stage, thinking that it is a waste of time, and their resultant work lacks structure and depth. Consequently, if you wish to write an essay which will dazzle your teacher, take time to plan in detail.

## BREAKING IT DOWN

Point

Explanation

Evidence

Link

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# WHEN WRITING IN ENGLISH YOU MUST BE CONCISE AND CLEAR OF YOUR MOTIVATION



## What is your motivation?

When you write an essay, a report, or even an email, you must in English culture be clear as to what and why you are writing and that must be stated immediately NOT at the end of your written work.

## Essays Need a Thesis

What is a Thesis?

A thesis is a position that you take at the start of your essay before you make your argumentation. A thesis is not a question, it is not a restatement of the subject, it is not where you say both are great and none are great. No. Ask yourself if you have taken a side or position, and if so, you have a thesis and it comes immediately in your work in the first paragraph, it is not saved as a surprise at the end.

# WHEN WRITING IN ENGLISH YOU MUST BE CONCISE AND CLEAR OF YOUR MOTIVATION PART 2

## **Thesis Example**

**Thesis:** Healthcare needs to be free and accessible for all.

Did this person take a position? YES!

Can they argue this position? YES!

**Example of a non-thesis:** Why do we need healthcare?

**Example of a non-thesis:** What is healthcare? It is a service to sustain health.

## **You Cannot Be on Both Sides of the Fence**

In English culture, there is certainly complexity in situations, however you will have only one page to write an essay, thus people must take a position in order to argue that well and go in depth.

It is rarely true that two things can be equally fabulous at the same time especially when we are speaking of science, law, events and interactions.

# WHEN WRITING IN ENGLISH YOU MUST BE CONCISE AND CLEAR OF YOUR MOTIVATION PART 3



## Email Objectives

We do not call your email correspondence objective a thesis but you certainly will need an objective when you write and it must be stated immediately as in an essay. For example:

“Hello Ms. Smith,

I hope you are well. I am writing today in order to ask if you have any available employment opportunities.”

## Why be direct?

In English culture, time is like money and people don't like to spend it! So they need to know what you want to say quickly. If not, they might not take time to read until the end when you finally get to the point.

It is not considered impolite to be direct. However, do remember that you are already being evaluated. That is why correct paragraph formation, organization, and language count! They reflect your personality and education.



# AN ESSAY OUTLINE

Essay Topic: Is social media positive?

Example of Strong Thesis Statements:

- 1) Social media is a positive invention.
- 2) Social media is not good for us.

Here you need to take a position. You cannot say it is great and it is also not. Save that for your long length book. This is a short written work so please take a position so that you can actually make an argument.

## **Outline of Points Against Social Media**

**Point One:** Social media is addictive.

**Point Two:** Social media is bad for mental health as it causes depression in many people.

**Point Three:** Social media is a way to become more extreme in one's views with rampant misinformation.

## **Outline of Points in Support of Social Media**

**Point One:** Social media connects us to family and friends.

**Point Two:** Social media helps our businesses grow.

**Point Three:** Social media is a great place to network.



# ESSAY EXAMPLE

## Essay Topic: Write about whether university should be free or at a cost?

REMEMBER: Your teacher cannot grade your opinion but they can grade your organization.

### “Universities Should Be Free”

As a student in France, my university costs next to nothing unlike schools in the UK and the USA. I believe that university should be accessible for all as a basic human right afforded to everyone.

**Thesis**

Education should be afforded to all as a form of equality. **Point 1**

Universities should not be offered only to the rich as this is unfair. If having access to higher education is only given to those who can pay for it, this will create a class divide of the haves and the have nots. Already in the USA and the UK, there is a long tradition of presidents and prime ministers who come from certain prestigious schools. This is a form of exclusion and discrimination that should not be allowed to happen in a healthy society.

**Point 2**

Education benefits society and the economy. In order to have a healthy society, people should test out what they are great at. There may be another Marie Curie from a disadvantaged family that could save lives and change the world but we will never know if she isn't given the chance. Making university free gives that opportunity to everyone.

**Point 3**

Lastly, free university creates a stronger workforce that is empowered. Employees would be armed with knowledge, critical thinking and better communication skills. These employees would be less susceptible to being exploited or intimidated. They would have the courage to stand up for themselves as every health society needs.

For these reasons, I believe that education should be democratized and given to all as a human right and not as a benefit to the wealthy.



# TRANSITION WORDS

**To sound fluid in your writing you need transition words and phrases aside from “indeed”.**

**Particularly  
Most notably  
Above all  
Predominantly  
Chiefly  
Essentially  
Specifically  
Unless**

**But  
However  
Although  
Except  
Excluding  
Furthermore  
Whereas  
Alternately**

**Unlike  
In the same way  
Therefore  
First of all  
To begin with  
Also  
In addition**

**Moreover  
Notably  
Undoubtedly  
In summary  
To conclude  
As a result  
Therefore**

**Consequently  
Since  
Accordingly  
Hence  
Finally  
Subsequently**

**Most of all  
Especially  
Nonetheless  
One reason  
Conversely  
Thus**

# Numbers

Chunk into groups

Two hundred  
ninety-two

Three hundred  
fifty-four

Six hundred  
thirty-two

292,354,632



million



thousand

*Two hundred ninety-two million, three  
hundred fifty-four thousand, six hundred  
thirty-two*

In English, a comma is used to help make numbers easier to read and is added to each 3 digits.

**2,000**

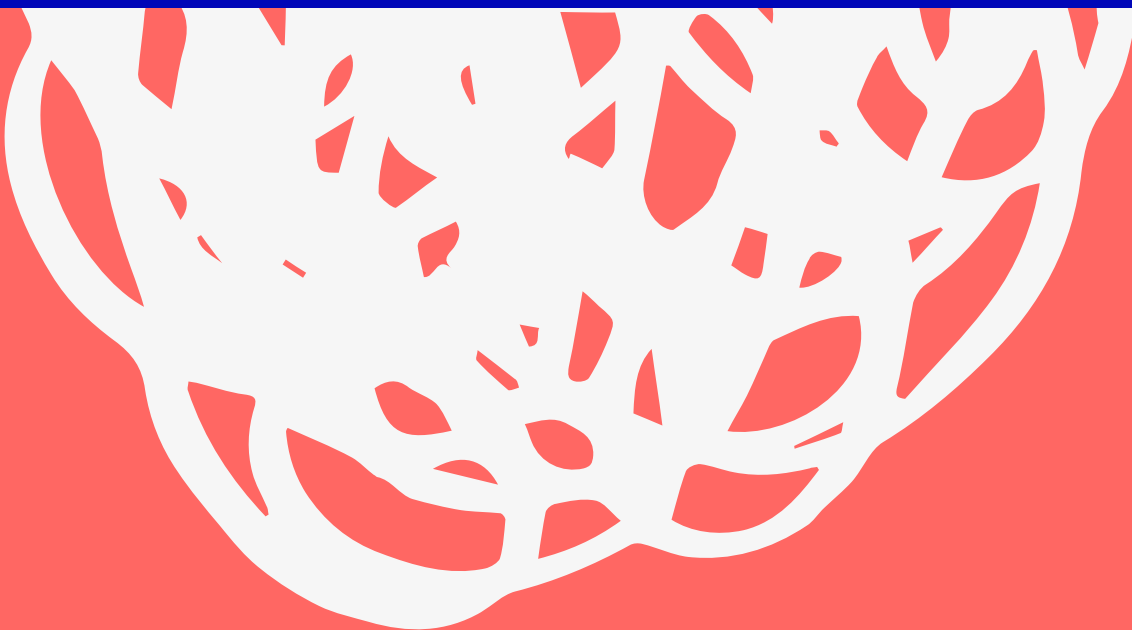
Two thousand.

**2,000,000**

Two million.

**275,780**

Two hundred and seventy five thousand,  
seven hundred and eighty.



# NUMBERS



## **A period is used to indicate cents or fractions**

\$1,267. 50 indicates one thousand, two hundred, sixty seven dollars and fifty cents.

**If a number starts out your sentence, please spell it out. If it lands after, you can use a digit.**

“Two hundred men worked at the station along with 15 women.”

## **Millions versus million**

When you are speaking about non-specific numbers, you can use the term “millions” or “thousands” or “hundreds”.

For example: “Jeff Bezos has **millions** of dollars in his account.”


**If you know the exact number then remove the “s” from millions, thousands and hundreds.**

Example: “Jess Beto has 3 **million** dollars.”



# WHO - WHICH - THAT

**Who** refers to people only. **Which** refers to groups or objects. **That** can refer to both people and things. For example:



- She is the one who drove me home yesterday.
- Anya is the one that rescued the bird.
- I don't like bread that has raisins in it.
- They were the group which needed to stay behind.
- She belongs to a great organization that rescues dogs.
- I do not trust products which claim to be "all natural".
- This cereal--which has sugar in it--is not good for you.
- That which doesn't kill you, makes you stronger.
- This group was the one that won at the Olympics.

## Common mistakes include:

1. "She was the one ~~wich~~ came to me."

- **This is a common misspelling students make and the wrong word choice.**

**Correction:** "She was the one **who** came to me."

2. "The team ~~who~~ won was Italy Rangers."

- **The word "who" is reserved for people only.**

**Correction:** "The team **that** won was Italy Rangers."

# “OR” VS. “AND”



Students sometimes confuse how to use “or” and “and” in sentences.

**THE WORD “AND” IS USED TO JOIN TWO CONCEPTS. THE WORD “OR” INDICATES EXCLUSIVITY, ALTERNATIVES OR EXCLUSION AND IS OFTEN USED AFTER THE NEGATIVE FORM OF A VERB OR QUESTION.**

“She likes coffee ~~or~~ bread.”

- Correction: **“She likes coffee and bread.”** (She likes both.)

“They don’t have beds ~~and~~ even clean water.”

- Correction: **“They don’t have beds or even clean water.”** (Used after a negative form as they do not have either.)

“There were plenty of problems that both he ~~or~~ she had to work out.”

- Correction: **There were plenty of problems that both he and she had to work out.** (They equally have problems to resolve.)

“We conducted an experiment on radioactive compounds ~~or~~ isotopes.”

- Correction: **“We conducted an experiment on radioactive compounds and isotopes.”** (They conducted experiments on both.)

“She had to choose either singing ~~and~~ dancing but not both.”

- Correction: **“She had to choose either singing or dancing.”** (One but not both.)

“Would you like fish ~~and~~ meat?”

- Correction: **“Would you like fish or meat?”**