**English Writing Guidelines for Assignments**

Homework is an important part of our educational development, especially in regard to writing and expressing our thoughts to others. Being able to put your words to paper can be freeing in itself. For this reason many people maintain blogs, diaries, or personal journals of their own.

It is the responsibility of teachers, students and parents to work together in order to best realize the potential that this freedom can offer. Following simple steps can help to make this process easier, and remove the sense of how overwhelming homework is seen by many in this modern age.

**Organize Your Ideas**

An outline or diagram is often used to help put ideas about a topic on paper. These can take the form of a pattern like a web. There are many other methods of organizing your ideas, which I would be more than happy to explain in the future.

**Diagram**

1. Begin your diagram with a circle or whatever shape you may prefer in the middle of the page you are working on.

Women in professional sports

Women

Or

1. Write your topic into this space. Try to narrow down your topic to help focus your research.
2. From this central point, draw at least three lines from the topic. Leave these lines far enough apart to put facts and information about your topic in the space you use.
3. Like before, you should make shapes or lines that allow you to organize your information into a workable space.

Main Idea 3

Topic

Main Idea 1

Main Idea 2

1. In each of these shapes or lines you chose, you write the main ideas of the topic you are working on. These main ideas can be intended to do one of several things. (Persuade or Inform are most common).
   1. If you are trying to persuade the reader, the main ideas are your best arguments, and will make up the focus of your fact research.
   2. If you are trying to inform, the same is true, but you will be giving information in a less biased fashion. You aren’t trying to get someone to agree with you, merely helping them learn about something.
   3. A third possible option is explanation. Your main ideas would be the different steps of a process. (How to make an electro-magnet)
2. From each of your main ideas, you will further draw three or four more lines. Again make sure to leave room for the information.
3. In each of these new branches of the diagram web, you will write facts or information that you have found on your main ideas. These facts will support your topic.

Once you are done with this, you have a basic structure for your essay and can make great progress.

**Compose a Thesis Statement**

A thesis statement tells the reader what your essay or paper is about, and what point you, the author, will be making. Look at your outline diagram and decide what point you wish to make. What do the main ideas and supporting information you listed say about your topic.

**There are two parts to a thesis statement.**

* The main topic itself. **Women in professional sports**
* The second part states the point of the essay itself. **deserve the same recognition as male athletes.**

Once you have developed a thesis statement that fits your intent with your writing, you can continue fleshing out the essay’s main points.

**Write the Body Paragraphs**

In the body of the essay, all the preparation up to this point comes to fruition. The topic you have chosen must now be explained, described, or argued.

Each main idea that you wrote down in your diagram or outline will become one of the body paragraphs. If you had three or four main ideas, you will have three or four body paragraphs.

**Each body paragraph will have the same basic structure.**

1. Start by writing down one of your main ideas, in sentence form.  
   If your main idea is "reduces freeway congestion," you might say this:  
   Public transportation reduces freeway congestion.
2. Next, write down each of your supporting points for that main idea, but leave four or five lines in between each point.
3. In the space under each point, write down some elaboration for that point.  
   *Elaboration* can be further description or explanation or discussion.

* Supporting Point
* Commuters appreciate the cost savings of taking public transportation rather than driving.
* Elaboration
* Less driving time means less maintenance expense, such as oil changes.
* Of course, less driving time means savings on gasoline as well.
* In many cases, these savings amount to more than the cost of riding public transportation.

1. If you wish, include a summary sentence for each paragraph.  
   This is not generally needed, however, and such sentences have a tendency to sound stilted, so be cautious about using them.

Once you have fleshed out each of your body paragraphs, one for each main point, you are ready to continue.

**Introduction**

The introduction should be designed to attract the reader's attention and give her an idea of the essay's focus.

1. Begin with an attention grabber.

The attention grabber you use is up to you, but here are some ideas:

* + **Startling information**  
    This information must be true and verifiable, and it doesn't need to be totally new to your readers. It could simply be a pertinent fact that explicitly illustrates the point you wish to make.  
    If you use a piece of startling information, follow it with a sentence or two of elaboration.
  + **Anecdote**  
    An *anecdote* is a story that illustrates a point.  
    Be sure your anecdote is short, to the point, and relevant to your topic. This can be a very effective opener for your essay, but use it carefully.
  + **Dialogue**  
    An appropriate dialogue does not have to identify the speakers, but the reader must understand the point you are trying to convey. Use only two or three exchanges between speakers to make your point.  
    Follow dialogue with a sentence or two of elaboration.
  + Summary Information  
    A few sentences explaining your topic in general terms can lead the reader gently to your thesis. Each sentence should become gradually more specific, until you reach your thesis.

1. If the attention grabber was only a sentence or two, add one or two more sentences that will lead the reader from your opening to your thesis statement.
2. Finish the paragraph with your thesis statement.

**Conclusion**

The conclusion brings closure to the reader, summing up your points or providing a final perspective on your topic.

All the conclusion needs is three or four strong sentences which do not need to follow any set formula. Simply review the main points (being careful not to restate them exactly) or briefly describe your feelings about the topic. Even an anecdote can end your essay in a useful way.

You have now completed all of the paragraphs of your essay. Before you can consider this a finished product, however, you must give some thought to the formatting of your paper.

**Proofread and Revise your work**

**Check the order of your paragraphs.**

Look at your paragraphs. Which one is the strongest? You might want to start with the strongest paragraph, end with the second strongest, and put the weakest in the middle. Whatever order you decide on, be sure it makes sense. If your paper is describing a process, you will probably need to stick to the order in which the steps must be completed.

**Check the instructions for the assignment.**

When you prepare a final draft, you must be sure to follow all of the instructions you have been given.

* Are your margins correct?
* Have you titled it as directed?
* What other information (name, date, etc.) must you include?
* Did you double-space your lines?

**Check your writing.**

Nothing can substitute for revision of your work. By reviewing what you have done, you can improve weak points that otherwise would be missed. Read and reread your paper.

* Does it make logical sense?  
  Leave it for a few hours and then read it again. Does it still make logical sense?
* Do the sentences flow smoothly from one another?  
  If not, try to add some words and phrases to help connect them. Transition words, such as "therefore" or "however," sometimes help. Also, you might refer in one sentence to a thought in the previous sentence. This is especially useful when you move from one paragraph to another.
* Have you run a spell checker or a grammar checker?  
  These aids cannot catch every error, but they might catch errors that you have missed.

**Format**:

* Paper lengths will vary each week, be sure to double check the assignment requirements.
* Papers should be type written with 1 inch margins on each side.
* Text should be double spaced and 12 point font.
* Font Style: Times New Roman

If a paper is unable to be typed, the page count of the assignment is doubled due to the difference in hand writing and type-space.

**Cover Page/Bibliography**: These do not count toward the total number of pages, but are required in all multi-page assignments.

**Plagiarism:** Country Gardens Charter School has very strict guidelines concerning plagiarism. Using the work of another person and passing it off as your own without giving them credit will not be tolerated. *Besides, why take credit for the work of another, when you can make your own just as good if not better.*