

Style Guide for Common Errors in Writing

This style guide is for any student, teacher, or faculty member at Illini West High School. It shows proper capitalizations, comma usage, words, and phrases that are used incorrectly by most high schoolers when writing papers. This guide is to make writing for students, and grading for teachers, less difficult.

apostrophes

use when showing the ownership or possession of something (ex: Joe's dog. The bank's money.)

use to show the omission of letters, i.e. contractions (ex: don't, can't, won't, etc.)

use when forming plurals of letters, numbers, or symbols (ex: She received two A's in math class. There are three two's in my phone number.)

capitalizations

capitalize all proper nouns-Proper nouns being a name used for an individual person, place, or organization (ex: Joe, Canada, Chicago Bulls.)

capitalize the first letter of a sentence.

commas

commas are to be used when separating independent clauses-an independent clause being a clause that can stand alone as a sentence-when they are joined by any of the following words: and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet (ex: We were going to leave, but my brother refused. She got first place in her heat, so her mom got her ice cream.)

commas are also to be used after introductory clauses-introductory clauses being dependent clauses that provide background information for the main part of the sentence (ex: While I was outside, it started to rain.)

commas are also to be used after introductory phrases-introductory phrases being like a clause, but it doesn't have its own subject and verb. (ex: To win the race, you better run as fast as possible.)

going to not gonna

I

capitalize the letter "I" when it stands alone as its own word (ex: I won the game. Then I took the money and ran.)

capitalize when it's part of the contraction "I'm" (ex: I'm going to leave soon. She's wrong and I'm right.)

capitalize when it is the first letter of a sentence. (ex: If you are going please get me something. Introductory paragraphs are necessary.)

numbers

spell out any number less than ten (unless there is a symbol in front of or behind the number) use numbers for any number over ten. (ex: two, four, six, 12, 14, 16, etc.)

punctuation

periods-use at the end of a complete sentence if the sentence is a statement or a command (ex: It is cold outside. Please take out the trash.)

question marks-use at the end of a complete sentence if the sentence is a question. Most sentences that are questions begin with any of the following words: who, what, where, when, how, why, are, do (ex: Are you going to the game tomorrow? Who are you sitting with?)

exclamation points-use at the end of a complete sentence if the sentence is showing excitement or exclaiming something (ex: I just won a new bike! You look amazing!)

semicolon

use to connect two independent clauses not joined by a conjunction. (ex: "When I finish here, I'll be glad to help you; that is a promise I can keep.")

it's/its

"it's" is a contraction of the words "it is" (ex: It's warm out here. It's over there. It's his toy.)

"its" is the possessive form of it and is to be used when someone or something has or owns something (ex: The house really has its charm. Its thorns are so sharp.)

since/sense

since is to be used when referring to a point in time (ex: I haven't been there since we were younger.)

since is also to be used in place of the word "because" (ex: Since I was there yesterday, I don't want to go today.)

sense is to be used when describing one of the five senses: touch, taste, smell, see, hear (ex: My sense of smell is gone.)

sense is also to be used when there is a certain “feeling” that something is the case (ex: I sense that you are near me. She had the sense that something was not quite right.)

sense is also to be used when referring to someone’s intelligence (ex: Please use your common sense.)

then/than

then is to be used when relating something to time (ex: I left the game, then went home. She was here but then she got a phone call.)

than is to be used when comparing things (ex: smaller than, further than, faster than, etc.)

there/their/they’re

there is to be used when referring to a place (ex: We will meet you there. I went there the other day. Over there!)

their is to be used when referring to a person, or group of people, or their belongings (ex: They said their bag was under the stairs. What is their problem?)

they’re is to be used as a contraction for “they are” (ex: They’re getting married. They’re having so much fun.)

to/too/two

to is to be used when referring to the words such as “toward” and “until” (ex: We are going to the store now. Are you going to wait until later to show her?)

too is to be used when referring to the words such as “excessively” and “also” (ex: We are coming with you too. I too, have the same theory as you.)

two is to be used only when referring to a number (ex: There are two dogs outside. She will be two years old next month.)