

Blended Structure and Style in Composition

attempt two skills from level two. Sams is being pushed in stages to level two. In the comments on the fourth essay, the marker does not believe that the student is ready for the full jump to level three. Thus in note 4 the marker requests Sams to attempt three techniques from level three in the next essay. Consequently flexibility consists not only in moving from one level to the next, but also in half steps as prescribed for individuals by the marker.

The levels constitute the heart of the programme. Level-one type essays embody the same format as those taught to grades four to eight. Level one includes a three-theme, five-paragraph format with one paragraph as introduction, three as a body and one as conclusion. An abbreviated outline of a university level-one essay was provided in unit eight directly after a grade-four essay on "Champlain." Both were expected to follow the style of:

1. An introductory paragraph which sets time and place and introduces the three themes.
2. Clinchers closely related to topic sentences.
3. Paragraph balance in size.
4. One very short sentence per paragraph.
5. A conclusion which re-states the three themes, and argues which is most important and why.
6. A final clincher which reflects the title.

In addition the university basic essay must contain at least one inset and one integrated quotation, footnote a minimum of three sources using *ibid.*, and *op. cit.* and an explanatory footnote. Much of this was suggested in unit eight as being appropriate to the senior high school. Level one is what this writer would expect students entering university should do well from their high school experience in written communication. It is the minimum. Once the lectures relevant to the level-one essay have been concluded in September and they have been thoroughly discussed in tutorials, the "Writing Style: Level-One Check Sheet" is distributed to students. The check sheet is illustrated. It contains thirty-six items relative to level one. It is called a check sheet because students are requested to check alongside each item which they have followed. They attach the check sheet to every essay submitted. When the check sheet is first distributed, it provides an opportunity to re-teach the rules and style of level one. It becomes the third repetition. When students check it before handing in each of the six essays during the year, it provides six more repetitions. Looking again at J.S. Sams' "Comment Page" the reader will notice that most criticisms carry with them a check sheet number. In early January the lecturer reviews the check sheet again. Altogether it provides an opportunity for about twenty repetitions. This is not enough, if humans require fifty-five for life-time retention. The university check sheet performs the function of the reminder series in the school system. It is not as effective. It does not achieve the desired number of repetitions as quickly and painlessly as the reminder series.

The "Writing Style: Level-Two Check Sheet" is introduced in a similar manner. It is originally handed to individual students as they achieve level two. In January it is distributed to all. A model is demonstrated. At the end of the level-two check sheet are a number of items relative to level three. By January the class is spread over all levels. Students submit both check sheets with all subsequent essays. Students on level three

Writing Style - Level 1 Check Sheet

Kindly check which rules you have followed and attach to every essay you write in the class.

GENERAL

1. The essay is approximately 6 pages double spaced.
2. The cover page has the question exactly as given, student's name, course number, tutorial number, tutorial master's name and date submitted.
3. The first page of the essay is headed by the title underlined and student's name. It is well centered. This is the presentation.
4. The essay has five paragraphs of approximately equal length.

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INTRODUCTION - one paragraph

5. It sets the time and place (historical background).
6. It outlines the three themes to be discussed.

THE BODY - three paragraphs

7. Each paragraph has a minimum of three sentences.
8. Each has a topic sentence.
9. Each has a clincher which repeats key phrases of the topic.

CONCLUSION - one paragraph

11. The reader is reminded of the three themes.
12. State which theme is most important giving reasons.
13. I have not used the personal form, I or we. The final sentence reflects the title of the essay.

FOOTNOTES - on a separate page after the conclusion.

14. They follow arts and humanities style in absolute detail and consistency.
15. There are at least six and not more than twelve.
16. Ibid. and op. cit. have been used, the first uppercase, the second not.
17. A minimum of three different sources have been used.
18. I have footnoted an encyclopedia, and have one explanatory footnote. Do not use ibid. more than three times consecutively.
19. I have cited one journal article (the expanded essay).
20. Paraphrased material has been footnoted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY - on a separate page after the footnotes

21. It is divided into Books and Journal articles.
22. Items are listed alphabetically by author's last name.
23. There are six to twelve items on level one, twelve to twenty, level two. Do not number bibliography.

QUOTATIONS

24. There is at least one integrated quotation less than three lines in length. It is enclosed in quotation marks.
25. There is one inset quotation, more than three lines in length. It is single spaced with no quotation marks.
26. If the inset quotation comes at the end of a paragraph, the clincher which proceeds it relates two ways a) to the topic sentence and b) to the quotation.
27. If the inset quotation is in the middle of the paragraph, it has at least two sentences before it and three after.
28. Quotations do not average more than two per page.

ENGLISH USAGE

29. Never repeat a major word in a sentence. Use a thesaurus.
30. 100 and above in number, ninety-nine and below in written form.
31. Beware over-use of upper case; Emperor Atahualpa but emperor, Aztec Empire but empire, Ghanaian Government but government, Chinese Communist Party but party.
32. Three spelling mistakes means a re-write. Use a dictionary.
33. Avoid semi-colon and colon.
34. Pronoun agrees with preceding noun. Common errors: Portugal invaded Mozambique. They were looking for slaves (Portugal - she, Portuguese, they). The Songhai government is followed by "it".
35. In history the past tense is general. "was", "were", or the "ed" form. (The Spanish were spoiling for war. Cortez killed Montezuma.) For the past of the past use "had". (The Spanish had landed earlier in Mexico). For the future of the past use "might" or "would". (The Spanish might-or would-yet realize their dreams).
36. Avoid racist terminology: "savage, native, primitive, tribe, negro".

Where possible essays should be typed because 1) you will recognize mistakes in typescript which you will miss in a manuscript and 2) tests have shown markers tend to grade typescripts higher than manuscripts.

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occasionally have to be referred back to the rules of level one. As shown above, students writing basic essays on level one may be requested to attempt techniques associated with the higher levels. The reminder series is superior. When they receive the second check sheet, students are handed about forty new rules all at once. It is far better to introduce new rules one or two at a time. In most respects the reminder series is superior to the check sheet. The latter was the writer's attempt to adapt the reminder series to the university setting. It has one advantage in that it can be carried home where the undergraduate writes most essays.

Writing Style - Level II Check Sheet

GENERAL

37. I own an a) Oxford Dictionary b) Roget's Thesaurus and c) Margot Northey's Making Sense, O.U.P. Toronto, 1983.
38. This essay was a) typed by the writer b) prepared on a word processor by the writer or c) other.
39. The topic of the essay was discussed with a friend.
40. How many drafts were there of this essay?
41. The essay employs a) the five theme format b) the super-essay format of six themes divided into two super-themes.

INTRODUCTION

42. There are no quotations in the introduction. I do not reveal my conclusions. There are no footnotes.
43. I have avoided telling the reader my plan outline as in "This essay begins by ..." "These matters will be discussed..." "The thrust of this essay is to prove..." "This essay does not intend..." You have a plan but do not write about it.
44. I have defined my terms and limited the question to manageable boundaries.
45. I have examined the special implications of the question.
46. I have raised the question at issue.

TOPIC AND CLINCHER SENTENCES

47. Do not include too much in the topic as in "By 1820, Shaka had implemented several shrewd changes in the old order, and as a result reaped military triumphs as well as an extension of empire."
48. Do not include a detail as in "Shaka gained recognition quickly because of his hunting exploits, and it is believed that he had killed a tiger single-handedly".
49. Do not use a detail as a topic as in "The first diamond was found in 1867 at Hopetown".
50. Before writing the clincher re-read the topic sentence.
51. Develop phrases and words to introduce clinchers such as "In this way", "As a result", "Thus", "Consequently", "Clearly". Do not over-work any one. Vary them.

SENTENCE VARIETY

52. Students over-use "that" as in "The people that sat in the front row believed that the war that they had experienced had been the most important in their history".
53. In each paragraph ensure there is a minimum of one complex sentence.
54. Use "who" (the people who), "which" (the war which) and "that" (believed or expected that).
55. Verbs again! "When Cortez landed (the past) on the Mexican coast he had been sent (past of the past) to discover wealth for the governor of Cuba who had hardly imagined (past of the past) that in less than two years Cortez would have conquered (future of the past) the Aztec Empire".
56. Avoid the construction "The Boers, out on the fringes of the Cape Colony, had also begun...."

QUOTATIONS

57. They are used to express another writer's opinion or some particularly apt or colourful phrase such as Robinson & Gallagher's reference to the partition of Africa as a "footnote to the history of India".
58. The quotations are properly introduced. For example: Hancock referred to the Declaration of 1923 on Kenya as "the rediscovery of the African majority".
59. Before an inset quotation place a colon after the last word of your text.

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60. Do not over-quote. No more than one inset quotation per page is a good rule.

FOOTNOTES

61. They follow social science style, eg. (Dietrich, 1980,64).
62. The bibliography is called "References". Items are listed alphabetically by surname and not divided into books and journal articles. There are twelve to twenty items.
63. An asterisk has been employed for additional information.
64. Journal, book and newspaper titles have been underlined in the text and among references. Chapter titles and articles are enclosed in parenthesis.
65. The footnotes cite five to seven different sources.

CONCLUSION

66. Re-read the introduction before writing the conclusion.
67. Never introduce new evidence. Thus footnotes and quotations should not form a part of the conclusion.
68. In "causes" or "significance" questions one or two may be primary out of which others arise.
69. In an essay divided by time periods, one decade may be more historically significant than others.
70. In a question which asks about the "nature" of a movement there should be various theories. Conclude which is superior and why. Why are other theories defective? Take a position. Argue it.

TABOOS

71. Never use "so on", "etc.", "got", "started", "came", "big", "good", "bad", "a lot of", "terrific", "fantastic", "nice", or "had" as the major verb.
72. Never use contractions or "due to". Never use "plus" except in mathematics.
73. Avoid bureaucratic jargon such as "interface", "escalate", "de-escalate", "parameters", "ongoing", "inputs", "outputs", "bottom line". Avoid such nonsense as "there has been an ongoing de-escalation of the frequency of printed media outputs".
74. Never split infinitives as in "to suddenly discontinue". Never end a sentence with a preposition.
75. Employ the hyphen and understand its use as in "ambitious God-fearing people", "stable long-term basis".
76. Underline foreign phrases, e.g., status quo.

SPELLING AND WORD MIS-USE

77. Led (not "lead" as in "lead pencil"), acquire, Spaniards, Britain.
78. Muslim not Moslem; Islam not Muhammadanism.
79. "To affect" is to influence, "to effect" is to implement. Defence policy is affected by the views of the provinces but only the federal government can effect it.
80. Immigration (double "m's") means "in-migration". Emigration (single "m") means "exit-migration".
81. Always use "different from" and "protected against".
82. Countries are "she" not "it".

LEVEL 111 ESSAYS: Check which item is applicable.

83. This essay attempts:
 - a) a dramatic opening paragraph.
 - b) a series of short staccato sentences for emphasis.
 - c) structural repetition for emphasis.
 - d) key word repetition for emphasis.
 - e) sub-headings.
84. The essay contains at least one paragraph with a dramatic opening followed by the topic sentence. The clincher is followed by a dramatic closing. For example "Cavalry ensured the golden age" (topic sentence follows). At the end of the paragraph the clincher is followed by, "The golden years were over."
85. World Bank Style footnotes have been used.
86. A minimum of seven sources have been cited in the footnotes.
87. There are transitional phrases between the theme paragraphs within the super-theme.
88. The themes are grouped evenly or at least not outside the ratio of 2:4, 3:5.