

Managing Your IEW Class

I. Condition

Key Principle: Use the summer to do as much preparation ahead of time as possible.

A. Get started early.

B. Write a lesson plan overview for the semester/year.

C. Decide how to package the materials.

D. Write handouts for each new skill.

E. Include one or more examples of each type of writing.

F. Include a "Writer's Toolbox" section.

G. Include an "Exercise" section.

H. Include a "Homework Sources" section.

I. Include assignment sheets and composition checklists for each assignment, with point values.

II. Communicate

Key Principle: The more specific you are about expectations, the better results you will attain.

A. Financial

Cost

Payment Schedule

B. Class Schedule (Dates, Time)

C. Syllabus

D. Parent/Student Responsibilities (See Examples 1 and 2)

Editor

Homework

Behavior

Dress code

E. The Parents' Information Meeting

Inspire

Explain

Teach

III. Coach

Key Principle:

COACH your students for mastery. "If they aren't making mistakes, you aren't coaching." (USA Volleyball)

A. First Class

BE ON TIME to greet your students!

Have nametags ready!

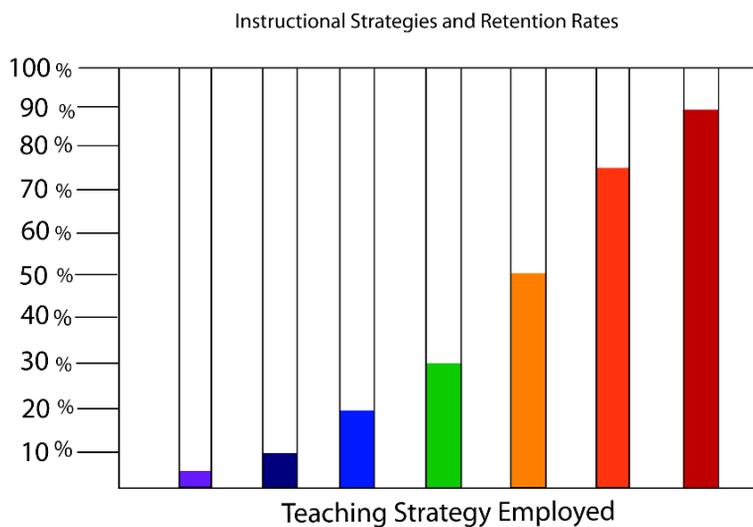
Smile!

Make connections

Be enthusiastic! Be fun!

Go over the "Rules"

Teach



(Results of studies by The National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine)

Explain Homework

B. Second Class

Go over homework in first 5-10 minutes.

Read one or two papers aloud.

Give papers to Student Assistant.

Enforce the Rules!

Review!

Proceed with the new lesson.

Go over the next homework assignment with them.

As soon as class is over, grade the papers!

C. Subsequent Classes

Repeat B. above, PLUS:
Positives

Negatives

Peer Editing

EXAMPLE 1: CLASS POLICIES

1. **PAYMENT SCHEDULE:** Since the classes are sequential, students must register for the entire school year. Class fees are \$20.00/class session; the total cost for the year is \$300.00 per student. After May 31, a \$25 late fee is added, bringing the total to \$325.00. Families may pay the whole amount up front or according to the following payment plan: **\$100 at registration (\$125 after May 31), \$100 at the Parent's Meeting held shortly before the first class, and \$100 at the first October class.** No further payments will be required for the rest of the year *unless your student requires individual tutoring (see #4).* **All fees are non-refundable.**
2. **PARENTS' INFORMATION MEETING:** I will hold a Parent's Information Meeting in August before classes start to give you important information so that your student may receive the full benefit from this class. During the meeting, among other information, you will receive the Writing Handbook and learn the outlining technique that we use for every type of writing that we do, because it is the foundation skill for good writing. You will make your 2nd class payment of \$100 at this meeting.
3. **TIME COMMITMENT AND ASSIGNMENTS:** The writing class involves a significant time commitment for both you and your student. Some homeschool parents use outside classes as a break from teaching and as an opportunity for their students to operate independently. These are admirable goals; however, *this writing course is not an Independent Study Course.* If you desire a class that does not require your involvement, my class is not the right one for your student.

Since we only meet every two weeks, you will serve as your student's Editor. Two weeks is too long a time to write without receiving feedback; only with your involvement will your student make progress. I give clear instructions for the Editor to follow. I also provide a class-specific **Writing Handbook** for each student so that you can understand what we are doing and will be able to help your student.

I expect assignments to be completed according to my directions and turned in on the specified day. The assignments take an average of 30-60 minutes each day. *For this reason I do not accept students who are simultaneously enrolled in another English class;* such students cannot keep up with writing requirements for both classes, and I do not make allowances for being "too busy with another class."

Writing assignments are broken into daily tasks on an assignment sheet. Directions are very specific. Unlike most writing programs, IEW students receive grades based on very concrete, objective criteria, which are clearly communicated on the assignment sheet and on the Composition Checklist given with each assignment. Therefore, even students who struggle with writing can receive a grade of 100% by completing all the checklist items! Papers that are not completed according to directions will be returned ungraded.

It is important that assignments be done *daily* and that your student not wait until the end of the assignment period and try to do everything at once. Without daily practice, your student will not improve in his writing skills. *Good writing takes time.*

4. **INDIVIDUAL TUTORING:** With the IEW method, students are given as much help as they need in order to master the writing skills. If I see that your student is struggling and consistently not completing items on the composition checklist, I will schedule individual tutoring time to address specific problems. The cost for individual tutoring is \$30/hour and will be paid at the end of the tutoring session. You must be present during the tutoring session so that you will know how to help your student at home.

If you know that your student usually struggles with schoolwork, you may be able to avoid the need for individual tutoring by closely monitoring his work. Take the time to review your student's papers when I return them to find out what areas need to be addressed. Assist your student if he needs help. The Writing Handbook will help you understand the concepts/skills so that you will be able to help more effectively. This is not considered "cheating!" Please read the article referenced in the e-mail entitled "The 4 Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing" for more information on the IEW philosophy of assisting students.

5. **AVOID MISSING CLASSES:** Each class builds on previous classes, so plan other activities around writing class. If you must miss due to an unavoidable conflict or illness, the homework assignments for the entire school year are included in the handbook, along with reading assignments that explain the new skills taught during class. I do not provide make-up classes, and I do not provide refunds for missed classes. I will be happy to provide individual instruction at the rate of \$30/hour.
6. **BE ON TIME:** Please bring your student on time to class and pick him up on time after class. Unless you have made prior arrangements with me because of some special circumstance, do not bring your student earlier than 10 minutes before class time.

If your student is late, not only will he disrupt the class, but he will also miss critical learning time. Often, we spend the first few minutes reviewing homework and making corrections, which will help your student to better understand the skills we are practicing.

For the safety of your student, please be on time for pick-up when class ends. Often I am occupied inside talking to a parent or answering student questions at the end of class, so I can't be outside supervising waiting students.

7. **DRESS/GROOMING:** The general guideline for dress is "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR!" Students are expected to dress and groom themselves in a way that is considerate of others in the class, and that will not cause a distraction from learning for others. Therefore, the following criteria will be observed:
- a. Appearance should be neat, clean and modest.
 - b. No underclothes showing (including but not limited to boxers, underwear, and bras)
 - c. No tank tops, halters, camisoles, see-through or other skin-baring tops
 - d. No oversized, tight or low-cut clothing (no cleavage visible)
 - e. No rude, suggestive or crude messages on clothing
 - f. No bare midriffs. When arms are raised midriff should be covered.
 - g. No short shorts/skirts or skirts with slits that expose the thigh. When sitting, shorts or skirts should lay no higher than ~ 3" above the knee.
 - h. No "gang" clothing or accessories
 - i. No extreme accessories, make-up, hair styles/colors
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Parents should take responsibility to assist their students to understand and follow these guidelines. If you are not sure whether a particular item meets the criteria, then your student should not wear it. If your student chooses to disregard the guidelines, I will speak to him/her and you about it. Continued non-compliance will result in being expelled from the class with no refund. If students are considerate of the needs and feelings of others in the class instead of trying to “make a statement” or get attention through their dress/grooming, we should not have any problems!

8. **CELL PHONES, PAGERS, IPODS and other electronic devices** are *not allowed* in the classroom, even on silent setting. If there is an emergency during class, you may call my home or cell number and someone will notify your student.
9. **CLASS SCHEDULES:** All classes meet every 2 weeks, with longer intervals at Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Masters. Please see below the specific schedule for your student's class.

EXAMPLE 2: STUDENT CONTRACT

Bring a signed contract for each student to the Parents' Information Meeting

1. **Telephone Calls:** My job is to help you become a better writer, and I like to help students who want to improve! I am available to answer your writing questions with the following restrictions:
Please do not call before 9:00AM, after 5:00PM, or on Sunday.
Call the home telephone number first; if I am not home, you may try my cell phone.
Do not call me with questions about the homework assignment on Writing Class days.
2. **Be on time (but not too early) for class.** It is disruptive for students to come in after class has begun. *Please do not come inside earlier than 10 minutes before class* unless your parent has made special arrangements with me ahead of time because of some unusual circumstance. We are a homeschool family and we are very busy on writing class days! Also, at *10 minutes before class you do not need to ring the doorbell*. Just come in and **shut the door behind you**. We have a dog (Pippin) and he will run away if the door is left open!
3. **Please use the restroom** before class begins, as it is disruptive for students to leave the classroom during class. The restroom is located next to the classroom.
4. **No food or drinks** may be brought into the classroom by students.
5. **SUPPLIES:** DO bring your own pen and notebook paper to each class. I do not provide these, and you will need them during every class. Also bring your Handbook to each class, because we will use them during class.

Write your name on your handbook as soon as you receive it! I do not have "extra" copies of the Handbook, so keep up with yours! If you lose it, I will have to make, and you will have to pay for, a replacement. Replacement Handbooks are \$40 each.

6. **ASSIGNMENTS:** I am very specific about how and when I expect assignments to be completed and turned in. Your homework assignment for each class is detailed on the pink Assignment sheet in the back of your Handbook. The assignment is broken into daily tasks that should be done on the day they are assigned, according to my directions.

One of your parents will serve as your Editor. At various points during an assignment period, you will be instructed on the assignment sheet to take your work to your Editor for review. This is a very important step in the process; **DON'T SKIP IT!** The Editor's job is to help prepare a piece for publication. All accomplished writers have Editors, so don't feel shy about having your work reviewed!

The assignment sheet will also list my requirements for an acceptable paper. A student assistant will check your homework assignment for basic items such as the correct format, the correct number of paragraphs, title, name, etc. while we are having class. If any items are marked as missing, I will check the paper and give it back to you at the end of that same class day. You will need to correct any deficiencies and bring it back within 3 days.

Assignments will be turned in using the homework folders that I will give you, with papers arranged in the specific order that I will explain at the first class. If you lose a folder, you may replace it yourself with a folder of the **same color**. *I do not accept homework that is not placed correctly in the correctly colored folder.*

7. **INDIVIDUAL TUTORING:** If I see that you are consistently not completing the homework correctly over several assignments, I will schedule you for individual tutoring. Your Editor (parent) will need to attend the session with you. The cost is \$15/half hour, and the amount of time will vary depending on your difficulties. *I suggest that the parent require the student to pay for the tutoring session, as most deficient assignments are caused by a lack of following directions and/or not completing daily items when they are assigned.*

You can avoid the need for individual tutoring by paying attention and participating in class, asking for help from me or your Editor when you need it, and completing assignments daily rather than waiting and trying to do everything at the end of the assignment period.

8. **BEHAVIOR:** The general guideline for behavior is "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR!" We are all learning how to be better writers (even me)! Students are expected to treat each other and me with respect. That means that you will listen when I am talking, and you will be attentive when other students are speaking. Of course, we will NEVER ridicule a student about questions asked or about something he/she has written.

9. **DRESS/GROOMING:** The general guideline for dress is "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR!" Students are expected to dress and groom themselves in a way that is considerate of others in the class, and that will not cause a distraction from learning for others. Therefore, the following dress code will be observed:

- a. Appearance should be neat, clean and modest.
- b. No underclothes showing (including but not limited to boxers, underwear, and bras)
- c. No tank tops, halters, camisoles, see-through or other skin-baring tops
- d. No oversized, tight or low-cut clothing
- e. No rude, suggestive or crude messages on clothing

- f. No bare midriffs. When arms are raised midriff should be covered.
- g. No short shorts/skirts or skirts with slits that expose the thigh. When sitting, shorts or skirts should be no higher than ~ 3" above the knee.
- h. No "gang" related accessories or clothing
- i. No extreme accessories, make-up, hair styles/colors

If you are not sure whether a particular item meets the criteria, then don't wear it. If you choose to disregard the guidelines, I will speak to you and your parent about it. Continued non-compliance will result in being expelled from the class with no refund. If all of us are considerate of the needs and feelings of others in the class we should not have any problems!

- 10. **CELL PHONES, PAGERS, IPODS and other electronic items** are *not allowed* in the classroom, even on silent setting. If there is an emergency during class, your parent may call my home or cell phone.
- 11. **CLASS SCHEDULES:** Class is held every other week (except for Christmas break and a 3-week period because of Thanksgiving and then again at Masters). See the individual class schedules attached for the exact days and time for your class.
- 12. **MISSED CLASSES:** I do not give make-up classes, so try not to miss class. You are responsible for all assignments even if you miss class. All homework assignments are included in the Handbook. Be sure to read the page numbers listed for the assignment. The assignments must be turned in by the assigned date even if you miss class, because otherwise I will get behind on my grading. If you know you will miss class, you might want to contact another class member to record the class for you. You will need to provide any equipment needed to do that, and show the student how to operate the equipment, as I do not have time during the class period to operate recording equipment.
- 13. **NOVEL:** We will read a novel for an assignment that we will do during Winter Semester. I will choose the book and give you the title. You may buy it or borrow it from the library.

I have read and understand the above information. My student has read it and we have discussed it.

Parent signature _____

I have read and understand the above information.

Student signature _____

EXAMPLE 3: ASSIGNMENT SHEET

LEVEL 1 ASSIGNMENT #6

- Read pp. 18-21 and 89-91.
- Make KWO for Introduction. Be sure to include information listed on p. 21.
- Write Introduction paragraph using KWO. Use the Composition Checklist to check for Structure and Style elements.
- Give to Editor for corrections.

- Rewrite Introduction making changes and corrections.
- Highlight your 3 topics** in the last sentence of Intro. If they are missing, rewrite your paragraph until you have all of them.

- Reread pp. 18-21.
- Write KWO for Conclusion paragraph. Be sure to include everything listed on p. 21.
- Write the Conclusion paragraph. Use the Composition Checklist to check for Structure and Style.

- Rewrite Conclusion making changes and corrections.
- Highlight your 3 topics** at the beginning of the Conclusion. Check for Key Words from Intro in the last sentence of Conclusion. If any of these are missing, rewrite your paragraph until you have all of them.
- Create a **title** from strong **key words of last sentence** of conclusion.

- Create the Bibliography page on a separate page. Read p. 16 and 22. See p. 92 for an example.

- Put all 5 paragraphs of the report into ONE document if you haven't already done so. Be sure they are in the correct order. Be sure all dress-ups and sentence types are **marked**. If they aren't marked you won't get credit for them. Highlight topic/clinchers in each body paragraph. In Introduction and Conclusion, **highlight topics/clinchers** in each body paragraph. These should be the same topics, 1 paragraph for each, that you highlighted in your Introduction and Conclusion.
- Create a title page. Be as creative with fonts and art as you like on the Title page.
- If you are including illustrations, these need to be on a separate page at the end of your report in front of the Bibliography.
- Put work in folder **according to directions** on folder label. **PLEASE TAKE ALL PAPERS FROM PREVIOUS ASSIGNMENTS OUT OF YOUR FOLDER.**

- Use today and tomorrow to finish up your paper and make it your very best work. Go back and check all of the instructions on this homework assignment sheet and be sure you have done EVERYTHING on it and on the Composition Checklist.
- NO CLASS THANKSGIVING WEEK!** We have 3 weeks between classes this time instead of 2 weeks. Check the schedule in your handbook for the next class day. **BE SURE TO BRING YOUR HOMEWORK AND HANDBOOK TO CLASS.** We will be starting something new! Also, we will have a small Christmas party!

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Homework Checklist Assignment #6

Be sure all of this is done or I won't accept your paper!
(Formatting instructions p. 88)

- Homework placed in Folder #1 correctly (Follow directions on folder label.)
- Title centered and underlined. (See instructions p. 10)
By (Student's Name)
- 6 dress-ups underlined per paragraph (1 of each)
- 6 Sentence types numbered
- Typed, black ink, white paper
- Double spaced
- 12 point serif font (like this font)
Example: Times New Roman
- 1" margins
- 5 paragraphs
All paragraphs on one continuous document because this is one assignment.

EXAMPLE 4: COMPOSITION CHECKLIST WITH POINT VALUES

**ASSIGNMENT #6: RESEARCH REPORT
COMPOSITION CHECKLIST**

_____ points out of 139 possible = _____ %

STRUCTURE ELEMENTS	I	II	III	IV	V
INTRODUCTION:					
First sentence(s) has an "attention grabber"	3				
Paragraph includes background information not found in essay body.	3				
States 3 Topics near END of paragraph.	3				
Last sentence has 2-3 strong Key Words (no topic/clincher)	3				
BODY:					
In each paragraph, "Clincher" repeats or reflects 2-3 words of "Topic" sentence.		3	3	3	
CONCLUSION:					
Restates 3 Topics from Introduction near BEGINNING of paragraph.					3
States what is "most significant/important" about subject					3
Final sentence repeats/reflects 2-3 strong Key Words from last sentence of Intro					3
GENERAL:					
Dress-ups underlined & sentence types numbered (1 of each in each paragraph)	3	3	3	3	3
Title from 2-3 strong Key Words from last sentence of Conclusion.			3		
Double-spaced, 1" margins, 12-pt. serif font, white paper, black ink, 1 document			3		
Title page with Title and Name. May use any font and picture if desired.			3		
All banned/weak words eliminated/replaced. (See below)			10 (minus 1 point per each)		
Key word outlines follow "Rules," have no more than 4 words per point	3	3	3	3	3
Works Cited page at end with all references listed in correct format.					10

STYLE ELEMENTS

DRESS-UPS: At least 1 of each in every paragraph	I	II	III	IV	V
"ly" word	1	1	1	1	1
who/which	1	1	1	1	1
strong verb	1	1	1	1	1
quality adjective	1	1	1	1	1
"www.asia." clause	1	1	1	1	1
"because" clause	1	1	1	1	1

SENTENCE TYPES: At least 1 of each in every paragraph

SENTENCE TYPES: At least 1 of each in every paragraph	I	II	III	IV	V
① Subject opener	1	1	1	1	1
② Prepositional opener	1	1	1	1	1
③ "ly" Adverb opener	1	1	1	1	1
④ "-ing"/"-ed" opener (requires a comma)	1	1	1	1	1
⑤ "www.asia." adverbial clause opener	1	1	1	1	1
⑥ VSS (Very Short Sentence 2-5 words)	1	1	1	1	1

Banned Words: go/went come/came say/said like I/me/you/us/we
 get/got think/thought see/saw look Contractions
 good bad nice pretty big little "Slang" words

10,000 Hours to Mastery, from *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell

This idea - that excellence at a complex task requires a critical, minimum level of practice - surfaces again and again in studies of expertise. In fact, researchers have settled on what they believe is a magic number for true expertise: 10,000 hours.

"In study after study, of composers, basketball players, fiction writers, ice-skaters, concert pianists, chess players, master criminals," writes the neurologist Daniel Levitin, "this number comes up again and again. Ten thousand hours is equivalent to roughly three hours a day, or 20 hours a week, of practice over 10 years... No one has yet found a case in which true world-class expertise was accomplished in less time. It seems that it takes the brain this long to assimilate all that it needs to know to achieve true mastery."

This is true even of people we think of as prodigies. Mozart, for example, famously started writing music at six. But, the psychologist Michael Howe writes in his book *Genius Explained*, by the standards of mature composers Mozart's early works are not outstanding. The earliest pieces were all probably written down by his father, and perhaps improved in the process...the earliest that is now regarded as a masterwork (No9 K271) was not composed until he was 21: by that time Mozart had already been composing concertos for 10 years...

Ten thousand hours is, of course, an enormous amount of time. It's all but impossible to reach that number, by the time you're a young adult, all by

yourself. You have to have parents who are encouraging and supportive.

Building a Niche of One, from *Better Living Through New Media* by David Seah

Starting first with that 10,000 hours of practice: I'd had a similar thought about **leveling-up** abilities based on a **magnitude-of-10** hour scale:

- at 1 hour you know some basics
- at 10 hours you have a pretty good grasp of the basics
- at 100 hours you are fairly expert
- at 1000 hours you are an experienced expert
- at 10000 hours you are a master

I originally got this idea when reading about pilots, who seem to always mention how many hours of flight time they've logged. Hours of experience are a good metric, and I've noticed that this pattern seems to recur (up to 100 hours, anyway) for me. It's not always *exactly* this many hours, but as an order-of-magnitude analysis it holds true. While **10,000 hours over 10 years** is a daunting proposition, consider this:

- 1000 hours is pretty doable. That's a little less than a year of full-time work.
- 100 hours is even more achievable...you could do that over a few months on the side, or just slam through it in a very intense couple of weeks.
- Even spending 10 hours practicing something is going to make you significantly better at it. If you spent 10 hours practicing one song, or learning how to juggle, or learning how to

bowl strikes...you're going to learn something.

- One hour? That's worthwhile too. You could spend an hour writing your signature over and over again to make it cooler. I've done that at least a couple of times in my life.

The point: the ability to **improve ourselves** is very much within our grasp. I always knew this, but putting it in terms of accumulating hours of experience is awesome. An acquaintance of mine put weight loss in similar terms: "Sure, it's going to take two years to lose that much weight--it's a drag. But you're going to be living those two years *anyway*, so why not slim down at the same time?"

(Used with permission by David Seah, <http://davidseah.com/blog/building-a-niche-of-one/>)

The Importance of Manuscript Form

by Tina Blue

In 1989, when my daughter was in third grade, she wrote a homework assignment in a spiral notebook and then ripped the page out to hand in the next day.

Her teacher quite properly reprimanded her and refused to accept the assignment. Thus, at the tender age of eight, Becky learned what many of my *college* students these days seem unable to learn: all work should be submitted in proper form.

Each semester I give my students an introductory handout, explaining such things as attendance and grading policies, required texts, *etc.* Included on that handout is a set

of simple, precise instructions detailing proper manuscript form for my course.

Just in case anyone loses his introductory handout (and about ¼ of the students in every class *will* lose it), I also have all that information, plus all other course materials, posted on two different sites on the Web: on Blackboard, where many instructors post their courses, and on a special Geocities site that I have set up for my courses.

In other words, my directions for manuscript form are readily available, 24/7, for all of my students--even those who cannot keep track of essential course handouts.

Now, except for the fact that I require extra-wide margins, since I write copious comments and corrections to help them revise their work before they get a grade on it, these requirements are pretty much standard. All of my students should have learned most of them before they ever got out of junior high.

No college student should be handing in essays written in pencil (or pink, green, or orange ink!), ripped out of spiral notebooks, written on both sides of the page, written all the way to the right edge of the page without regard for margins, or lacking such essential information as the course number, the assignment number, or the student's name.

Furthermore, if the student writes on regular notebook paper, then it is standard procedure to skip lines, just as one double-spaces when typing. Not only does that make it easier for the instructor to read the essay, it also allows room for comments and corrections. And just as one would not type a paper on both sides, one is not supposed to write on both sides of the page.

But even though I remind my students repeatedly that they must follow these

guidelines (and of where to find them), and though I spend several minutes in class the period before the paper is due emphasizing how important manuscript form is, and though I ask them to double-check their papers for form at the beginning of the period when they are handed in, a significant number of students *still* hand in improperly prepared work.

When they write an in-class essay, I hand out copies of the instructions for proper form, so they can have a checklist right there, even if they have lost their handout, but also so that they will understand that I consider proper form to be important

Yet I will inevitably get several papers written in pencil or weird-colored ink, on both sides of the page, without margins, without double-spacing, and ripped out of spiral notebooks!

Do you think I am too picky? Probably a lot of my students think so. But *I* don't think so.

Quite apart from the fact that improper manuscript form greatly complicates the already onerous task of handling, marking, and sorting several hundred papers, and recording grades for them every semester, there is also the fact that one of the most important things a student should take from his education is a sense that he must do things properly, according to whatever rules pertain to the situation at hand.

Most of the actual subject matter of their courses will fall out of their heads soon after they leave school--and in most cases much sooner than that. But they should also be learning habits of mind and behavior that will enable them to adapt to the requirements of whatever job they end up in after school.

Employers don't want excuses. They want performance. And they expect their employees to work according to specified standards. The same student who turns in sloppy, improperly formatted essays is likely to turn in reports or other projects that do not meet his employer's standards. At *some* point these kids have got to grow up and do things the way they are supposed to be done. At *some* point they will have to accept that the rules that everyone else is required to follow are not just suggestions for them to consider or ignore, depending on how they feel.

Of course, part of the problem is that most students don't take most of their classes all that seriously. They've always gotten away with ignoring the rules, so it comes as a great shock to them when they encounter a teacher who actually *penalizes* them for not following instructions. And of all the classes students don't take seriously, English has got to be the worst.

A year ago, after I had spent a fair amount of time in one "Introduction to Poetry" section harping on how appalled I was that so many students were either unable or unwilling to follow simple formatting and style instructions, an architecture major came down to my office to discuss the C- he had gotten on his first essay. He told me he had never gotten such a low grade before.

I pointed out that he had violated every single style, structure, and formatting rule on the checklist, and I told him that in addition to all those errors, his paper also violated all the rhetorical conventions of the type of essay we were writing in that class. The C- was actually a very generous grade. I was going easy on them because it was their first essay for my class.

He was shocked that his grade had been lowered for such things. I asked him, "If you were to turn in a chatty, self-

referential biology lab report, one that ignored all the structural and stylistic conventions that govern lab reports, what sort of grade would you get?"

He admitted that he would get an *F*.

"Well," I pointed out, "different kinds of papers have to adhere to different rhetorical conventions. This paper was not supposed to be *about you*. It was *not* a personal essay assignment, but a formal critical analysis of a work of literature. So besides not formatting the paper properly, you wrote the wrong kind of paper, even though I provided sample essays and warned in class against precisely the sort of paper you wrote."

The young man admitted that I had in fact provided very clear instructions, but he didn't think that I would lower his grade if he just wrote how he felt about the poem, since that's what he had always been allowed to do in English classes. And, he said, no other English teacher had ever lowered his grade just for not following formatting instructions.

Well, I blame wishy-washy English teachers for their willingness to accept any sort of blather in any sort of form, and give it an *A* or a *B*. But I don't think it's just in English classes that we have this problem. I hear plenty of complaints from teachers in other subjects about students' refusal (or inability) to follow the simplest standards of form and style.

For example, recently I was looking over about a dozen long research papers for a 600-level bibliography and methods course in the history department. Understand, these are advanced history students--seniors, and graduate students--most of whom intend to become professionals in the field... They are provided with explicit instructions and models for citing different kinds of sources.

And a significant part of their grade will be determined by how carefully they cite their sources.

I could not believe what I saw in these research papers. Not one student followed any recognizable model for notes or bibliography!...

Obviously, despite the professor's insistence that they format their notes and bibliography entries properly, these students either *could not* or *would not* do so. Either they could not wrap their minds around the notion that such things matter, so they didn't even bother to check their citations against the style sheet provided, or they simply do not know how to follow a model to format something correctly.

The fact that so many *college* students don't follow explicit instructions for preparing their formal academic assignments should be a matter of concern. Either they are not educable, which of course I prefer not to believe, or they are so lazy, spoiled and self-centered that they don't feel obliged to follow any rules. That is also troubling, because a large part of functioning as an adult consists of doing what you are supposed to do, the way you are supposed to do it.

This problem starts early, because these kids are being allowed to get away with ignoring details and rules in most of their classes, so they are not developing the mental attitude that attends to details or that takes rules of form seriously.

But details and rules of form *do* matter, and when they get out into the real world, their inability to do things right and to follow directions will come back to haunt them.

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