

# The Principles of Good Writing

By Richard Nordquist

Experiences in school leave some people with the impression that *good* writing simply means writing that contains no *bad* mistakes--that is, no errors of grammar, punctuation, or spelling. In fact, good writing is much more than just correct writing. It's writing that responds to the interests and needs of our readers.

Briefly, here are the basic characteristics of good, effective writing:

- Good writing has a clearly defined purpose.
- It makes a clear point.
- It supports that point with specific information.
- The information is clearly connected and arranged.
- The words are appropriate, and the sentences are clear, concise, emphatic, and correct.

Again and again, you'll find that the guidelines, examples, and exercises throughout this Grammar and Composition site are based on these fundamental traits.

Good writing is the result of much practice and hard work. This fact should encourage you: it means that the ability to write well is not a gift that some people are born with, not a privilege extended to only a few. If you're willing to work, you can improve your writing.

As seen in *Advice from One Writer to Another*, professional writers--the ones who make writing *look* easy--will be the first ones to tell you that often it's not easy at all:

- "There is no rule on how to write. Sometimes it comes easily and perfectly: sometimes it's like drilling rock and then blasting it out with charges."  
(Ernest Hemingway)
- "Writing is just work--there's no secret. If you dictate or use a pen or type or write with your toes--it's still just work."  
(Sinclair Lewis)

Don't be discouraged by the thought that writing rarely comes easily to anyone. Instead, keep in mind that regular practice will make you a better writer. As you sharpen your skills, you will gain confidence and *enjoy* writing more than you did before. As discussed in *The Write Attitude and Your Writing Goals*, your attitude toward writing will improve as you grow more satisfied with your work.

# English 12 Essay Writing Guidelines

## 1st Semester

- Students should progress from the 11<sup>th</sup> grade essay writing guidelines to the 12<sup>th</sup> grade essay writing guidelines
- Seven sentence minimum per paragraph
- Varied sentence structure (complex/compound sentences)
- Use of transitions between paragraphs (quotes)
- S/Q/R – Statement/Quote/Response or
- S/E/R – Statement/ Evidence/Response
- Do not merely summarize the body paragraph topics in the conclusion
- Must have insightful resolution of the essay topic in the conclusion

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester

- In addition to the above guidelines, students should progress to the following:
- Continue to enhance stylistic writing techniques according to the teacher's specific requirements