

High School Rhetoric & Composition

Module 1: Foundations of Style, Tone & Letter Writing

1. CORE WRITING PRINCIPLES

Effective written communication rests on clarity, precision, and register adaptivity. Whether composing an academic essay or a professional email, always align your tone with your audience and purpose.

Style & Register Fundamentals

- **Clarity Over Complexity:** Prefer direct phrasing over overly convoluted vocabulary.
- **Active Voice Priority:** Write "The student analyzed the data" instead of "The data was analyzed by the student."
- **Cohesion & Flow:** Use transitional phrases (e.g., *furthermore, conversely, consequently*) to bridge ideas smoothly.

Tone Adaptation Rules

- **Academic/Formal:** Objective, evidence-based, third-person perspective, no contractions (e.g., *do not*).
- **Informal/Personal:** Expressive, conversational, first-person (*I, we*), idioms and contractions permitted.

2. FORMAL VS. INFORMAL LETTER WRITING

Mastering correspondence formats is essential for academic inquiries, professional requests, and personal reflection.

Element	Formal Letter / Email	Informal Letter / Note
Purpose	College applications, complaints, official inquiries.	Friendship, catching up, personal updates.
Salutation	<i>Dear Mr. Smith / Dear Admissions Committee:</i>	<i>Hi Alex / Hey Sam!</i>
Structure	Clear statement of purpose, supporting context, call to action.	Flexible flow, personal inquiries, conversational closing.
Sign-Off	<i>Sincerely, / Respectfully yours,</i>	<i>Best, / Talk soon, / Warmly,</i>

Formal Template Structure:

Dear Principal Vance, I am writing to formally request the addition of a debate club to the extracurricular schedule for the upcoming term. Our proposed club will enhance critical thinking and public speaking skills. Attached is our syllabus and petition. Thank you for your time and consideration. Sincerely, Jordan Lee Student Council Representative

Informal Template Structure:

Hey Sam, Hope you're doing well! I wanted to check in and see if you're still up for studying for the chemistry exam together this weekend. Let me know if Saturday afternoon works for you. We can grab some boba too! Talk soon, Jordan

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Module 2: Argumentation, Debating Skills & Refutation

1. THE MECHANICS OF DEBATE

Debate is not an argument; it is a structured, evidence-driven discussion meant to persuade a neutral adjudicator. Success depends on clear logical construction, strategic counter-arguments, and polished delivery.

The Golden Rule of Persuasion (The A-R-E Framework):

Every point in a debate or argumentative essay must follow this triad: **Assertion** (What is your claim?) → **Reasoning** (Why is it true?) → **Evidence** (What data/fact proves it?)

Constructing a Case

- **Define the Motion:** Clearly outline parameters and key terms at the start.
- **Impact Analysis:** Explain *why* your point matters (who is affected and to what scale).
- **Structural Signposting:** Use cues (e.g., "Our first argument covers economic impacts...").

Delivery & Rhetoric

- **Pacing & Pauses:** Control your rate of speech; use deliberate pauses for emphasis.
- **Eye Contact & Stance:** Engage directly with the audience/judge.
- **Avoid Logical Fallacies:** Steer clear of *Ad Hominem* attacks or slippery slope arguments.

2. REFUTATION & REBUTTAL TACTICS

Effective rebuttal requires listening actively to the opposing team's arguments and systematically dismantling their logic rather than merely restating your own position.

Rebuttal Method	Core Strategy	Phrasing Example
Direct Denial	Prove the opponent's premise or factual evidence is false.	"Their claim that costs will rise is contradicted by..."
Mitigation	Accept that the point exists, but show its impact is negligible.	"While this may cause minor delays, the long-term benefit..."
Turnaround	Show that the opponent's point actually supports your side.	"Their argument regarding safety actually proves why our policy..."

4-Step Rebuttal Formula for Speakers

1. **They Say:** Briefly reference the opponent's argument ("Opposition claimed that...").
2. **But We Say:** State your counter-assertion clearly ("However, this overlooks...").
3. **Because:** Provide logic and evidence for your counter-point.
4. **Therefore:** Conclude why your team wins this clash in the debate.

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Module 3: Essay Mastery & Self-Correction Strategies

1. ESSAY ARCHITECTURE

A well-structured essay guides the reader seamlessly from a compelling thesis to a resonant conclusion.

Introduction & Body Paragraphs

- **Hook:** Engage the reader with a relevant statistic, quote, or thought-provoking question.
- **Thesis Statement:** A specific, debatable claim that outlines the central argument of your paper.
- **Topic Sentences (TEEL):** Start every body paragraph with a clear Topic sentence, Explanation, Evidence, and Link back to thesis.

Conclusion & Synthesis

- **Restate Thesis:** Rephrase your thesis in a new way based on the evidence presented.
- **Synthesize Points:** Show how body arguments connect together rather than just listing them.
- **Final Insight:** End with a broader statement on real-world relevance or future implications.

2. ERROR CORRECTION & EDITING PROTOCOL

Self-correction transforms draft writing into polished academic work. Use this diagnostic table to catch common high school writing errors during proofreading.

Common Error	Incorrect Example	Corrected Revision
Comma Splice	The essay was long, it had great points.	The essay was long; however, it contained great points.
Vague Pronouns	When John met Dr. Smith, he was nervous.	John was nervous when he met Dr. Smith.
Subject-Verb Agreement	The list of sources are complete.	The list of sources is complete.
Dangling Modifier	Walking to class, the rain soaked Maya.	Walking to class, Maya was soaked by the rain.

The 3-Pass Editing System:

- **Pass 1 (Structure & Argument):** Does the thesis make sense? Are paragraph transitions smooth?
- **Pass 2 (Sentence Level):** Read aloud to check cadence, eliminate passive voice, and cut fluff.
- **Pass 3 (Mechanics):** Check punctuation, spelling, citations, and subject-verb agreement specifically.