Student Reference Guide

to the

Academic Expectations

of

WILLITS CHARTER SCHOOL

A CALIFORNIA PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL for THE ARTS and SCIENCES

Updated August 2022

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MISSION AND VISION OF WILLITS CHARTER SCHOOL

The mission of Willits Charter School is to enable students in grades 6-12 to reach their fullest potential by providing them with a high-quality, personalized education in a safe and supportive environment. We strive to inspire students to embrace their curious, creative nature and be self-motivated, competent, lifelong learners. We encourage students to become productive citizens who respect themselves, others, community, diversity, and the environment.

Willits Charter School maintains high academic standards while respecting the unique qualities of all learners. Our commitment to teaching individual responsibility as well as compassion and respect for self and others motivates all of our educational policies and procedures. We encourage students to reach for new heights in learning and to embrace challenges as opportunities, seeking their own positive solutions and finding personal fulfillment as a result of their efforts.

Our staff and board embody the school's mission and vision providing both expertise and passion in their fields. We incorporate the arts, humanities, sciences and physical education throughout our curriculum at all levels. We are firmly committed to literacy and we encourage critical thinking in every subject.

Willits Charter School is a place where families are actively involved in the formal education of their children. We recognize that every stakeholder plays an important role in a student's academic success as well as personal development, and we work cooperatively with families to ensure that success.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide students with a quick reference to the basic requirements for written work at Willits Charter School. By becoming familiar with and adhering to the standards expressed in this handbook, students will strengthen their ability to communicate clearly and effectively.

These expectations should be thought of as the basic expectations for all assignments in all classes. Work that does not adhere to the standards outlined in this handbook may not receive full credit and may be returned to the student without a grade.

BASIC EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL CLASSES

ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS *MUST*:

- Be legible
- Use complete sentences that "stand alone"
- Use the proper format for paragraphs and essays
- Have the proper header

ALL ASSIGNMENTS INVOLVING RESEARCH *MUST*:

- Be original work in the students' own words
- Cite sources in proper format
- Include a "Works Cited" page

ALL ANSWERS TO MATH PROBLEMS *MUST*:

- Be legible
- Show the calculations leading up to the answer
- Provide units when necessary

ALL GRAPHS *MUST*:

- Be neat
- Have labeled axes
- Have a title

FORMATTING TYPED ASSIGNMENTS

GENERAL FORMAT

First Last Name Last Name Page #

Teacher

Class

Date

Title of Assignment

1" Margins
12 pt. Times New Roman font
Double spaced throughout
Use "Tab" to mark the beginning of a new paragraph

EXAMPLE

Sarah Smith Smith 1

Ms. Craig

US History

3 September 2013

The Civil War

After Abraham Lincoln was elected in 1860, seven states seceded from the Union to form the Confederate States of America . . .

FORMATTING HANDWRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

GENERAL FORMAT

First Last Name

Teacher

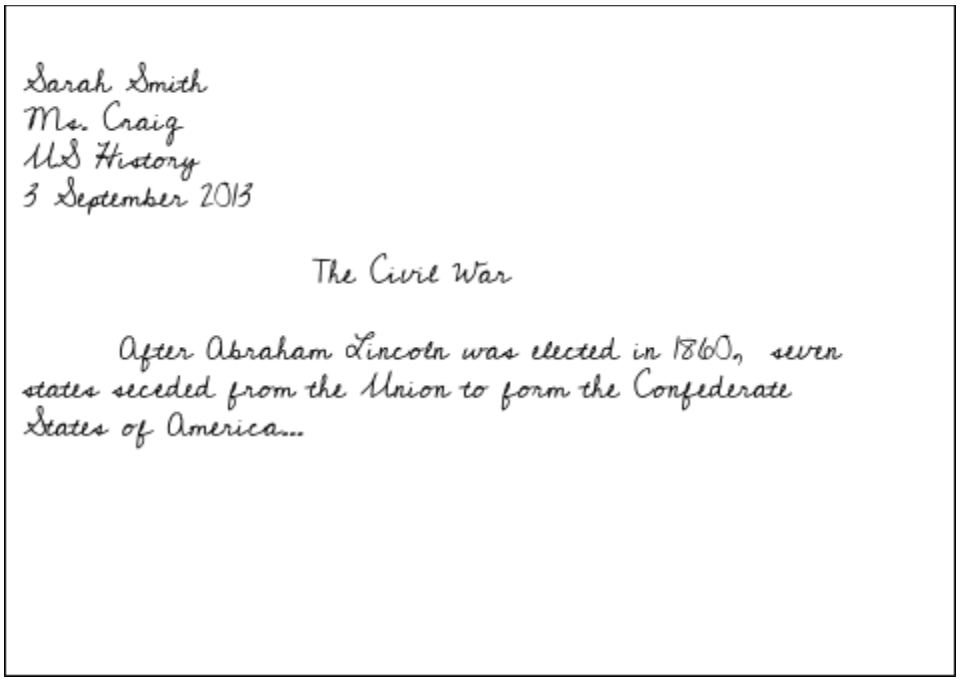
Class

Date

Title of Assignment

Blue or black ink or pencil
Indent to mark the beginning of a new paragraph

EXAMPLE



EVERY SENTENCE YOU WRITE *MUST*:

- Be legible
- Begin with a capital letter
- End with a period, a question mark, or a single exclamation mark
- Have a subject and a predicate
- Be checked for proper spelling
- Include academically appropriate spelling (LOL, OMG, IDK are not acceptable.)

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE STANDARDS, EVERY SENTENCE YOU WRITE IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION *MUST*:

- Answer every aspect of the question
- Be understandable without the question standing next to it (include the question in the response)
- Not begin with “it” or “because”
- Have antecedents for all pronouns
- Have correct punctuation
- Have no spelling errors

WRITING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

All classes at WCS, regardless of subject, involve some form of writing.
Understanding the similarities in the structure of different types of writing can help you improve your written communication.

	Informative or Explanatory Text Examples: Informative Essays, Biography, Descriptive reports	**Persuasive Text** Examples: Argumentative essay, Analysis, Any writing with a Thesis	**Scientific Writing** Examples: Lab reports, Science Projects, Scientific journal articles	**Math Proof** "A series of statements, each of which follows logically from what has gone before. It starts with things we are assuming to be true. It ends with the thing we are trying to prove.[1]"
The Big Idea (a.k.a The Claim)	Topic Sentence	Thesis	Hypothesis	**End:** the idea you are trying to prove (Cheng 3)
The Smaller Ideas	Sub-topics	Supporting Arguments	Procedure	**Beginning:** the details you assume to be true, including the definitions necessary to understand the proof (Cheng 3)
Evidence	Reason, Detail, Facts	Quotes/ Examples	Data	**Middle:** statements, each following logically from what comes before (Cheng 3)
Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	Conclusion	**End:** the idea you are trying to prove (Cheng 3)

[1] Cheng, Eugenia. "How to Write Proofs: a Quick Guide." Oct. 2004, cheng.staff.shef.ac.uk/proofguide/proofguide.pdf.

IN ALL CLASSES, EVERY PARAGRAPH YOU WRITE MUST:	**A QUALITY PARAGRAPH WILL:**
● Be indented five spaces on the first line (use TAB). ● Be double-spaced (when typed). ● Handle one idea.	● Be fully developed (clarify, define, exemplify, illustrate). ● Show organization (chronological, sequential, opinion/reason, comparison/contrast, problem/solution, cause/effect, etc.) ● Be coherent (flow; use transitional devices, conjunctions, adverbs). ● Be concise (unnecessary words obscure meaning). ● Be clear (avoid verb tense shifts, misplaced and dangling modifiers; use parallel structure and active voice when possible).

THE STRUCTURE OF YOUR ESSAY MUST:	**THE CONTENT OF YOUR ESSAY WILL:**
● Have a thesis (single controlling idea). ● Be written in paragraphs. ● Have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.	● Include general and background information in the introduction. ● Have a thesis that is clearly defined and arguable. ● Have body paragraphs that develop, exemplify, and support the thesis. ● Have a conclusion that originally restates the thesis and main ideas in an original, meaningful, and memorable way. ● Have all the same attributes of a quality paragraph.

ASSIGNMENTS INVOLVING RESEARCH

Any written work that is used to describe, explain, or inform is a form of expository writing. In a nutshell, expository writing is used to convey information from writer to reader. Expository writing includes book reports, literary analyses, position papers, research papers, and any essay that involves research. When you are incorporating the ideas of others into your own work, you must not plagiarize.

PLAGIARISM means taking someone else's words, ideas, or specialized information and passing them off as one's own. It is intellectual theft. The word plagiarism comes from the Latin words *plagiaries*, meaning plunderer, and *plagium*, meaning kidnapping (American Heritage Dictionary, 2nd ed).

Anytime you summarize or paraphrase, you must restate the source's meaning in your own words and document your source. "You are guilty of the academic offense known as plagiarism if you half-copy the author's sentences – either by mixing the author's phrases with your own without using quotation marks or by plugging your synonyms into the author's sentence structure." (Hacker 398)

ACCEPTABLE versus UNACCEPTABLE PARAPHRASING

Original text (from Watters, Thomas. *Planets: Smithsonian Guides.* Ligature, Inc., 1995.)

"The Sun was worshipped as a god by early cultures. Structures were built in its honor and rituals performed to secure its favors. Such practices and beliefs faded over the centuries as astronomers gained knowledge about the sphere whose nuclear furnace cradled and continues to support life on Earth. Not until the twentieth century, however, were the Sun's complex nature and fascinating features revealed." (Watters 32)

Example of unacceptable borrowing of words and structure:

Early people ***worshipped the Sun as a god*** by erecting structures and ***performing rituals***. These practices and beliefs decreased ***over*** time as scientists learned more ***about the sphere whose nuclear*** reactions shape life on Earth. Many of the ***complexities of the Sun*** remained a mystery until the twentieth century (Watters 32).

Examples of acceptable paraphrasing:

Although much of the detailed information we have about the Sun has been learned only recently, ***early*** human **c*ultures*** recognized and celebrated the Sun's importance to life on Earth. Over time, human society moved away from the spiritual worship of the Sun as a more scientific understanding of the Sun was developed (Watters 32).

TIPS FOR AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

When writing, you must make a clear distinction between what your own thinking is and what you have borrowed from others. Acknowledging the ideas and comments of others builds trust with your reader while it strengthens your own ideas by placing them in the context of other work.

The pointers that follow are designed to help you avoid plagiarism. They are based on the article, "Academic Plagiarism" written by SuEllen Shaw in *Writer's Corner*, Winter 1995-96 and adapted from:

Chekola, Mark. "Plagiarism: What It Is and How to Avoid It.." *Plagiarism*, Minnesota State University Moorehead, 22 Mar. 2007, web.mnstate.edu/gracyk/expectations%20of%20students/plagiarism%20warning.htm.

Tip #1: If you use more than three words in a row that can be found in exactly the same order in your source material, you must put the words in quotation marks and cite your source.

Tip #2: If you are using your own words, but the idea comes from your source, you do not need quotation marks but you must cite your source.

Tip #3: Use lead-ins to identify how much of a paragraph is someone else's idea.

Example: According to Diana Hacker, writing professor at Prince George's Community College, a good way to avoid plagiarism is to read a passage, comprehend the meaning of what you have read, and then close the book before writing your summary. After you have written the information in your own words, look back at the source and verify that what you have written is accurate.

Tip #4: Any information you use in your paper that is not general knowledge requires that you give credit to a source.

Tip #5: When in doubt, cite your source.

DOCUMENTING A SOURCE USING MLA FORMAT

Within your text, cite the author's last name and the page number(s) in parentheses at the end of your sentence (Hacker 216-217). If you use the author's name (Diana Hacker) in your sentence, use only the page number (216-217). When you make a general reference to the work of an author whose name is mentioned in your sentence, you may omit any parenthetical reference and document the source in the list of *Works Cited,* which comes at the end of your paper. Note: When the reference is a long, indented paragraph, the parenthetical reference comes *after the period* at the end of the paragraph.

The *Works Cited* list will be on the last sheet of your written work.

The most recent version (MLA 8) for citing sources does not distinguish between the type of source. For any given source, you should document the following, using the following punctuation and italics where necessary. If an element does not apply/exist, simply omit it. **There are often MULTIPLE WAYS to correctly cite a source using MLA 8.**

- Author.
- "Title of Source."
- *Title of Container,*
- Other Contributors,
- Version,
- Number,
- Publisher,
- Publication Date,
- Location.

As an example, here is the citation for the Diana Hacker book referenced above:
Hacker, Diana. *Rules for Writers*. 5th edition, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004.

You may use this template to help you organize the information needed to cite a web page in MLA 8 format. Take note of the punctuation used after each element.

CORE ELEMENTS: **This information refers directly to the web page which contains the information you are citing.**
Author. -For a person, write the author as LAST NAME, FIRST NAME, MIDDLE NAME. -For a corporation, write the name of the corporation.
"Web Page Title." -Write the name of the webpage. Put quotation marks around the title.
CONTAINER INFORMATION: **This information refers to the larger piece of work (website) that the web page you listed above is a part of. Not all web pages will have a container. Some web pages may have more than one container.**
Title of website, -This should be italicized when typing.
Other contributors, -List whether the website or project was edited by a person or a group.
Version, -Does the website display a version number? If so, record the version.
Publisher, -Look for the publisher next to a © sign. -If there is more than one publisher, use a / between each name.
Publication date, -Use the last revised date or the copyright © date.
URL. -Write the address for the overarching website (not the individual webpage). -You do not need to include http:// or https://.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SCIENCE LAB REPORT FORMAT

	First and Last Name Teacher Name Class Date *Your paper will be returned, ungraded if:* **Holes are ripped* **No name* **Spiral paper* **Not in standard pencil/pen*
	Title
I.	**Purpose:** What question are you asking?
II.	**Hypothesis:** Write your educated guess. What do YOU think is going to happen? Make sure to state WHY you think this.
III.	**Materials:** Write a list of supplies needed for this lab.
IV.	**Procedure:** Write step-by-step directions.
V.	**Data & Observations:** Record information in charts/drawings/writings/graphs.
VI.	**Conclusion:** Write a paragraph addressing the 6 previous parts.
	(Indent) What was the lab's purpose? What did you do and observe?
	What was YOUR hypothesis? Do your data support your hypothesis? Do your data
	suggest that you should reject your hypothesis? Describe any
	human errors or unexpected results. Suggest any changes ("Next time I would…"). Explain
	what YOU learned from the lab for YOUR own life.

HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE LAB REPORT FORMAT

Ima Greatstudent Greatstudent 1

Ms. Vaccaro

CP Biology

18 September 2015

Title of Lab

I. Introduction: This section is a written paragraph that should connect lab concepts to class content. The *Introduction* serves to summarize information relating to the lab. Information may include (but is not limited to) previous research, importance of the phenomena being investigated, or a rationale for conducting the experiment.

II. Purpose: The *Purpose i*s the whole point of doing the lab, phrased in question form. Ask yourself, does your *Purpose* clearly and concisely describe what was investigated?

III. Hypothesis: The *Hypothesis* is a prediction or possible answer about the outcome of the question you asked in the *Purpose.* Make sure your *Hypothesis* is tightly connected to your question. Make sure you state your reasoning behind your prediction. This section should be written in complete sentences.

IV. Materials:

- A bulleted list of all equipment, chemicals, or other items that were used in the experiment

V. Procedure:

1. The *Procedure* section should be written as a list of sequential steps that explain how the experiment was performed. You may use drawings to help support your descriptions.
2. Enough detail should be used so that the experiment could be repeated using your report.
3. Write in the impersonal (3rd person) past tense (e.g. the temperature was taken every two minutes) rather than the personal (1st person) present or future tense (e.g. we will take the temperature every two minutes).

VI. Data and Observations: This section provides evidence for your *Conclusion* and includes:

- Any data/data tables fully labeled with titles and units
- Any pictures/diagrams fully labeled, colored, and described in words

VII. Results: This section shows an analysis of your data and includes:

- Any graphs including titles, units, and labeled axes
- A statistical analysis of your data, appropriate for your grade level (e.g. mean, median, mode, calculation of standard deviation, tests for significance, etc.)
- An objective, written overview of your results (save inferences for your conclusion)

Greatstudent 3

VIII. Conclusion: The Conclusion is a written paragraph that begins by restating the lab's *Purpose* and making reference to the *Procedure*. Restate your *Hypothesis* and evaluate whether your data support or suggest that you should reject your *Hypothesis*. Describe any human errors or unexpected results. Suggest any changes ("Next time I would…"). Explain what YOU learned from the lab for YOUR own life.

IX. References: You must provide an MLA formatted citation for every resource used in preparing your experiment and lab report.

Formatting Your Lab Report

- Your name, teacher's name, the class name, and the date of the lab report are double-spaced in 12-point, Times New Roman font.
- Dates in MLA are written in this order: day, month, and year.
- MLA requires double-spacing throughout a document; do not single-space any part of the document.
- Label all sections.
- Set your sections apart by adding an additional space between sections.
- Page numbers begin with page 1. In the header section, type your name next to the page number so that it appears on every page.
- You must include an MLA formatted bibliography for any resources used in preparing your report.

CONSTRUCTING GRAPHS

Graphs are important tools used to display and communicate data. When a graph is put together incorrectly, it detracts from the information the graph is intended to convey. Being able to construct and understand graphs is an essential skill that you will use regularly.

Most graphs have 5 major parts:

1. Title: The title states what the graph is about and gives the reader an understanding of what information will be found in the graph. A good title is closer to a sentence than a phrase and is usually found at the top of the graph. For instance…"Plant growth in centimeters per day for Plant A" is a good title whereas "How big is my plant?" is not.

2. Independent Variable (X-axis): The independent variable is the variable being tested by the experimenter. Common independent variables include: time, generations, measurements (length, distance), and temperature. This variable goes on the X-axis.

3. Dependent Variable (Y-axis): The dependent variable is the variable that is affected by the independent variable. It is the variable being measured by the experimenter measures. This variable goes on the Y-axis.

4. Scale for each variable: Before you can plot your data points, you must figure out how much each box on your graph paper is worth. Scale doesn't always have to start at zero, but it must be consistent. For example, if you start off making each box worth 5 cm, each subsequent box must also be 5 cm. Always make sure your scale is properly labeled.

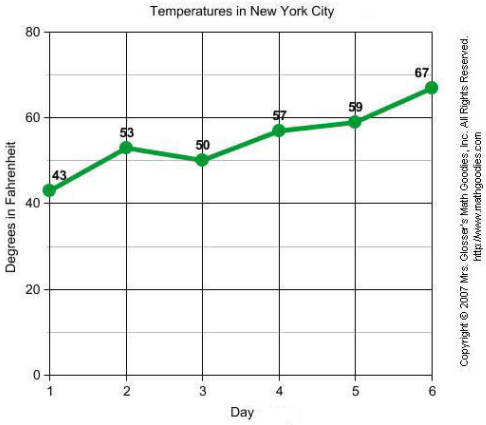
5. Legend (or Key): A legend is short description about the graph's data. Legends are required if you are using different patterns or colors to represent different variables on your graph.

Rules and Tips for Graphing:

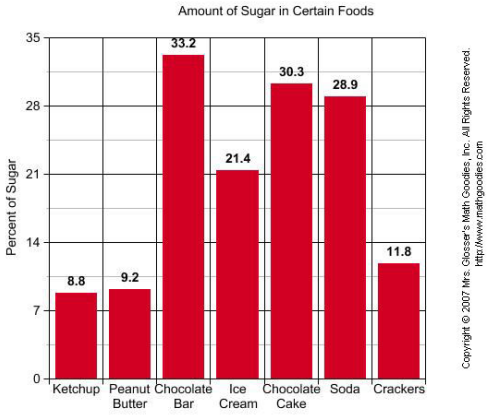
- ➔ Always use a pencil to draw your graph. It's easier to fix mistakes.
- ➔ Always draw lines with a ruler. Do not freehand. Use at least half of your paper for the graph.
- ➔ Make sure the independent variable is on the X-axis and the dependent variable is on the Y-axis.
- ➔ Include all parts described above

TYPES OF GRAPHS

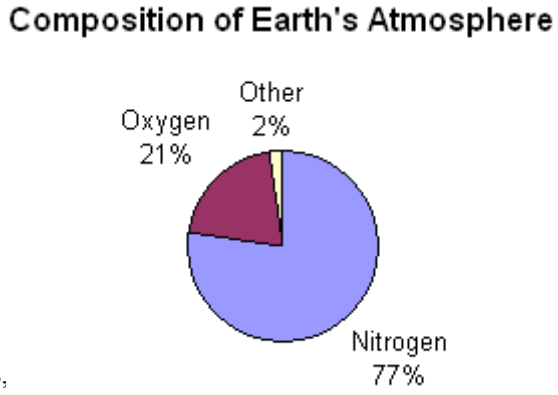
It is important to use the appropriate type of graph for your data. Although there are many different types of graphs, three of the most common types are described below.[2]



LINE GRAPHS are used to measure a change in something over time. Use a line graph to represent continuous data.



BAR GRAPHS are used to compare items to each other with only one data point. Use a bar graph to represent discrete data.



PIE GRAPHS are used to show percentages that add up to 100%.

[2] Graphs are from: Glosser. "Comparing Graphs." *Unit 11*, Math Goodies, www.mathgoodies.com/lessons/graphs/compare_graphs.html.

WCS STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Willits Charter School will produce effective communicators and critical thinkers who demonstrate college and career readiness. Students will:

1. Read closely and analytically to comprehend a range of increasingly complex literary and informational texts
2. Produce effective and well-grounded writing for a range of purposes and audiences
3. Employ effective speaking and listening skills for a range of purposes and audiences
4. Engage in research and inquiry to investigate topics, and to analyze, integrate, and present information
5. Explain and apply mathematical concepts as well as interpret and carry out mathematical procedures with precision and fluency
6. Solve a range of complex well-posed problems in pure and applied mathematics, making productive use of knowledge and problem solving strategies
7. Clearly and precisely construct viable arguments to support their own reasoning and to critique the reasoning of others
8. Analyze complex, real-world scenarios as well as construct and use mathematical models to interpret and solve problems

WCS GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS and A-G

The a-g / College Entrance Requirements are a sequence of high school courses that students must complete (with a grade of C or better) to be minimally eligible for admission to the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU). They represent the basic level of academic preparation that high school students should achieve to undertake university work. For the graduation classes of 2019 and beyond, WCS graduation requirements are fully aligned with a-g. Effective 2016-2017, the minimum passing mark to earn credit is 70% (C).

The following chart summarizes the a-g / College Entrance Requirements and the alignment of WCS graduation requirements to a-g.

A-G Category	**A-G Details**	**WCS Graduation Requirements** (Class of 2024)
(A) History/Social Science	Two years, including one year of world history, cultures, and historical geography and one year of U.S. history or one-half year of U.S. history and one-half year of civics or American government.	10 credits U.S. History 10 credits World History
(B) English	Four years of college preparatory English that includes frequent and regular writing, and reading of classic and modern literature.	40 credits English
(C) Mathematics	Three years of college preparatory mathematics that includes the topics covered in elementary and advanced algebra, and two- and three-dimensional geometry.	30 credits Math (must demonstrate Alg I completion)
(D) Laboratory Science	Two years of laboratory science providing fundamental knowledge in at least two of these three disciplines: biology, chemistry, and physics.	10 credits Biological sciences 10 credits Physical sciences 10 credits Additional science

(E) Language Other than English	Two years of the same language other than English.	20 credits Foreign language
(F) Visual & Performing Arts	One year, including dance, drama/theater, music, or visual art.	10 credits Visual and Performing Arts
(G) College Preparatory Elective	One year (two semesters), chosen from additional "A-F" courses beyond those used to satisfy the requirements above, or courses that have been approved solely for use as "G" electives.	5 credits Economics 5 credits Civics
		20 credits P.E.
		5 credits Geography
		5 credits Health
		5 credits Internship
		5 credits Senior Project
		40 credits of Electives