5. **STYLE SHEET**

There is much more to writing a good essay than presentation. Good organization, a clear plan, attention to paragraphs and clear expression are all of paramount importance. However, poor or inconsistent presentation is a distraction to whoever is marking your essay, and can result in a lack of clarity, confusion, and loss of marks. The following are some simple guidelines about presentation. These are rudimentary only; they do not address some of the more obscure aspects of style, which are appropriate mainly to more advanced work. (A brief bibliography is provided in case you are interested in other issues.) Remember to leave ample margins for comments by the marker. Your essay should be word processed.

**Usage of ‘it’s’ and ‘its’**

“It’s” is a verb, a contraction of “it is”. “Its” is the possessive of “it” and, like similar possessives (“yours”, “theirs”) it does not need an apostrophe. If you are in doubt about a sentence in which you have used “it’s”, try substituting “it is” and seeing whether the sentence makes sense. If it doesn't, then use “its”. For example, say you have used “it’s” in the following sentences:

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It’s a long way to Tipperary.
The whale was harpooned in it’s side.
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Then substitute “it is” to see if they make sense:

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It is a long way to Tipperary.
The whale was harpooned in it is side.
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Then substitute “it is” to see if they make sense:

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It is a long way to Tipperary.
This makes sense so “it’s” is correct.
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The whale was harpooned in it is side.
This makes no sense, so “it’s” is wrong and “its” is correct.
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1. **In the text**
   
i. Underline or italicise book titles, and the titles of plays. e.g., *The Taming of the Shrew*; *Middlemarch*; *Adam Bede*.
   
   ii. The titles of poems, essays, articles and short stories should be given in double quotation marks; e.g. “Among School Children”; “Conflict in the Work of Emily Dickinson”; “The Secret Life of Walter Mitty”.
   
   iii. All spelling should be correct. There is no excuse for misspelling.
   
   iv. Never confuse *its* and *it’s*.
   
   v. Check all of your quotations for accuracy, and make sure that your sources are provided.
   
   vi. Quotations
      
      a. Prose
If you are quoting a small amount, simply include this in the text with double quotation marks around the quoted portion.

Example: As Melville wrote, “Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian.”

For a longer quotation, indent the left hand side of the line, as you would for a new paragraph. When you indent, quotation marks are not necessary.

Example: As Melville wrote:

For all his tattooings he was on the whole a clean, comely looking cannibal. What's all this fuss I have been making about, thought I to myself -- the man's a human being just as I am: he has just as much reason to fear me, as I have to be afraid of him. Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian.

If you miss out some of the quotation, perhaps because it is less relevant to your argument, indicate this in the text using ellipsis, three or four dots.

Example:

For all his tattooings he was on the whole a clean, comely looking cannibal. What's all this fuss I have been making about, thought I to myself -- the man's a human being just as I am.... Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian.

b. Poetry.

When you quote more than two or three lines, indent the left hand side of the line, just as you would for a new paragraph. Make sure that you quote accurately, paying special attention to the ends of lines.

Example: As Yeats puts it:

Poet and sculptor, do the work,
Nor let the modish painter shirk
What his great forefathers did,
Bring the soul of man to God,
Make him fill the cradles right.

If you are quoting only a couple of lines, there is no need to indent; simply place the quotation in your text as with any other quotation. If there is a line break, signal this with a slash.

Example: In “Under Ben Bulben” Yeats wrote that the “modish painter” should not “shirk/What his great forefathers did.”

2. Footnotes/endnotes
The proper acknowledgement of sources for quotations you have used is of crucial importance to writing essays in the School of English. Failure to acknowledge a source could open you to a charge of plagiarism, even if you have been merely careless. See section 1.7 on plagiarism.

There are several basic ways of annotating sources, and the School of English has no preferred method. Whichever you choose, though, you must be consistent; do not change methods during an essay.

You may find that the most straightforward method is simply that of using footnotes or endnotes. When you quote, number each quotation consecutively and then provide a numbered note giving the source. The note can come either at the foot of the page, or at the end of your essay. The details of citation may vary, but a page number is always required. More details about the book you’ve quoted from will appear in your bibliography. The main object of the citation is to allow the reader to find the quotation in the source you have used.

Example: As Melville wrote, “Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian.” (7)
Your note would read:

If you find you are quoting a great deal from one text (for example if your essay is focussed on a specific novel), you can use an abbreviated form of the novel’s title, or insert a page number in the text. This will reduce the number of notes and will help the essay to flow more easily.

Example: As Melville wrote, “Better sleep with a sober cannibal than a drunken Christian” (Moby-Dick, p. 24).

If you’ve cited some information from a web site, give the web page address in full in the footnote, and add the date on which you used this source.

Example: http:www.melville.net/Accessed August 1 2004

The footnotes/endnotes do not need to be detailed, since the full citation will appear in your bibliography. A citation might just give the author, title and page number; Austen, Pride and Prejudice, p. 67.

3. Bibliography

The bibliography should include all the works from which you have quoted, and all of the works you have consulted in the preparation of your essay, including any web material. List works under the author’s name, in alphabetical order. There are several ways of presenting a bibliography. The main rule is to be consistent and clear.

Each entry should include the following:

- For books: The place and date of publication, and the publisher. Give the author’s name as it appears on the title page.
- Place these in this order: Name of author, a comma, title of the work, then, in a parenthesis, the place of publication, a colon, the name of the publisher, a comma, and the date.
• Some books may have an editor, or a translator. These should be acknowledged.

If you have used an article, provide the author’s name, the title in double quotation marks, where the essay appears and the page numbers of the books or journal. **Example:** Adler, Joyce, “Cannibalism in Melville”, *American Literature* 23 (1985), 332-50.

For material used from web sites give the full citation in the bibliography so that the marker can find the same material, and add the date you accessed the material. **Example:** [http://www.melville.org/hmobit.htm](http://www.melville.org/hmobit.htm) Accessed 23 June 2004.

**Further Reading**
The Chicago Manual of Style
The MHRA Style Manual (Modern Humanities Research Association)

Whichever style you decide to adopt, the main rule is to be consistent. As we suggested at the start, don’t get too distracted by matters of style; presentation is meant to assist clarity, not dominate your thinking.