

Polishing your Essay Writing Skills

1. **Assign the essay:** Make sure you have a good grasp on the topic.
2. **Give a set amount of time.**
3. **Read the essay aloud** (Or, read it aloud to yourself.)
4. Go over the **basic expectations of an essay**. Make sure you know how essays are graded.
Evaluate your own essay!

a. Did you show a good understanding of the material? Is the analysis thoughtful and insightful? Do you show original thought?

b. Is the content fair, good, wonderful or superb? Did you cover the basic facts?

c. Did you provide specific details? Did you go above and beyond, really providing some amazing details?

d. Is the main idea clear? Do you have a strong, clear thesis? Is it supported throughout the essay?

e. Is the essay readable? Does it flow well?

f. Are there many grammar and spelling mistakes?

g. Was there a strong introduction that hooked the reader in?

h. How was the conclusion?

5. **Make corrections:**

Identify the places where you've made mistakes. Read through your essays and, using a **red/colored pen or pencil, add in any missing commas and circle any spelling mistakes.**

● Essay Writing Checklist

- Strong thesis, clear main idea.
- Introduction with a good hook.
- Supporting paragraphs with lots of specific details.
- Strong conclusion.
- Before handing it in re-read the essay.
 - My essay flows well.
 - There are no run-on sentences.
 - I have lots of supporting details.
 - The formatting is good.
 - I have looked for spelling and grammar mistakes.

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● Grammar Check: Commas

- between items in a series, numbers, between the day and the year, between a city and a state
- in compound sentences (look for the word “but”)
- after an introductory word, interruptions and interjections or
- after an introductory phrase or clause
- set off a speaker's words
- to set off appositives (a word or phrase that renames or explains a noun)
- to set off explanatory phrases

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● Grammar Check: Quotation Marks and Underlining

- Quotation marks around
 - Titles of songs
 - Short stories
 - Poems
 - Articles
 - T.V. episodes
- Underline the titles of
 - Books
 - Movies
 - TV programs
 - Plays
 - Magazines
 - The names of ships and aircraft

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● Grammar Check: Capital Letters

- The first word of every sentence
- Names of people
- Days of the week, months
- Holidays, holy days
- Periods, events in history
- Battles
- Official documents
- Languages, nationalities, religions
- Political Parties
- Trade names
- Official titles used with names
- Formal epithets (the Great)
- Planets, heavenly bodies

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● Capital Letters - 2

- Continents
- Countries
- States, provinces
- Cities, towns, villages
- Streets, roads, highways
- Landforms
- Bodies of water
- Buildings, monuments
- Public Areas
- the first word in a sentence in a parenthesis, but do not capitalize the first word if the parentheses appears within another sentence

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● Capital Letters - 3

- the first word in a complete sentence that follows a colon when you want to emphasize that sentence or when the sentence is a quotation
- a particular section of the country
- certain religious words (God, Allah)
- the first word of a title, the last word, and every word in between except articles (a, an, the), short prepositions and coordinating conjunctions. This is also true for titles of books, newspapers, magazines, poems, plays, songs, films, words of art, stories
- the letters used to indicate form or shape

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● Capital Letters -4

- the name of an organization, association or team.
- abbreviations of titles
- words like father, mother, uncle and senator when they are used as title with a personal name or when they are substituted for proper nouns
- words like sociology and history when they are used as titles of a specific course

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● Grammar Check: Plurals

- Most plurals add an s
- Nouns in sh, ch, x, s, z – add an es
- Nouns that end in y (preceded by a consonant... change the y to i and add es (fly – flies)
- Nouns that end in y (preceded by a vowel) add an s (donkey – donkeys)
- Nouns ending in o (preceded by a vowel) add an s (radio – radios)
- Nouns ending in o (preceded by a consonant) add an es (echo – echoes)
- Musical terms always add an s (alto – altos, banjo – banjos)
- Nouns ending in f or fe
 - If it has an f sound add just s (roof-roofs)
 - If it has a v sound (wife – wives)

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Grammar Check: Plurals 2

- Some nouns have an irregular spelling in the plural form: crisis – crises
- Plurals of symbols, letters, numbers and words being discussed as words are formed by adding an apostrophe and s: wow's, R's, YMCA's, 3's, A's
- Words that end in ful – add an s: two mouthfuls of peas
- Compound nouns- add an s or es to the most important word in the compound: brothers-in-law, secretaries of state
- Collective nouns can be either singular or plural depending on how they are used.

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Grammar Check: Numbers

- numbers one to nine are usually written out
- numbers 10 and over are usually written as numerals
- numbers being compared should be kept in the same: style 8 to 11 years old
- decimals, percentage, chapters, pages, addresses, phone numbers, identification numbers and statistics should be numerals only.
- numbers at the beginning of a sentence should be written out.

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Parts of Speech

- Noun – names a person, place, thing, or idea
- Pronoun – is used in place of a noun
- Verb – expresses action or state of being
- Adjective – describes a noun or pronoun
- Adverb – describes a verb, adjective or another adverb
- Preposition – first Word or words in a prepositional phrase
- Conjunction – a word that connects other words or groups of words
- Interjection – A word that shows strong emotion or surprise

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Transitions

Agreement

The transition words like also, in addition, and, likewise, moreover, not to mention, furthermore, together with, of course -- add information, reinforce ideas, and express agreement with preceding material.

Opposition

Transition phrases like but, rather, or, in spite of, although, instead, nevertheless, regardless, above all, in reality, besides, on the contrary, despite, then again, after all -- express that there is evidence to the contrary or point out alternatives, and thus introduce a change the line of reasoning (contrast).

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Grammar Check: Homophones

- there/their/they're
- its/it's
- to/two/too
- hear/here
- chord/cord
- foreword/forward
- prophesy /prophecy
- principle/principal
- stationary /stationery
- bear/bare
- ad/add
- led/lead

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Grammar Check: Homophones - 2

- meat/meet
- new/knew
- piece/peace
- reign/rain/rein
- road/rode
- seam/seem
- way/weigh
- weather/whether
- your/you're
- allowed/aloud
- break/brake

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Grammar Check: Homophones - 3

- not/knot
- weak/week
- through/threw
- pail/pale
- scene/seen
- sail/sale
- made/maid
- mail/male
- sea/see
- board/bored

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Grammar Check: Use the right word! - 1

- a lot
- adapt/adopt
- affect/effect
- allusion/illusion
- already/all ready
- altogether/all together
- among/between
- can/may
- coarse/course
- complement/compliment
- counsel/council

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Grammar Check:

Use the right word! - 2

- good/well
- farther/further
- imply/infer
- insure/ensure
- lend/borrow
- medal/meddle
- metal/mettle
- moral/morale
- pedal/petal
- personal/personnel
- vary/very

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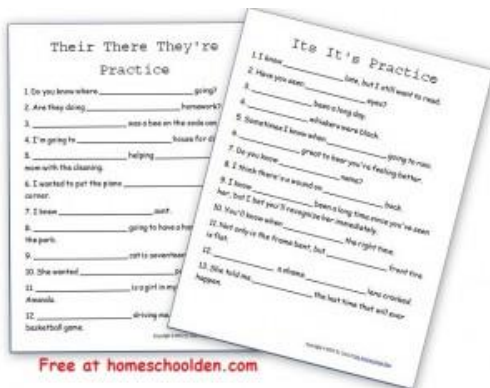
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I mentioned that I have also made the kids various practice worksheets through the years. For those of you who might be new to our blog, let me link to the most popular sheets we have. You can also check out our [Language Arts Resource page](#).

The most popular grammar pages we have are the [their/there/they're and its/it's page \(Free\)](#)



Here are some similar worksheet sets with homophones:

[Free Grammar Practice Sheets – to/two/too, there/they're/their AND Plurals, Adding Endings](#)

[they're/their/there, it's/its, you're/your, way/weigh – and other Homophones Worksheet \(free\)](#)

[Free Grammar Worksheets: Homophones \(words that sound the same, but are spelled differently\)](#)

Our **comma rules and practice sheets** also tend to have a lot of downloads each day:



[Comma Rules and Practice \(Free Worksheets\)](#) (pictured above)

[Comma Rules and Practice Sheets \(Free\)](#)

[Comma Rules and Practice Pages \(Free Grammar Worksheets\)](#)

[Grammar Review Sheet – Capital Letters, Commas, Letters](#) (Grade 1)

A couple years ago, I started going over the **semicolon rules** with my older two. This set explains the rules for using semicolons and has practice sentences.

[Semicolon Rules and Practice Sheets \(free\)](#)



And here are some of our other *free* grammar worksheets

- [The use of apostrophes, quotation marks and underlining](#)
- [Quotation Marks – Said and Asked Words](#)
- [Grammar Practice Sheets: Irregular Verbs and Nouns](#)
- [More Irregular Verb and Plural Noun Practice Sheets](#)



- [Grammar Sheets: Lay-Lie, Piece-Peace, Accept-Except](#) Made by Liesl at the Homeschool Den
- [Free Cupcake Contraction Activity and worksheet](#)



You might also interested in some of the other free resources we have on the blog:

We have a [FREE Homeschool Planner and Discovery Journal](#)



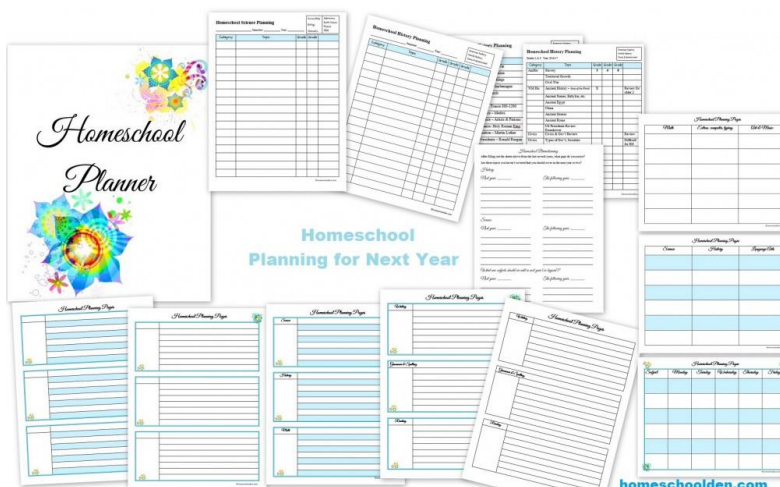
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If you are still in the Planning Stages of your Homeschool Year, you might want to check out this free resource:

Homeschool Planning for Next Year (Free Planning Pages): [Homeschool Vision Planner](#)

I shared these free Homeschool Planning Pages that I use as I try to figure out our long-range homeschooling goals. This post shares share the process I go through as I plan out the next year... I shared the planning pages that I've been using the past few years. I like having colorful planning pages to work on. This isn't really a weekly/monthly planner, but rather a **homeschool vision planner**. This 30+-page pdf is currently FREE to download! Let me know if it's helpful! ~Liesl

[Free Homeschool Planning Pages \(Homeschool Vision Planner\)](#)



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You might also be interested in these **FREE Homeschool Curriculum Resource Guides:**

If you are looking for more practical homeschooling tips, you might be interested in our Homeschool Planning Series with tips on Creating Your Homeschool Curriculum. We have three (of four) **free resource guides** available for [K-1](#), Grades [2-3](#) and Grades [4-5](#). (The Grade 6-8 Resource Guide is mostly finished. I hope to share that early this next Fall 2017.)



[Creating a Homeschool Curriculum: Kindergarten, Grade 1](#) This FREE 50-page Resource Guide has been created to answer some basic questions: What subjects should I cover? Where do I start? How do I know what to teach. It offers topics, units and hands-on activity ideas that might appeal to your kids.



[Creating a Homeschool Curriculum Grades 2-3 FREE 30-page Resource Guide](#)

This guide is a starting point for choosing the material you might want to cover in your homeschool. What subjects, units and topics should you cover in Grades 2 and 3? Where do I start? This resource guide will offer suggestions on what topics and hands-on activities might be engaging for your kids at this age.

Creating a Homeschool Curriculum: Grades 2-3
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What subjects should I teach my kid/s? Where do I start? How do I know what to teach my kids?

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[Creating Your Homeschool Curriculum – Grade 4-5 FREE Resource Guide](#)

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What subjects should I teach my kid/s? Where do I start? How do I know what to teach my kids? FREE 35+ Page Resource Guide

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Grade 6-8 Curriculum Resource Guide Coming Soon!