



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Correspondence Writing Tips

**A COMPANION TO THE
MCPS CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL**



Misused and Confused

Comprise; Compose

Use these with care.

To *comprise* means “to contain, embrace.”

Example: The state of Maryland comprises 24 counties.

The phrase *comprised of*, though increasingly common, is poor usage.

To *compose* means “to make up, to form the substance of something.”

Example: The committee is *composed of* parents, teachers, and community stakeholders.

Tool for Good Writing

Keep a dictionary within reach. MCPS uses *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (the 11th edition is available).

- Use it to find out what words mean and to confirm that words mean what you think they mean.
- Use it to find out the preferred spelling of a word.
- Use it to find out what preposition to use.

Example: methodical, ~in his daily routine.

A dictionary also helps in finding the accepted spelling of the names of people and places. Check out the *Handbook on Style and Punctuation* section, (page 1604 in the 11th edition).

Excerpts taken from *Edit Yourself, A Manual for Everyone Who Works With Words*, Bruce Ross-Larson, ©1996 and *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th edition, ©2003.

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Look for more
tips in the near future!

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Our Editorial Help Desk also appreciates
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We are also your contact for
a copy of the MCPS
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