

5<sup>th</sup> in a  
series of  
useful  
tips

MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

# *Correspondence Writing Tips*

**A COMPANION TO THE  
MCPS CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL**



# Tips for Good Writing

## **Is it Fewer or Less?**

The words *fewer* and *less* are commonly confused in English, or rather, *less* is used while *fewer* tends to fall by the wayside. You'll be less confused and make fewer mistakes after reading through this lesson.

## **Fewer**

*Fewer* is used with countable nouns: people, animals, chairs, shoes. You know *fewer* people than I do. There should be *fewer* books on the table. *Fewer* of us show up each year.

## **Less**

*Less* is used for uncountable, usually abstract nouns: money, happiness, snow, idealism. I hope *less* snow falls this year. You should spend *less* of your time complaining. *Less* is also used with adjectives and adverbs: I'm *less* happy than I used to be. He runs *less* quickly than you.

## **The Bottom Line**

*Less* is the more common word, there's no doubt about it. But many speakers seem to use it all the time, even in the relatively fewer constructions that need *fewer*. Just remember that if the noun can be preceded by a number (one person, three dogs, six of us, 19 problems), it should be modified with *fewer*. Otherwise, *less* is better.

Taken from *Laura K. Lawless*, [englishlanguage.allinforabout.com](http://englishlanguage.allinforabout.com)

