Using Italics

Italics have a variety of uses in formal writing, so it’s important that we understand when it is appropriate to use this function.

1. **Emphasize words and/or phrases:**
   - “It wasn’t the *only* time I’d ever slipped on the ice, but it was definitely the most embarrassing.”
   - “I *swear*, Mrs. Smith, the dog *really did* eat my homework!”

2. **Foreign words that are not commonly used in English, including the use of Latin terms for living organisms:**
   - “*Homo sapiens* have a very complex central nervous system.”
   - “I made a delicious *coq au vin* last night for our guests.”

3. **Mentioning a word as an example of a word rather instead of as a word itself:**
   - “Instead of using *the*, you should use the word *a*.”
   - “While the word *menu* is technically French, it has been adopted into the English language.”

4. **A letter or number mentioned as itself:**
   - “Many people forget that my name is Anne, spelled with an *e*.”
   - “She realized that the 65 written in red on her paper meant that she could not raise her grade enough by the end of the semester to pass the class.”

5. **Introducing or defining terms:**
   - The basic principles of a beginning writer’s essay are the *introduction, body, and conclusion.*”
   - An *odd* number is one that does not equal a full number when divided by two.”

6. **Algebraic symbols or symbols for physical quantities or mathematical concepts:**
   - “The speed of light, *c*, is approximately equal to 3.00×10⁸ m/s.”

7. **Italicize the titles or names of the following sources:**
   - Books (*The Scarlet Letter, Heart of Darkness*)
- Magazines or journals (*Time*, *Shakespeare Quarterly*)
- Newspapers (*The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*)
- Websites (*Austin Peay State University Website*)
- Plays or musicals (*Hamlet*, *Waiting for Godot*, *The Sound of Music*)
- Television or radio programs (*The Colbert Report*, *Talk of the Nation*)
- Movies (*The Shawshank Redemption*, *Casablanca*)
- Legal cases (*Brown v. Board of Education*)
- Music albums (*The White Album*)
- Long musical pieces (*Nutcracker Suite*)
- Works of art (*The Thinker*, *Mona Lisa*)
- Long poems (*The Waste Land*, *Paradise Lost*)
- Pamphlets (*The American Crisis*)
- Famous speeches (*Gettysburg Address*)
- Comic strips (*Calvin and Hobbes*, *Peanuts*)
- Ships, spacecraft, trains, and airplanes (*H.M.S. Pinafore*, *U.S.S. Enterprise* (Do not italicize or underline U.S.S. or H.M.S. in names of these crafts.))