

32 Writing Tips

A Guide for Writing Effectively and
Avoiding Plagiarism

Being able to write proficiently is a powerful skill to have, and will prove to be an asset in many areas of life.

Writing well requires proper instruction and ample practice. Knowing about ethical writing practices like citation and paraphrasing will also help you avoid plagiarism and improve your writing.

To better understand what it takes to be a strong writer, English Instructor and writer, Beth Calvano, M.Ed., outlines 32 of the best writing tips.

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#1 Listen to your inspirations

The best writing ideas come from doing something else! Inspirations rarely last long, so write them down, even if that means making a note in your smartphone. Brooding over a writing assignment only leads to frustration and usually bad ideas. Take a walk; go out with your friends; do anything but think about the task. When the ideas come, they will be brilliant! You'll wonder why you hadn't thought of that earlier! It doesn't matter. Writing is a process, go with it! Don't answer the phone or the door. Sit at your computer and let the words pour out. After the initial rush, save the paper and answer the ten texts that you received while you were writing. Come back to the paper later, after you have cleared your head. That was just the first draft!

#2 Keep it simple

Many freshmen college students try to use lots of words to say something quite simple. Don't fall into that trap. Your professor will not be impressed. He or she will simply edit out your fine words. Instead, choose quality words that convey your message in the best way possible. Don't overuse the Thesaurus! Find the word that is best for the idea and use it. Edgar Allen Poe wrote: "Words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality." Poe was right in that each word has its own reality. Find the right one. Your writing should be as tight as possible. Read over your paper and dissect the words. Can some words be removed? Can some words be exchanged for better ones? A concise, well-worded paper will impress your professor more than a wordy one.

QUICK TIP

Don't overuse the Thesaurus! Find the word that is best for the idea and use it.

#3 Making your point: Persuasive writing

Inevitably, at some point in your college career, you will be assigned a persuasive essay to write. If you are not naturally argumentative, tricks exist to help you give Donald Trump a run for his money! The number one piece of ammunition in your arsenal must be facts. Ethics instructors often tell students to never begin an argument unless they have their facts straight! How can you be convincing if you don't have a clue what you are talking about? Another bullet to carry through this process is the ability to **lead** with words; do not push. Your readers will push back. Convince them by exposing a point of **shared meaning or significance**. Most people agree on certain matters. Find that point for your subject and use it as a persuasive tool. For example, if you are writing about buying a new computer, a persuasive sentence could be: **“No one wants to pay the retail price for a new computer, so looking for sales and online coupons is a good practice.”** Above all, exude confidence. You must sound self-assured and secure in your assertions. Arming yourself with these writing tools may ensure you a brilliant persuasive paper.

QUICK TIP

Never begin an argument unless you have your facts straight!

#4 It's all in the details: Descriptive writing

This is where the artist in you gets to paint with words! Anyone who has ever read a Victorian novel or a Stephen King book knows the significance of details. In his book, *It*, King's description of Pennywise the Clown has inexorably changed the way many people feel about clowns. Use the **senses** to describe. How did the room smell? What sounds could be heard from outside or from the other room? Could you almost taste the bread baking in the kitchen? Was the fabric on the settee soft or rough? Was the room dusty or filthy, or was it fresh and clean? Use **vivid words**. Instead of writing “the dog,” write “the stately Great Dane.” Also, add **feelings** to strengthen the mood: “The anxious elderly woman reluctantly opened the door.” Details, details, details: They are the key to descriptive writing that will leave a memorable impact on your readers.

#5 Mixing it up: Using a variety of sentence structures

Monotony is not favored in any kind of writing, except in directions or lists. Don't bore your readers to tears. Don't write the way Ben Stein speaks! Fortunately, the Fathers of the English Language provided us with a plethora of sentence structure possibilities. A **simple** sentence can be: "School reform is a complicated topic." A **compound** sentence can look like this: "School reform is a complicated subject, so it can be an effective conversation starter." A **complex** sentence can read: "Because school reform is such a complicated subject, it can be an effective conversation starter." A **compound complex** sentence can add dimension to a paper: "Because school reform is such a complicated subject, it can be an effective conversation starter, and it can cause arguments among parents and school officials." Another way to mix it up is to use different terms for the same object or subject, or repeat the same term (for emphasis) in different kinds of sentences. Create a wonderfully long sentence, and add a short one directly after it. Turn a sentence into a question. Keep the paper alive and moving!

#6 In the beginning: Creating an introduction

Two schools of thought exist for the creation of a paper's introduction. First write the introduction and then follow the pattern throughout the rest of the paper. However you choose to develop your introduction, it must contain the thesis statement. The thesis statement can be one sentence or more. It should contain a concise declaration of the content of the paper. The reader should know, by reading the introduction, exactly what the paper will be about. If you introduce the topic of school reform in your introduction and end up discussing the poor driving habits of school bus drivers, you have gotten off course! Use the introduction as a template for the rest of the paper. An example of an effective introduction is: **Painting a room is time-consuming work. However, if done properly, an average size room can be painted in an afternoon. Steps can be taken to make the job easier. The first step is to prepare the room for painting. The second step is to ensure that all supplies are on hand. The third step is to use proven painting techniques. Finally, the last step is the clean up and reassembly of the room.** This introduction sets the stage for the rest of the paper. Each step can be a separate paragraph.

#7 In the end: Developing a conclusion

Writing the conclusion to a paper is quite easy. You already have all of your information in the paper. Include the ideas from your thesis to remind the reader of salient points. The conclusion does not have to be simply a rehash of the paper. It should be a summary, but it can be creative and inspired! Draw conclusions; use your critical thinking skills to pull together what you have just written. Can you make assumptions with the information that you have just presented? Can you leave the reader with a question to ponder? Do you have an appropriate quote in your arsenal that would be a perfect ending for your paper? For example, if you have written a paper about an emotional legal case, this quote by Associate Supreme Court Justice, Sonia Sotomayor, may be fitting: **“It’s not the heart that compels conclusions in cases, it’s the law.”** Leave the reader with the sense that he or she was just illuminated! Think about your favorite movie ending. How did it make you feel? That’s the level of feeling you want your conclusion to evoke!

QUICK TIP

The conclusion should be a summary, but it can also be creative and inspired.

#8 Transitioning through a paper

If your professor’s comments on the papers you submit include “flow,” “choppy,” “transitions,” and offensive words like those, it’s time to break out a list of transitions and use them. Transitioning in writing entails moving smoothly from one idea into another. When writing for an audience, especially a professor, using transitions makes you look clever and quite academic! Professors may look for transitions at the beginning, and sometimes at the end, of each paragraph. Depending on the subject of your paper and the differences or relationship between paragraph ideas, transitions can include: also, however, finally, currently, for example, in fact, consequently, again, furthermore, and in summary. In conclusion (Notice the transition!), the more you use transitions in your writing, the more natural the practice will become.

#9 Avoiding “it”

We have a tendency to write the way we speak. One of the dangers of this sloppy practice is the misuse of the word “it.” The misdeed can come at the beginning or later in a sentence. For example: **“It is simple to download an app onto an iPhone.”** If you thought that sentence was perfectly okay, you were mistaken! To what does “it” refer? A better way to word the idea is: **“Downloading an app onto an iPhone is simple.”** The same blunder can be made later in a sentence: **“The dog likes it when you scratch behind his ears.”** The word “it” is not needed here. A way to correct this sentence is: **“The dog likes to be scratched behind his ears.”** If the subject is already known, the use of the word “it” as a pronoun is acceptable. For example: **“The new car was green. It was also very expensive.”** The subject is understood in the second sentence. Check your writing. If it includes rogue “its,” remove them.

#10 Passive voices in the night

When you receive your papers back from grammar checker software, do they contain many passive voice admonitions? The problem is that many people like the way the passive voice sounds! The other problem is that it is inappropriate for most academic writing. Don’t despair; passive voice has its place in other forms of writing. Active voice is the opposite of passive, and what we need to be considered effective scholarly writers. In active voice, the subject is executing the action. In passive voice, the subject is incurring the action by the verb. The subject is said to be passive in this case. Use the active voice in academic writing. For example:

Passive voice: “Permission should be given to the students, so that they can attend the function.”

Active voice: “Parents must give permission for their child to attend the function.”

QUICK TIP

Although passive voice sounds fine when speaking, it is not appropriate for academic writing.

#11 The thing is...

The Thing was a sci-fi movie first made in 1951 and remade a couple of times over the years. The monster was named “The Thing” because it was a previously unknown entity. Fortunately, when writing for college, we don’t have to face unknown monsters, unless, of course, we are explaining statistical analysis! “Thing” is a very versatile word, too versatile for academic writing. Instead of using this word, eliminate it or use the word that the dictionary uses to define the particular subject about which you are writing. We have dictionaries so that professors don’t have to read sentences like: **“The thing is that Pavlov’s theory was built upon by Skinner.”** Another example is: **“Pavlov’s theory was the thing that Skinner studied to help form his theory of operant conditioning.”** In the first sentence, “thing” serves no useful purpose. The sentence can be written: **“Skinner built on Pavlov’s theory.”** In the second sentence, the “thing” has already been named as the “theory”: **“Skinner studied Pavlov’s theory. Through this study, Skinner formed his theory of operant conditioning.”** Be precise in your wording; (the thing is that) your grade will depend on it!

#12 Anthropomorphisms: Giving human characteristics to nonhuman entities

Sometimes called personification, this practice has its roots in ancient storytelling (mythology, religion, etc.). So, we come by this habit in our writing honestly! With all of the fairy tales we’ve heard throughout our lives, giving human characteristics to A.A. Milne’s Winnie-the-Pooh seems like a normal state of affairs. The creators of Disney movies are notorious for their flagrant use of anthropomorphisms! An example of anthropomorphism in a sentence is: **“The study found that online instructors benefit from faculty forums.”** The correct way to state this is: **“The researchers found that instructors benefit from faculty forums.”** We read anthropomorphisms often in all kinds of writing, but your professors, if they are doing their job, will call you out on them if they are used in certain kinds of writing. It is hard to resist using personification when writing with feeling. Pooh, a stuffed bear (A.A. Milne), says beautiful sentences like, “How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard.”

#13 Cut it out: Editing

Nobel Laureate, George Wald (1906-1997) said: “We are the products of editing, rather than of authorship.” A not-so-well-edited paper not only garners a low grade, it also makes you look sloppy and careless. You will be remembered for your mistakes! Edit a paper while you are writing it, and again after you finish it. The best practice is to put the paper aside for a day or two, and edit it after your mind has had time to readjust. Yes, that means not waiting until the last minute to write it! Often, you will find that better words can be used, and that you have overlooked minor errors. For instance, edits will make this sentence better: **“The student will have to try and get the paper done by Tuesday.”** Edited: **“The student must finish the paper by Tuesday.”** Another tip: Not editing your resume properly can be the kiss of death! If you cannot afford to pay someone to edit your work, hone your editing skills. Remember, you are the “product of your editing”!

QUICK TIP

Edit a paper while you are writing it, and again after you finish it, preferably a day later.

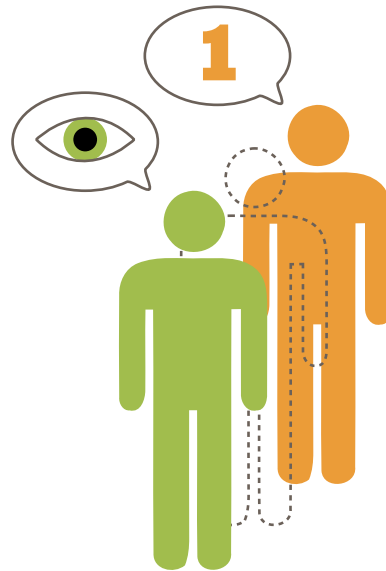
#14 Make it perfect: Revising

Revising a paper is somewhat like editing, but more pronounced. Revising can mean rewriting. If your paper is not what it could be; if it does not flow, if your tone changes throughout the paper, if you have strayed from the thesis, or if the paper is organized poorly, you will want a serious rewrite. This is not a punishment! This is part of the writing process; embrace it! Sometimes, upon re-reading a paper, you will find that it does not pack the punch that you wanted or that the words simply do not convey the message you intended. In a 1956 interview entitled “The Art of Fiction,” with *The Paris Review*, Ernest Hemingway claimed that he rewrote the last page of *Farewell to Arms* 39 times before he got the words just right! Think of revisions as a badge of honor. Give yourself a pat on the back for finding the problems. The fact that you have makes you a bona fide writer. Congratulations! **For example:** “The researchers found that 43 out of 70 participants suffered adverse reactions to the medication. But the pharmaceutical company went

ahead and gave the medications out anyway.” **In the first sentence, the tone is academic. The second sentence is conversational in tone. It can be changed to match the academic tone:** “However, the pharmaceutical company chose to market the medication despite the researchers’ findings.”

#15 First and third person: When to use “I” and “one”

Most people find writing in first person easy. We get a chance to write about ourselves, something we know quite a bit about! Difficulty often comes when the assignment calls for third person writing. Using the word “I” is obviously writing in first person. To replace it, use the word “one” or use a person’s name or title, even if that person is you. Simply write your name and continue writing as an observer. It’s an odd feeling the first time you write about yourself in third person. Some folks take medication for speaking about themselves from this point of view, but this is an assignment, so no meds required! An example of using the word “one” in the third person is: **“One can easily remove the hard drive from a computer.”** Using “one” instead of “you” or “I” immediately relegates the sentence to third person status instead of first. “One” also makes the sentence more academic or professional.



#16 Put it in your own words: Paraphrasing

A student once asked, “Why do I have to reword it when someone else has already said it better than I ever could?” The answer was that if she did not paraphrase she would be stealing the material from the original author! This is called plagiarism. Paraphrasing also shows the instructor that you understand the material. Your paper will be more coherent if you completely understand the information. Remember that your professor is

a professional and will know whether or not you have comprehended the subject matter. Paraphrasing also saves you from adding too many quotes. Using a lot of quotes makes you look lazy and is not acceptable in academic writing. One important rule is that if you choose to use more than two words together verbatim from the author, you must use quotation marks. Use a thesaurus to find different words that mean the same as the author's if you're not feeling particularly brilliant. Citing the paraphrased or quoted material will be your next step, but we will get into that in the next tip. An example of paraphrasing is: Original: **“Brill and Smith (2010) found that the students performed class work more efficiently directly after the teacher finished a lesson.”** Paraphrased version: **“The researchers reported that students more successfully completed classroom assignments just after their teacher concluded the lesson.”**

#17 Avoiding plagiarism: Citing

This is how you legally use someone else's material in your papers. Students make such a big deal out of citing, but it's an easy process that covers your behind and makes you look smart! The rules are that you must cite after you have paraphrased and after you have used quotes. Cite after each sentence in which you have used another's idea(s). If you have made conclusions based on what you have read from the material that you are citing, you do not have to cite that material. Those ideas are yours, and perhaps someone will need to cite you one day!

Remember that your professor most likely has access to plagiarism detection software, so don't take the chance. You are a scholar! Check your institution's chosen document formatting style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) for exact guidelines. Usually, citing only entails the author (s) name(s), year of publication, and page or paragraph number for quotes. Why put yourself through the embarrassment and punishment of plagiarism accusations when citing is simple?!

An example of a (paraphrased) citation in APA format is: **“Research shows that the two theorists are correct in their assertions (Simon, 2012).”**

QUICK TIP

Using someone else's word or IDEAS requires citation.

#18 Avoiding plagiarism: References

The reference or cited works page is an integral aspect of a college paper. This page may be boring to assemble, but it is crucial. Created properly, the reference page can be a guard against plagiarism. References for each citation, except for personal communications, must be listed. Check your institution's preferred formatting guidelines (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.) for direction. Don't think that because the reference page is at the end of the paper that your professor will not check every last comma and period. The rules for references are very precise. This page is where you can lose a lot of points for mundane mistakes! Formatting style guides are available in hardcopy book form. Another way to find correct referencing information is to look online. Many universities have reputable sites for formatting guidelines. Be sure to look for scholarly sources for this information. Some online citation generators are not reliable. Learn how to correctly cite and reference in the format chosen by your institution of higher learning. I recommend buying the appropriate style guide and keeping it next to your computer. An example of a journal article reference in APA format is: **Howard, T. (2010). Investing in real estate. The Real Estate Journal, 4(2), 123-126.**

QUICK TIP

Look for formatting style guides on university websites.

#19 “How many quotes can I use?”

Professors are not stupid; that’s why they have advanced college degrees! They know the tricks of the trade, and adding long quotes to a paper to meet the word count is one of the oldest tricks. Use as few quotes as possible. Block quotes (of 40 or more words) may be necessary if you are writing about a poem or literature, but they are mostly frowned upon. The general rule is that a paper should include less than 20 percent quoted material. That figure can vary; check with your professors. If you believe that you need to use quotes, choose ones that are pronounced and will add value to your paper. For instance, if you are writing a paper about a colorful public personality, you may want to include a particularly provocative quote made by that person that illustrates their personality. Using meaningful quotes sparingly can add worth to your writing.



#20 Summing it up

A great way to practice paraphrasing is to summarize. If you are writing a college paper and need to include the particulars of a study, article, or book, you will need to be able to summarize. Summarizing is simple. Read the text and then put it into your own words. If you are summarizing a lengthy study and you do not have time to read the entire text, some tricks exist to speed up the process. Read the Introduction carefully so that you can become familiar with the study and why it was conducted. Read briskly through the midsection of the study, which usually includes the literature review, methodology, and analysis. Toward the end of the paper will be the conclusions. This section will be of particular interest to you because it contains a synopsis of what the researcher(s) found and what conclusions were drawn from the study. Summarize as you are reading. You can rewrite the summary after you finish. Think of it as the retelling of a story. But, unlike the retelling of what happened at the party on Saturday night, this story must be accurate, with no embellishments! **Don’t forget to cite!**

#21 “I can’t use Wikipedia?”: Sources

No! You cannot use Wikipedia as a source! Virtually anyone can edit a wiki, so they cannot be considered scholarly sources. If you like some of the information that you find in Wikipedia, look at the bottom of the wiki page and find the references. Search those references for the information that you need. Scholarly sources include peer-reviewed articles found in ground and online libraries and website content written by experts. The time spent finding a reputable source is worth the effort. Don’t risk a low grade because you were trying to save time. If you choose to use a website as a reference, look for who created the site or who wrote the material that you want to use. Does that person hold a master’s or a doctoral degree? Is the website connected to a university? If it is a business website, is the creator an expert in the field? Does he or she list credentials? The best sources to use are those found in a ground library or an online library database. Check with your college or university librarian for available usage. Your academic integrity is important, protect it!



#22 Write like a scholar: Academic writing

Academic writing is unlike any other writing that you will participate in in life. It is very different from casual or even business writing. Academic writing is not difficult, and it is an excuse to show off your writing and critical thinking skills! If you are not sure exactly what academic writing sounds or looks like, read some scholarly-written articles. They are not hard to find. Any peer-reviewed journal in any library (ground or online) will be filled with them; EBSCOhost and ProQuest are two enormous online library databases. Read until you find yourself speaking like a scholar! This practice is much like language immersion courses. Instead of learning a new language, you are learning an upgraded version of the English language that you already know. Wow your friends and classmates with your newfound vocabulary and beautiful cadence. You may find a difference in the way you write and the grades you receive. Think like a scholar and be a scholar!

#23 Writing for the reader

Who will be reading your paper? Keep your audience in mind when composing a paper. If you are an expert in your subject area, and you are writing about something that an 18-year-old would understand (like how to use an iPod Touch), but your audience is a group of 60-year-olds; you will want to word yourself carefully. Explain each step in layman's terms. If you are writing about the content of a textbook for a professor, you can usually assume that the professor has a handle on the subject matter. If you are unsure of which tact to take, take the safe route and use details. However, if you are writing for an audience of business people and you are trying to sell them on an idea, you will want to use persuasive and positive language. Make your product or idea as enticing as possible. Writing an upbeat feature article for the college newspaper allows you to be relaxed with language and mood. Knowing and writing for your audience is imperative for writing success.

#24 Get their attention: Titles

Stephen King said “You cannot hope to sweep someone else away by the force of your writing until it has been done to you.” Think of the titles that have led you to read a book, article, or paper. Many writers have trouble creating titles. Some authors hold contests and let their readers come up with interesting titles! Since not many people are likely to be interested in a title contest for a college paper, you are on your own! The title of your paper is what your audience will read first. If the title is not appealing, you may lose readers. A dull title may also cause your audience to form a negative opinion of your paper before they even start reading it! Dissertation titles are notoriously boring, but that is expected. If a fun title does not come to you right away, look for ideas from the ones you know. Remember, make it your own! **For example:** “How to choose a cell phone” is a possible paper title, but “Buying a Cell Phone: Don't Get Ripped Off” is more of an attention-getter.

QUICK TIP

Don't be boring. Capture readers' attention with an intriguing title!

#25 Putting it together: Organization

A.A. Milne said: “Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up.” Organizing is especially important before writing a paper. An outline is usually the best approach to organizing in this instance. Use the standard academic paper outline of Introduction (with thesis), body of paper (following thesis), and conclusion. An outline can be just a couple of words for each section, or it can be a full sentence for each section. For instance, you can write out the first sentence of each paragraph. Even some “chicken scratch” on a napkin is better than no organization! Be systematic about checking your organization. Use the outline you have written to check each section of the paper. Organization can also include making sure you have attended to other commitments so that you have the time to devote to writing a paper without being rushed. Also, collect all of the materials, texts, etc. that you will need for your paper and keep them near your computer. Organizing before you begin the writing process can save a lot of time.

#26 The art of the draft

The ultimate purpose of writing drafts is to make mistakes and then correct them! Drafting is the process of writing and rewriting a paper until it is perfection. Each draft should get progressively better. Look for word usage, sentence structure, coherence, adherence to thesis, grammar issues, and proper citing and referencing. This process means that you must begin a paper days in advance of its due date, not hours before! Build upon each draft, making corrections and revisions until you read the paper and you cannot think of another addition or subtraction that would make it more perfect. Three drafts is usual in the writing process, but sometimes more are used. The number of drafts is not important. What is important is that you systematically improve upon the original paper. Some writers never feel finished. They never feel that their work is perfect. If you are one of these writers, strive for the best that you can do in the time allotted! Don't make yourself crazy over one paper because many more papers will be assigned!



#27 Using essay structure for more than just essays

The structure of writing an essay is useful for many other writing tasks. As an exercise, use this formula when answering any test questions or questions on job applications. Repeat the question in the answer. This shows that you understand the question. Using this structure also helps you to remain on topic. The sentence that you develop becomes the thesis for your answer. Simply reword the question in the form of a sentence and proceed from there with confidence! For example, if the question reads: **“Reflecting on the reasons for the current economic downturn, which reason do you believe was the most influential, and why?”** The sentence that could be written as a thesis statement is: **“Reflecting on the reasons for the current economic downturn, I believe that the most influential reason is that lenders relaxed their regulations on authorizing credit.”** You would then explain why you feel that this is the most influential reason. The formula of rewording a question is a simple one. The practice will help to ensure that you answer the question satisfactorily and in detail.

#28 When it’s okay to use humor

Most academic writing is scholarly in tone, but every once in awhile we have a chance to slip some humor into a paper. What a gift this is when it happens! The task is to use the humor tastefully, so that it is received well by your professor. Usually, this opportunity comes when the paper assigned is “lighter” in nature. These kinds of papers allow you to share a bit more of your personality. The paper could be an opinion piece or your view of an event. You may find an amusing anecdote about the writing subject that can be shared in the paper. You may even come to a comical conclusion about a subject after studying it. Using humor would be a great conclusion to a paper! The trick is to not get carried away. Go for a smile or a chuckle, not more. This is still an academic paper. Keep the humor suitable, maintain command of the scholarly tone, and enjoy the chance to show your fun side! **For example, a paper about a skydiving experience could conclude with:** “ I conquered my fear of heights by skydiving, but when that crow flew into my face, I developed ornithophobia, a fear of birds!”

#29 Backing it up: Supporting your thesis

Ernest Hemingway said: “There is nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and bleed.” Although writing a college paper may sometimes feel like a blood-letting, the difference between writing a novel and writing a paper is that academic writing contains a specific formula. The thesis is the driving force of a paper. A thesis is often one sentence, but it can be more than one. A simple thesis rule is to list the exact topics that you will be covering in the paper. For example: **“The Knights Templar guarded pilgrims on their trips to the Holy Land; they were bankers, and they were put to death in 1314 by King Philip of France.”** This thesis statement lists three topics that can be discussed in three separate paragraphs. Once the thesis is established, use it as a guide for the rest of the paper. Whatever you have addressed in the thesis statement, you must include in your document. Backing up your thesis ensures that you stay on topic and include all pertinent information.

QUICK TIP

Simple thesis rule: List the exact topics that you will be covering.

#30 What?: Writing coherently

“What?” You never want your professor to ask this question when reading your paper! Read your paper after you have not looked at it for a couple of days. Do the sentences make sense? Does the paper flow from one sentence and one paragraph to another? Have you used transitions? Do you answer any questions that may arise in reader’s mind? Does one idea lead logically to the next? Your paper should have a specific order. If the reader wishes to review the paper to reread a section, he or she should be able to easily find the part of the paper they need. Each paragraph should only contain the information pertinent to one subject. Also, each paragraph should contain at least 3 sentences. Too many short paragraphs will cause the paper to be choppy. Explore each idea that you have introduced in the thesis thoroughly. Have a friend look at the paper (one who is a good writer). Take any comments as constructive criticism. Make revisions as necessary.

#31 Read it out loud

Reading your papers out loud is another good practice. Involve others in the process. Walk down the hall in your dorm reading aloud as if you were sharing Shakespeare! Any mistakes you have made will be glaringly obvious to anyone listening, and they will be more than happy to call you out on them! Many mistakes can be found this way. Turn off the TV and the music and concentrate on what you are reading. If it doesn't make sense to you or to others listening, it won't make sense to your professor. If the sentences all sound the same, rewrite some of them for variety. If the sentences are too short or too long, improve them. Would you be interested in this paper? If the paper is boring, find a way to make it interesting. Research your subject again to find an interesting angle. Reading a paper out loud is an effective way to find what works and doesn't work in a paper.

#32 Prove it: Incorporating evidence

Scottish philosopher, David Hume (1711-1776), said: "A wise man proportions his belief to the evidence." This is the standard to which your professors will hold your papers! If you make an assertion, incorporate evidence for that statement. For instance, if you make a statement such as: **"John Doe believed that scientific proof of Bigfoot existed."** you must support that statement with evidence. Where did you find this information? The correct way to cite and reference this statement in APA format is: **John Doe believed that scientific proof of Bigfoot existed (Smith & Jones, 1998). Reference: (on reference page) Smith, J. & Jones, J. (1998). Bigfoot. The Journal of Nature's Beasts, 18(4), 16-18.** In academic writing, evidence usually involves the use of citations and references. Using evidence will show your professor that you are a serious, scholarly writer.

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