

# General Essay Guidelines

As we progress towards formal essay forms, the following guidelines establish items of importance. Starting week 3, these will factor into grading of your papers.

1. Typically, academic writing does not reflect personal stories nor overt editorials. Your research paper will not contain collections of personal memories.
2. Avoid colloquial phrases and cliches. Specifically do not use the phrase “a lot,” which can usually be replaced with one of the following words:  
*many, most, much, extreme.*
3. Avoid questions in your writing. Make statements instead.
4. A typical paragraph contains three sentences or more.
5. Avoid opening sentences with words such as: well, sure, now, yes, no.  
Do not begin sentences with conjunctions: but, and, or, nor, for, so, yet.
6. Do not end your sentences with a preposition.
7. Do not use contractions. (don’t, can’t, won’t, he’s, I’ll, we’ll, *etc.*)
8. Remember **it’s** is a contraction for **it is**: “It’s going to rain today.” Avoid it.  
On the other hand, **its** is a possessive:  
“Despite its name, the Smokey-sky iris exhibits strong colors.”
9. Proof your work.
  - Double check verb tense and noun/verb agreement.
  - Double check punctuation.
  - Remember spell check is not perfect:  
Threw his use of color and texture, Van Gogh established a rebel reputation.  
His genius lyes in the fact head never accepted conventional painting methods.
10. Avoid using passive (or linking verbs) which use forms of “to be”  
(is, was, were, am, are, has been, etc.)
 

no: He was going to the store in a hurry to get a newspaper.

yes: He hurried to the store and purchased a newspaper.

guidelines