

General Guidelines and Pre-Writing



introduction

Writing matters even with today's technological advances—effective communication is still essential for our society to function.

General Essay Guidelines

As we progress towards formal essay forms, the following guidelines establish items of importance.

1. Typically, academic writing does not reflect personal stories nor overt editorials. Your research paper will not contain collections of personal memories or random opinions.
2. Avoid colloquial phrases and cliches. (see *SF Writer* p 61)
Specifically do not use the phrase “a lot,” which can be replaced with one of the following words: *many, most, much, extreme*.
3. Avoid questions in your writing. Make statements instead.

General Essay Guidelines

4. A typical paragraph contains five 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 Smoggy-iris exhibits strong colors."

General Essay Guidelines

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.

Essay Format

- All assignments will be turned in utilizing 12 pt. Times New Roman.
- Double space papers, with 1” margins on all four sides.
- Indent opening paragraphs with the standard 1/2 inch.

On page 335 of the *SF Writer* a MLA standard template is available for you to follow. Be sure to keep your papers consistent with these requirements.

A full grade point will be deducted if any of these requirements are not met.

Pre-Writing Techniques

- Ideas need to be developed first and *then* explored in detail.
 - > free-write exercise
 - > journal writing
 - > listing
 - > mapping / clustering / grouping
- Multiple drafts of a paper need to be created before turning in a final version.
- Understand the boundaries of the assignment.
 - > Date due
 - > Page restrictions / word count
 - > Prompt specifications
- Determine your purpose, audience, tone, point of view
 - > Part of the topics for next time.

Sei Shonagon (c.966-c.1017)

Squalid Things

The back of a piece of embroidery.

The inside of a cat's ear.

A swarm of mice, who still have no fur, when they come wriggling out of their nest.

The seams of a fur robe that has not been lined.

Darkness in a place that does give the impression of being very clean.

A rather unattractive woman who looks after a large brood of children.

A woman who falls ill and remains unwell for a long time. In the mind of the lover, who is not particularly devoted to her, she must appear rather squalid.

Shonagon, Sei. *The Pillow Book*. Ivan Morris, trans. New York: Columbia UP. 1991. Print.