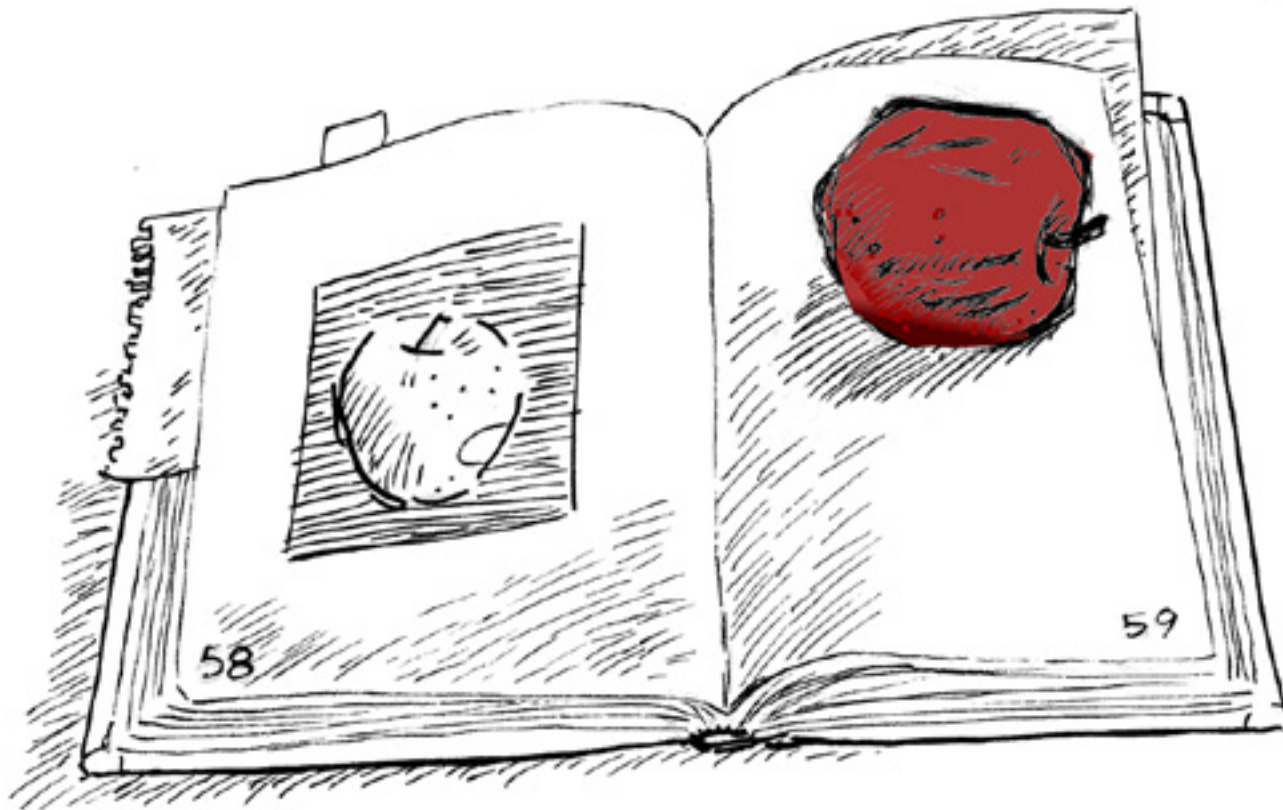


General Guidelines and Pre-Writing



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 10 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 *Bedford* p 221-222)
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. 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.

10. Proof your work.

- Double check verb tense and noun/verb agreement.
- Double check punctuation.
- Remember spell check is not perfect.

Ode to My Spell Checker || by Jerrold H. Zar

Eye halve a spelling checker

It came with my pea sea.

It plainly marks four my revue miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a quay and type a word and weight for it to say

Weather eye yam wrong oar write.

It shows me strait a weigh as soon as a mist ache is maid.

It nose bee fore two long and eye can put the error rite.

Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it,

I am shore your pleased to no.

Its letter perfect awl the way.

My checker told me sew.

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 583 of the *Bedford* 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.

Basic Essay Modes

- 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.
- Multiple drafts of a paper need to be created before turning in a final version.

Pre-Writing Techniques

- Ideas need to be developed first and *then* explored in detail.

Pre-writing exercises help establish an idea before building the entire work.

- > freewrite exercises
- > journal writing
- > listing
- > mapping / clustering / grouping

Journal Writing

Keeping a journal:

In a sense, with this method you are talking to primarily to yourself through the page.

- you develop the restrictions or the formula
- record highlights of day to day events
- generate notes and ideas for possible future writing
- practice techniques with your writing style
- create meditation exercises / word games
- show a writer's concepts and experiments: a record of intentions left behind

Sei Shonagon (c.966-c.1017)

The Pillow Book of Sei Shonagon || Translated by Ivan Morris ©1991

These writings serve multitude of purposes. They act as:

- a collection of memories
- character sketches
- short prosaic writing
- developments of ideas for future poems
- historical document

> The writings represent the point of view of a noble lady in the 11th century.

Little is known of Shonagon's life other than the sparse details provided in the passages. The entire book covers ten years in the court discussing scandals, gossip, opinions of the upperclass.

Sei Shonagon (c.966-c.1017)

She does manage to promote a strong feminist attitude:

she believes her writings are equal to men, even those of higher rank.

Most important is the fact how this project began. Shonagon herself states that the Empress of Japan gave her a series of blank notebooks, resulting in:

I now have a vast quantity of paper at my disposal and I set about filling the notebook with odd facts, stories from the past, and all sorts of other things, often including the most trivial material. On the whole I concentrated on things and people that I found charming and splendid; my notes are full of poems and observations on trees and plants, birds and insects. (263)

Sei Shonagon (c.966-c.1017)

She catalogs intimate details of her life, small occasions and ceremonies.

The lists often transcend from the ordinary experience to poetry.

It was common during her lifetime for individuals to record stray experiences or sexual encounters; the writer stored the material in drawers kept under pillows— thus the title “pillow book.”

Shonagon’s words are the oldest collection of personal writings to survive from the culture.

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. (170)

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