

# General Essay Guidelines

The following guidelines establish items of importance. Points will be deducted for these items. Refer to this sheet often during the writing process.

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 clichés. 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 five sentences or more.
5. Do not open sentences with the following:  
well, sure, now, so, because, yet, but, and, or, nor, for, yes, no.
6. Do not end your sentences with a preposition.
7. Do not use contractions (don’t, can’t, won’t, he’s, *and all other forms*).
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:
10. Avoid over-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.
11. Avoid gender specific nouns: mankind, civilized man, and other similar wording.
12. Avoid using the abbreviation *etc.*

guidelines