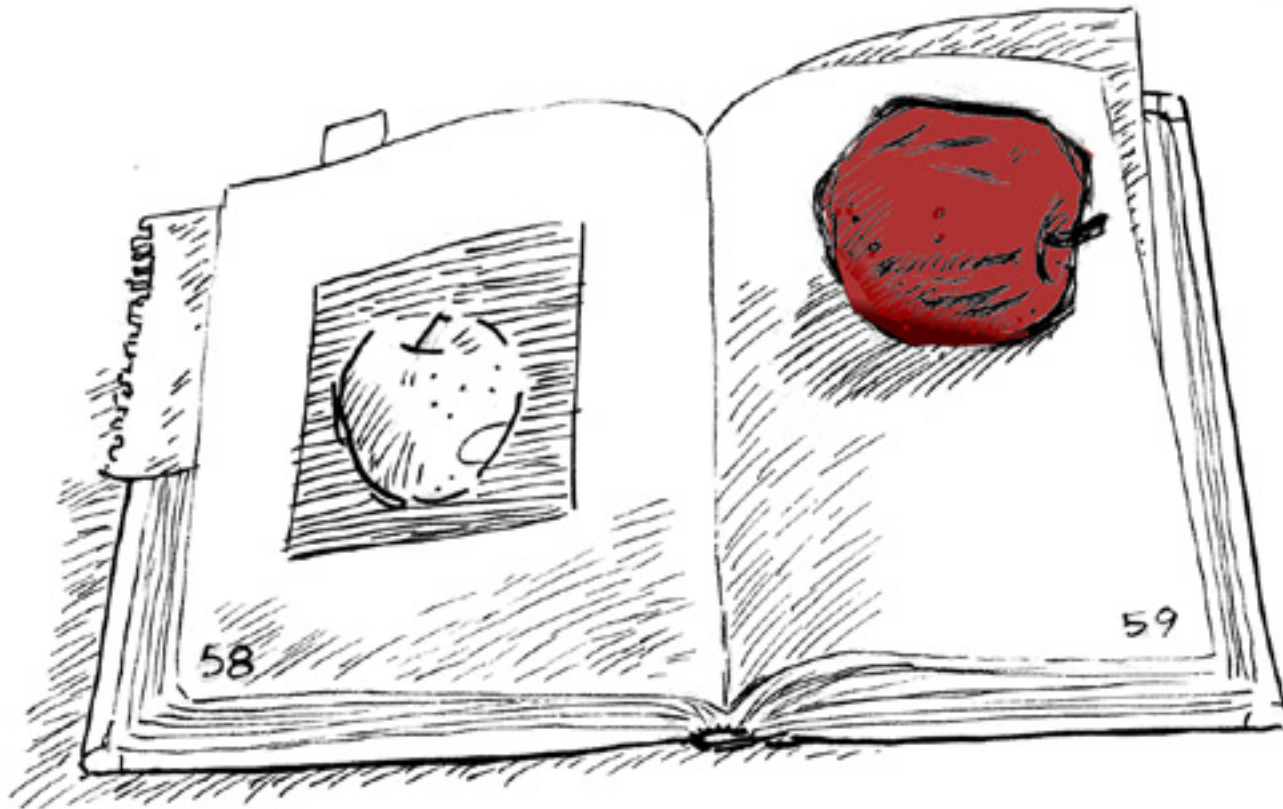


# General Guidelines and Pre-Writing

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# *introduction*

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

# General Essay Guidelines

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*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

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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

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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

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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*

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- 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.

# *Pre-Writing Techniques*

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- 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)*

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## *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 not 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.

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