

Checklist for writers

Please follow this list carefully, and check you have observed all the points after you finish *each* paper.

Grammar, punctuation, syntax

- Do not use first person plural (we, us).
- Make only one space after commas, periods, semi-colons and colons.
- Understand the meaning and use of the definite article (the) and the indefinite article (a, an).
- Do not use exclamation marks.
- Do not use first person singular (I) or personal opinions, except in personal statement or admission papers.
- Do not capitalize common nouns.
- Avoid all forms of questions, including rhetorical questions.
- Do not use colloquial terms or expressions.
- Do not use empty adverbs such as basically, actually, really.
- Do not use hyperbole (great exaggeration) or hyperbolic words such as enormous, huge, magnificent, glorious or other superlatives such as most obnoxious.
- Make sure all verbs agree with their subject in number (singular and plural).
- Make sure all prepositions agree with the verb (in English, most verbs have only one or two prepositions that can be used (results in, not results to)).
- Check all spellings.
- Check that all adverbs are in the right place (you cannot put an adverb inside an infinitive verb like this: He tried to neatly write his name.)
- Do NOT use archaic words or terms. Young native English-speakers do not use these words. Some are hence, whereby, nevertheless, henceforth, hereunder, abovementioned, therefore, thus. Nowadays, these words are only used in certain forms of Colonial English.
- Do not use meaningless words as transitions just for their own sake.
- Use the present tense. Never use the future tense (will be), unless you intend to suggest the future.
- Do not use the present continuous tense as the main tense of the paper (is writing, are thinking). Use the present: writes, think.
- Check punctuation: do not leave out any commas.
- Write short sentences: only one sentence for each concept.
- Do not start a sentence with a conjunction (and, but)
- Do not write useless words to make sentences appear grander or more complicated.
- Make sure each sentence makes perfect, clear and logical sense.
- Use a hyphen for compound words such as stress-free.
- Do not repeat words frequently within the same paragraph. Use a pronoun or a synonym to vary the syntax.

- Do not repeat the same concept, idea or thought.
- Do not use gender-specific words for general meaning (**man, mankind, men, manhood, gentleman**)
- Do not write lady when you mean woman.
- Do not use Latin abbreviations such as **etc., i.e., e.g.**; use what they mean in English: and so forth, that is, for example.
- When paraphrasing, make sure the ‘synonyms’ you use mean exactly the same as the word you wish to replace.
- Do not start a sentence with ‘As such.’
- Never write ‘so as to’ when you mean ‘to’.

Formatting

- Do not label paragraphs with Introduction, Conclusion or any other subtitle.
- Use the correct form and punctuation for in-text citations, according to the style choice.
- Make sure the thesis sentence appears in the first paragraph.
- Write a new, original title of less than nine words for each essay.
- Write the lecturer’s question on the coversheet. Center your new title on top of the essay.
- Do not justify the text. Align it to the left only.
- Do not identify any keywords.
- Make sure you understand how to write and format a reference list.
- Understand the difference between an author’s first and last names.
- You must state date of retrieval from the Internet.
- Always remove hyperlinks from URLs.
- Support each fact with an in-text citation.
- “Number of sources” means number of books, online texts or articles you need to reference. A paper always needs many more *in-text citations* from the sources than just two or three.
- There is no need for page numbers for essays less than four pages.
- Headers are not necessary for short essays.
- Do not include an abstract for an essay shorter than five pages, or for an essay without sub-headings.

If you do not know the meaning of some of the words used here, such as rhetorical, common nouns, articles or hyperbole, look them up: you need to know what they are.