**Top Twelve Most Common Errors**

1. Avoid the use of *contractions.*

* Ex: Don’t, can’t, won’t, shouldn’t 🡪 Do not, cannot, will not, should not.

1. Avoid the use of *hedges.*

* ***Hedges*** = a mitigating word or sound (usually adjectives or adverbs) used to lessen or soften the impact of a statement to avoid over-precise commitment.
  + Ex: seems, somewhat, maybe, suppose, kind of, sort of

1. Improper punctuation in in-text citations.

* Punctuation always goes AFTER the citation, unless you’re including a question mark or an exclamation mark that is part of the direct quote.
  + Ex: “I’m more beautiful than anybody else…why can’t I be happy**?” (Fitzgerald 8).**
  + Ex: “He wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people – he wanted the glittering things themselves**” (Fitzgerald 2).**

1. The naked “this” (or “this” used as a determiner NOT followed by a noun).

* Ex: **This** is shown in the first quote.
* Ex: Dexter sees **this** as a reflection of his class identity.

1. Use **present tense** when referring to events in the novel.
2. Avoid *opinion-oriented phrases*, such as “it is clear,” or “it is obvious” in a persuasive or argumentative essay. Each reading is your interpretation that needs to be corroborated with facts, not opinions.
3. Any form of phrasing that includes “show” because a text cannot metaphorically show anything.

* Ex: The reader can see…
* Ex: The author shows…
* Ex: Through this character it can be seen…

1. Beware of *indefinite pronouns* and terms such as “you,” “one,” “we,” and “the reader.”
2. Avoid metalinguistic devices when introducing textual evidence.

* Ex: In this quote, the author shows us that…
* Ex: In conclusion…
* Ex: This is an example of a thematic device in the story…

1. Avoid the use of *passive voice.*

* A passive construction occurs when you make the object of an action into the subject of a sentence.
  + Ex: Why was the road crossed by the chicken?
* The best way to spot passive voice is to look for a form of **“to be” + past participle**.
  + **Forms of “to be” =** is, are, am, was, were, has been, have been, had been, will be, will have been, being.
* **Using the “by zombies” rule to determine passive voice:**
  + - It can be seen… (by zombies).
    - He is being attacked…(by zombies).
    - Dexter Green was disillusioned…(by zombies).

1. Improper MLA formatting for text titles:
   1. Shorter bodies of work, such as short stories, poems, and songs, use **quotations**: “Winter Dreams” and s“Let America Be America Again.”
   2. Longer bodies of work, like novels and plays, use **italics**: *A Raisin in the Sun.*
2. General claims in the opening sentences of your introduction. Please don’t!

* Poor Introduction: Capitalism has always had a negative affect on society. Capitalism is a system in which resources are unevenly distributed, but in which each individual has the ability to access these resources equally, theoretically. In America, the ideology of the American Dream capitalizes on this notion of equal opportunity in the pursuit of upward mobility. In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s short story “Winter Dreams,” the author critiques this notion as false.
* Strong Introduction: In F. Scott Fitzgerald’s short story entitled “Winter Dreams,” Fitzgerald critiques the way in which the ideology of the American Dream in early 20th-century America capitalizes on the notion of equal opportunity to mask the inherent inequality of the capitalist system. Capitalism is a system in which resources are unevenly distributed, but in which each individual has the ability to access these resources equally, theoretically. Through the character of Dexter…