# TIPS WHEN WRITING

**1. Thesis/Purpose Statement:** Academic writing follows a specific pattern— after a brief opening, you state your position in one clear sentence. Whether your essay is explanatory or argumentative, a strong thesis statement will provide the map, guiding the entire essay. What is the function of a purpose statement: 1.It gives the paper a focus meaning, scope, and direction. 2. It foreshadows the development of the argument

**Sample purpose statement:**

This paper examines the claims made by Professor Sut Jhally regarding the impact advertising has on society.

**2. You don’t need to list all the assigned chapters in your introduction**:

“In chapters 1,5,6,7 and 15 the authors…”

**Instead write**: “Within the selected chapters, the author…”

**3. The word “novel” refers to fiction only**. We are not reading novels in this course.

4. Please, do not use the word “huge” in your paper.

**Weak**: Media plays a *huge* role in our lives

**Better**: Media plays a *consequential* or *significant* or *integral* role in our lives (\*Use a thesaurus to strengthen word choice)

**Weak**: The reading had a huge impact on me.

**Better**: The reading had a meaningful/significant impact on me.

**5**. **Keep language as academic as possible (avoid colloquialisms).** What is a colloquialism? A colloquialism is an expression that should not be used in an academic paper. Colloquialisms denote a manner of speaking or writing that is characteristic of familiar "common" conversation. **Examples of colloquialisms include**: "what stuck out to me" "what roped me in” “blows my mind” "the part of the reading that hit me” (instead write: “Most notable is Lasn’s claim that we are all members of a cult.”)

**Incorrect:** I pretty much disagree with everything he says.

**Correct**: I disagree with the majority of Lasn’s claims.

**Incorrect**: Lasn hammers home the point

**Correct:** Lasn repeatedly emphasizes

**Incorrect**: The author takes a deep dive

**Correct:** The author critically examines

**Incorrec**t: It hit me pretty hard.

**Correct**: The cult analogy invited a profound shift in my thinking.

**Incorrect**: Like I said before…

**Correct:** As previously stated…

6. Book titles should be italicized.

Incorrect: In the book “Culture Jam”

Incorrect: In the book Culture Jam

**Correct**: In the book *Culture Jam*

7. Papers require paragraph breaks. I read numerous papers that have no paragraph breaks throughout an entire page (or more). A paragraph begins with a topic sentence—the rest of the paragraph provides evidence for the subject identified within the topic sentence. Then, the speaker transitions to a new paragraph with a new topic sentence and evidence to support it, etc.

**8. Papers need a transition sentence when moving from one idea to another**

Example: “As the chapter progresses, Lasn introduces readers to the idea that consumers haven’t chosen this lifestyle, he argues it has instead been chosen for them.”

“Lasn, having explored the personal consequences of our consumption habits, moves on to examine several of the ecological consequences.”

“Lasn then asks readers to consider another consequence of advertising, which is its effect on body image.”

9. Leave out adverbs used for emphasis (e.g. truly, very, really, extremely…)

Weak: It ~~truly~~ bothers me

Better: Lasn’s claim that we are all members of a cult bothers me.

Weak: I ~~very much~~ enjoyed the reading

Better: I enjoyed the reading

Weak: I ~~extremely agree~~ with Lasn’s claim

Better: I agree with

10. Say what you need to say using the least amount of verbiage necessary.

Weak: Throughout the entire reading (“entire” is redundant)

**Better**: Throughout the reading

Weak: In this paper, I will be examining

**Better**: This paper examines

Weak: Laughter should be authentic and genuine (“genuine” is redundant, thus should be removed)

**11. When referring to a person use “who” not “that”**

Incorrect: My mother is a person **that**…

**Correct**: My mother is a person **who**…

**12. Avoid using the phrase “as a whole” in your paper**

“Media as a whole affects us” – why include “as a whole?”

“Society as a whole” A whole what? Just write “society”

**13. In text citations are required**

Lasn (2000) asserts, “Cult members aren’t really citizens. We’re consumers” (p. 54).

Or

According to the author, “Cult members aren’t really citizens. We’re consumers” (Lasn, 2000, p. 54).

If you are using the same source throughout your paper, then every quote that follows only needs the page number included:

Lasn continues, “Do you feel as if you’re in a cult? Probably not. No one seems to be forcing us to do anything we don’t want to do. But make no mistake, there are rules” (53).

**14**. **Watch your punctuation. Periods, question marks, etc. belong *inside* quotations marks.** (\*except when using a citation)

Incorrect: My grandfather yelled, “Don’t eat all the pie”**.**

**Correct:** My grandfather yelled, “Don’t eat all the pie**.**”

**\*exception when citing a page number - in this case, the period comes after the page number**: Ex: Lasn continues, “Do you feel as if you’re in a cult? Probably not. No one seems to be forcing us to do anything we don’t want to do. But make no mistake, there are rules” (53)**.**

**15. No exclamation points in an academic paper.** This is a juvenile style of writing.

Incorrect: I could not believe what happened next!

**16**. **Do not use ALL CAPS in academic papers.**

**17**. **Avoid the word “things” when writing.**

Incorrect: People buy ~~things~~ that celebrities wear.

**Correct**: People by products (or clothing) that celebrities wear.

Incorrect: ~~Things~~ are changing fast

**Correct:** Attitudes are rapidly changing.

**18. Don’t write directly to the reader (avoid “you”)**

Incorrect: When ~~you~~ think about Lasn’s claim…

**Correct:** When I consider Lasn’s claim…

Incorrect: Y~~ou~~ really don’t know how ads are influencing ~~you~~.

**Correct**: Citizens fail to realize the ways in which advertisements are influencing them.

19. Avoid ending sentences with prepositions (in, of, to, for, from)

Incorrect: The cult analogy is a part of the reading I disagree with.

**Correct**: The cult analogy is one with which I disagree.

Incorrect: Buying unnecessary products is a habit I often find myself in.

**Correct:** Buying unnecessary products is a habit in which I find myself frequently engaging.

**20. Watch for common misspellings:**

Incorrect: can not, through out, defiantly, Dialog

**Correct**: cannot, throughout, definitely, dialogue

**21. Be mindful of sentence structure.**

**Awkward:** Within the contents of the first section in Culture Jam, author Kalle Lasn, it can easily be determined on his purpose of creating his book. (\*awkward 25 word sentence)

**Concise**: Within the earliest pages of *Culture Jam* author, Kalle Lasn, makes clear the intention of his book. (\*more clearly organized 17 word sentence)

22. Read your paper out loud. Do the sentences make sense?

23. Have someone proofread your paper. Better yet, make an appointment with the Writing Center. I cannot stress this enough.

**⚓ The Undergraduate Writing Center:**

[The Undergraduate Writing Center](https://web.uri.edu/aec/writing/) offers one-to-one online writing support in both synchronous and asynchronous formats, accessible directly through our scheduling site at [uri.mywconline.com](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__uri.mywconline.com_&d=DwMFaQ&c=dWz0sRZOjEnYSN4E4J0dug&r=NTNwiWANzXOoGx_uOR7xzw&m=L1HLRaggIh7a8Ry7Do8hZN-Oza0E01DQH7bj8hZY5Lw&s=VkGoEYi60GybOMofLg3bVU_EOTeQ4ZI9A-5GJ2FFuFg&e=).

The Undergraduate Writing Center provides students with writing support across academic disciplines, as well as for professional and personal purposes such as scholarship essays and graduate school applications. Peer consultants are trained to work with students at every stage of the writing process, from understanding an assignment prompt and outlining ideas, to drafting and revising. This summer, students have the option to schedule a 25- and 50-minute online appointment or submit their work for asynchronous written feedback at [uri.mywconline.com](https://urldefense.proofpoint.com/v2/url?u=http-3A__uri.mywconline.com&d=DwMFaQ&c=dWz0sRZOjEnYSN4E4J0dug&r=NTNwiWANzXOoGx_uOR7xzw&m=L1HLRaggIh7a8Ry7Do8hZN-Oza0E01DQH7bj8hZY5Lw&s=fhI-AAOTaXDu7xKTLjgx-SJdOHuZ9Gf-VtPhumpTsbA&e=). For more information visit <https://web.uri.edu/aec/writing/>.

* RECENT FEEDBACK FROM STUDENT WRITERS:
* *“The feedback addressed things I had never really thought about before, and I was able to see my paper in a different way.”*
* *“Talking things out with another person really helped me to organize and clarify my thoughts.”*
* *“This session helped me spot things that I didn't even notice because I had reread it so many times.”*

Additional AEC Resources:

**⚓ Academic Skills Consultations:**

Academic skills consultations provide students with opportunities to strengthen their academic skills through 1-1 consultations that help them to identify their needs and challenges and develop specific strategies and skills for improving their performance in any undergraduate course. This summer, students can register for consultations by scheduling an appointment with Dr. David Hayes through Starfish or by contacting him at [davidhayes@uri.edu](mailto:davidhayes@uri.edu). More information on consultations, as well as access to our self-service Study Your Way to Success study skills web portal, can be found at <https://web.uri.edu/aec/academic-skills/>.