

Common writing issues

- Writing your essay as a blog:
 - your essay is expected to be written in the *formal* English.
 - we ask you to avoid colloquialisms¹, cliches, and conversational style.
 - pay attention to punctuation, and use Oxford commas.
- Avoid your own ideologies:
 - if you are saying that X dialect is good/bad/for poor/for rich/for educated/for illiterate, you are missing the whole point of this class.
 - although, do tell us of ideologies other people have, where do you know it from, and why these are ideologies.
- Avoid generalizations:
 - if you want to say something like: “*Language is what separates humans from other animals,*” – be ready to cite it.
 - generalizations look cheesy
 - they look like you couldn’t think of anything better to say.
- Wrong capitalization
 - proper names are to be always capitalized,
 - names of languages are always capitalized: *English, Chicano English, Arapaho*.
 - some geographical features also need to be capitalized. E.g., directions that are used as nouns are always capitalized: *the South, the East Coast*.
- Jumping tenses:
 - APA specifies that all in-text citations need to be either in Past Tense (*said*) or in Present Perfect (*has said*)
 - Choose one tense in the beginning and stick to it throughout the paper. Use aspect and adverbs to indicate time relations.
- Contractions:
 - academic writing *does not* tolerate contractions: *It is, he is, they have, we would, she was, they were, etc...*
 - If you avoid contractions, it’s easier for you to properly spell such things as *their*, and *its*.
- Quotes
 - if you have examples of words in a language/dialect and their meaning in English, use this linguistic standard of quotation: *grub* ‘food’. The word in the foreign language, or another dialect needs to be italicized, and the translation in English is in single quotes.
 - be careful to use quotation marks (“ ”) with actual quotes from text.
 - for IPA examples, put distinct sounds in square brackets [] or in right-slanting slashes: *the sound /k/ in his dialect is voiced and sounds more like /g/*.
- Letters v. sounds:
 - be careful when you say “he doesn’t pronounce his R’s”: R is a letter, /ɹ/ is probably the sound you are trying to talk about (or is it / ɾ ɾ ʀ ʀ / ?)
- Structure:

¹ Do you remember what these are? Read Eble’s chapter.

- (especially for the longer essays): your essay needs to have parts in it that relate to each other.
- always begin with the introduction that would have your thesis statement and bring in the topic of discussion. It is always at least one its own paragraph.
- always end with the conclusion the would wrap up the major points of your discussion, evaluate your research, and hint at what is to be done next. It is always its own paragraph.
- the main part of the essay may consist of several paragraphs, but should not repeat any of the stuff you have said in the intro.
- break up ideas into paragraphs: are you still talking about the language ideologies, or have you moved on to giving examples?
- Format:
 - Times New Roman
 - 12 pt
 - 1 inch margins
 - each new para is indented
 - no extra space between para's
 - **number pages**