



Self-Editing Checklist for College Papers

Introduction

Title

You should have an interesting, meaningful title that captures the reader's attention. **Don't** simply name the assignment (i.e., Argument Essay).

Hook

The opening sentence(s) of your paper should grab the reader's interest and make them want to read more. Possibilities:

- Brief story that illustrates your main idea (HINT: be sure you can connect this to your thesis in a meaningful way)
- Concrete example
- Surprising fact

Thesis

A strong thesis statement will provide a clear outline for the whole paper. Keep in mind:

- The thesis should match the assignment. A thesis for a compare-contrast paper will be different from a thesis for a research paper or a persuasive paper.
- A thesis should never be written as a question.
- A thesis statement is often placed at the end of the introductory paragraph.
- A strong thesis statement will often forecast the main points to be covered in the paper.
- A separate forecast statement also can work well.

Body Paragraphs

Does each paragraph have a topic sentence that clearly summarizes all of the points in that paragraph?

Does each topic sentence clearly relate back to the thesis statement?

- Does all of the information in the paragraph relate to the topic sentence?
- Are the body paragraphs in the same order as the topics in your thesis/forecast statement?
- Does the concluding sentence in each provide a transition to the next paragraph?

Editing the Text

- Have you removed unnecessary words, especially adverbs (very, really...)?
- Have you used a varied vocabulary? Use a thesaurus or dictionary to find replacements for repeated words.
- Are your sentences varied in terms of length and structure? A mixture of long and short sentences is best.
- Are all of your transitions smooth and clear?
- Are your verb tenses consistent? Do they match your discipline? (History=past; Literature=present)
- Are you using strong, interesting verbs? ("*hurried* to the store" is more interesting than "*went* to the store").
- Are you using **active voice** rather than passive voice? Examples:
 - **Active voice: Andrew bought the book.**
 - **Passive voice: The book was bought by Andrew.**
- Have you read your paper out loud to catch errors that are hard to find? (This really is one of the best ways to revise your writing.)

Formatting

- Did you make sure the margins, page numbers, headings, line spacing, & etc... meet the formatting style the instructor requires? HINT: *The Purdue OWL* (Online Writing Lab) website provides helpful guidelines for most formatting styles, including:
 - MLA (English & Humanities)
 - APA (Social Sciences)
 - Chicago Manual of Style (History)
- Margins
- Page numbers
- Heading(s)/Cover Page

References/Works Cited/Bibliography Page

Integration of Sources

Have you placed a citation after EVERY use of source material?

Concepts/Ideas: Even if they are described in your own words, concepts and ideas derived from sources should be cited.

Summaries

Paraphrases

Quotations

Are all of your quotations introduced and explained properly?

Grammar and Mechanics

Have you checked your paper for spelling errors?

Have you looked for common punctuation problems, such as comma usage?

Is your paper free of fragments and run-ons?

The Learning Center

Have you considered making an appointment with an English Specialist in the Learning Center? We can help!

Have you considered using the Online Writing Center? You typically will receive comments within 24 hours.