

**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/Bibiography 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.