

### Tips for Academic Writing

This is a quick reference sheet with advice for academic writing. I hope it proves helpful for all your classes.

#### **Big Issues**

Make sure you have an **introductory paragraph**. This paragraph should tell your reader what you hope to accomplish in your essay. This means two things: 1) you want to introduce in a general way your case studies—in other words, what you are analyzing and writing about (do not give away too many details; these will come in the body of your essay); 2) you want to clue your reader in on your argument. This is really important. You need to say what you will be claiming and arguing for. This is the classic **thesis**, which can always be more than one sentence long.

I strongly suggest outlining your essay before writing. An **outline** will help you map your ideas and sections. Here are some questions to ask yourself to get good organization: does each paragraph lead to the next in an organic way? Do I give my reader clear transition sentences from one paragraph to the next (**transition sentences** are key). If you have a good map for your writing, odds are neither you nor your reader will get lost.

#### **Smaller Issues**

**Tense agreement**: make sure that you do not switch from past to present tense arbitrarily. Stay with one tense unless you need to switch. A good rule of thumb: if you are writing about something that is still around, like a painting in a museum or a novel, use the present tense; if you are writing about something that happened in the past or was lost/destroyed, then use the past tense.

Use the **third-person** voice for academic writing (although sometimes first-person works too, depending on what you are writing about)

Watch out for **comma splices**. This is when you use a comma that creates two incomplete sentences on either side. You either need to separate this into two separate sentences; or, you need to add a conjunction.

Avoid using **contractions**.

Watch out for incomplete sentences. A sentence should always have a subject, verb, and usually an object.

Always **cite** any text that you quote or paraphrase. Refer to the Chicago Manual Style (or whatever citation rules your discipline or professor asks you to use). Your bibliography should just include the sources (you do not need to say what database you downloaded it from, like JSTOR)

Always **proofread** your writing—and ideally, have a friend read it or someone in the writing center.

#### **Submission Etiquette**

If hardcopy, always **print out** for submitting. If over email, save the **file and name** it clearly. If your professor has given you directions for file and name, then follow their directions.

When writing to your professors (or in any other professional situation), make sure you **compose a short email**. Do not just send an attachment without any context.

Remember to **sign your name** to your email so that your professor knows who you are.