

FORMAL WRITING GUIDELINES

General Writing Rules

- Do not use 1st person (I, me, we, us).
- Do not use 2nd person (you); don't compensate by using "one."
- Do not abbreviate or use symbols (&, w/, b/c).
- Do not use contractions.
- Underline or italicize larger works (books, magazines, plays, movies, epics).
- Use quotations around small works (articles, poems, songs, chapters).
- Spell out numbers written in one or two words.
(one, thirty-six, sixteen hundred, two million, 2½, 101, 1,275)
- Spell out numbers beginning a sentence (Fourteen students were...).
- Use quotation marks sparingly; only use single quotation marks for quotes within quotes.
- Use people first language ("people with disabilities" not disabled people").
- Avoid using questions.

Writing Maturity

- Avoid starting sentences with the following words; it's not that it is grammatically wrong, but there are usually stronger ways to write a sentence.
 - It
 - There
 - Then
 - Well
 - So
 - And, But, Or
- Do not use the following words; again, they are weak in formal writing:
 - really
 - lots / a lot
 - tons
 - kind of
 - sort of
 - thing
 - okay
 - nice
 - awesome
 - stuff
 - huge
 - got
 - one
 - reader

Literary Papers

- When writing about a piece of literature, write in the present tense (literary present). It's as if the characters in the work are frozen in time and are present today.
- When writing about a specific piece of literature, mention the title of the work as well as the author's name (both first and last) in the opening of your work.
- Do not talk about your essay in your essay ("In this essay...").
- Use active verbs and avoid present participles (verbs with -ing and a form of be). Instead of writing *is telling* use *tells*.