

RULES FOR PAPERS

January 6, 2006

1. Send your papers to me by email preferably as a word document. If not, try saving it as an rtf. or html. file and sending it to me.
2. Your papers should be typed in Arial 11, double spaced.
3. **No title page is necessary or desired.** But you do need a title. Place the title on the first page of the essay. **(Minus 1 pt. for no title).**
4. Do NOT put your name at the beginning of the paper. Put it at the end. I save the papers in a file and will not know who wrote it as I read it.
5. Penalties for lateness: If the paper arrives within 24 hours after the due date, the grade will be dropped by ½ of a grade point: e.g., a B becomes a B-. If the paper arrives within the week after the paper is due, the grade will be dropped by a full grade point, e.g., from a B to a C. For all papers that are more than a week late, the student must discuss the problem and the penalty with the professor.

SHORT GRAMMAR GUIDE

or

10 relatively easy ways to avoid annoying

the professor grading the paper

(minus 1 pt. for each offense)

1. **Avoid using the word “feel”.** This word suggests that a view is highly subjective and rather instinctual and perhaps rather private. It is difficult to argue with feelings, for one knows best if one is cold or angry. “I think” or “I believe” or “Aristotle claims” or “Aristotle maintains” suggests that some thought has gone into the position being argued, and thus, others can be called upon to take it seriously.
2. **“However” is a postpositive;** that is, it is a word that should not be the first word in a sentence. Its placement should indicate the point of contrast with something in the previous sentence.

Ex.: Some politicians think capital punishment is immoral. Congressman Jones, however, supports it.

3. **Do not use contractions,** such as “don’t”, “won’t”, “can’t” (except very rarely). These suggest a casualness in your argument.
4. **All pronouns must have clear antecedents.** That is, whenever you use a pronoun, make sure that the noun to which it refers is very near by and clearly affiliated with it. The word “this” is particularly problematic. Do not use pronouns, especially the pronoun “this”, without a clear and identifiable antecedent. Often the word “this” refers to some notion implicitly expressed in a previous sentence; this is a **“floating this”** and should be avoided. I HIGHLY

recommend that you do a word search for “this” and consider eliminating all occurrences of it; it is usually too vague.

Wrong Ex.: I didn’t mean to offend you but I am afraid I said something that made you leave the party early. This won’t help our relationship.

Correct Ex.: I didn’t mean to offend you but I am afraid I said something that made you leave the party early. But your unwillingness to tell what was offensive to you won’t help our relationship.

or: I didn’t mean to offend you but I am afraid I said something that made you leave the party early. I am sorry; such thoughtlessness on my part won’t help our relationship.

5. Watch for **misplaced and dangling modifiers**.

Wrong Ex.: I found my wallet running down the street. (Since it is empty, it could run quickly!)

Correct Ex.: Running down the street, I found my wallet.

Wrong Ex.: Having reviewed Thomas’ view of law, it is now necessary to consider Kant’s categorical imperative.

Correct Ex.: Having reviewed Thomas’ view of law, we must now consider Kant’s categorical imperative.

6. Watch for mismatched pronouns (**agreement errors**). Remember that the words, “each,” “every,” “any,” and such are **singular** nouns.

Wrong Ex.: One/each of the students listened to their teacher.

Correct Ex.: One/each of the students listened to his teacher.

7. **Use the active voice** whenever possible; the passive voice makes for deadened prose.

Passive: The ball was hit by John.

Active: John hit the ball.

Passive: It is believed that Aristotle is a great philosopher.

Active: Few ages have failed to recognize that Aristotle is a great philosopher. (For all its truth and for being in the active voice, this is still a lame sentence!)

8. **Vary your sentence structure**. Avoid a continuous noun/verb format. That is, do not start every sentence with a noun, followed by a verb. Use both complex

and simple sentences. When composing sentences, start some with a dependent clause. Or why not ask a question instead of making a statement? Furthermore, you might try to link your sentences together with connectives such as “furthermore, however, moreover, still, yet, thus, etc.” In many instances, simply putting a prepositional phrase at the beginning adds variety. And learn to use the semicolon; it connects two units that could stand alone as sentences, but which have such a close connection that it is right to think of them as one sentence.

9. Do not use the word “**aspect**”; it is regularly used when the author doesn’t know what he or she wants to use.
10. Use “**he or she**” if it makes you feel good; otherwise, it is still appropriate to use forms of the masculine pronoun when speaking of man generically.

Correct Ex.: The teacher told each student to hand in his or her paper on time.

Equally Correct Ex: The teacher told each student to hand in his paper on time. (And this instruction applies to both the females and males.)