

The Rules of Academic Writing- Reference Sheet

Directions: Highlight or mark the correct sentence.

A. Best Word Usage

1. Avoid using the word, **THING in your writing such as **SOMETHING, EVERYTHING, ANYTHING**. Why?**

a. It is too vague

Eg. *There is something in the air that smelled familiar.* (poor)

There was a familiar scent in the air. (better)

2. Avoid *slang* such as **KIDS, COOL, TOTALLY AWESOME, LIKE, I MEAN**

i. It is colloquial language which is highly informal.

ii. *The scene in the book was awesome.*

iii. *Running down the road, I totally tripped.*

iv. *Edgar Allen Poe is a well-known author of short stories.*

3. Avoid simple words such as **BIG, NICE, BAD, GOOD, HAPPY.**

a. Sophisticated vocabulary means an improvement in vividness and clarity.

i. *The movie was thought provoking.*

ii. *The movie was good.*

4. Avoid writing “I think” or “I believe” to preface a sentence.

a. It is already understood that the writer is expressing his or her opinion in the writing piece.

i. *My parents love me very much.*

ii. *I think my parents love me very much.*

5. Try not to use the same word twice in the same sentence

a. Using the same two words in one sentence is often regarded as wordy

i. *John was late for class, but John had a good excuse.*

ii. *John was late for class, but he had a good excuse.*

6. Try not to use the same words twice in sentences that follow each other.

a. The use of the same main words in concurrent sentences is often considered wordy.

i. *The cat, that was not taught very well, was scratching the new sofa.*

ii. *The cat was scratching the new sofa. The cat was not taught very well.*

7. Avoid contractions such as CAN'T or DON'T or DOESN'T or WON'T.

- a. Contractions resembles verbal dialogue and colloquial language. You can use contractions in dialogue or in narrative but not formal writing.
 - i. *I told you he will not do it.*
 - ii. *I told he won't do it.*

8. Most academic writing is written in third person (eg. He, she, it, himself, herself, themselves). Stay in the third person. Don't use "you"!!!

- a. The indiscriminate use of person tends to cloud the meaning of the message.
 - i. *He bought the amazingly coloured sports car when it was on sale.*
 - ii. *He bought the amazing sports car when it was on sale. You should see its amazing colour.*

9. Write out numbers less than one hundred.

- a. This is standard in the English language
 - i. *She bought 7 dresses at the mall.*
 - ii. *She bought seven dresses at the mall.*

10. Avoid the use of exclamation marks.

- a. The words in a writing piece ought to be used for emphasis. This forces the student to use stronger diction.
 - i. *He was overwhelmed.*
 - ii. *He was happy!*

11. Always underline the names of books or movies if you are handwriting. If you are typing, use italics. (both sentences are good) The names of poems, songs and short stories are in quotation marks.

- a. A great way to learn 20th century American history is to watch the movie Forest Gump.
- b. The book *Twilight* is much better than the movie.
- c. The poem "If" is considered a work of art.
 - What is missing from these sentences?
 - i. *The number one song on the chart right now is Sweet Child of Mine.*
 - ii. *The book To Kill A Mockingbird is a classic piece of American literature.*

B. Best Sentences

12. Combine sentences as much as possible.

- a. Combining sentences is used to reduce wordiness.
 - i. *The student, who was raised with strong morals and values, spoke respectfully to his parents.*
 - ii. *The student spoke respectfully to his parents. She was raised with strong morals and values.*

13. Use a variety of sentence types.

- a. Sentence variety assists in the development of writing style and sophistication.

1. **Simple sentence:** I like to go to the store to get bubblegum.
2. **Compound:** I like to go to the store to get bubblegum, and sometimes I buy a slurpee too.
3. **Complex:** When I go to the store to buy bubblegum, I buy slurpees too.
4. **Compound-complex:** When I go to the store to buy bubblegum, I also buy slurpees; therefore, I am broke and my teeth hurt.

Can you write one of each of these types of sentences?

- i. Simple-
- ii. Compound-
- iii. Complex-
- iv. Compound-complex-

14. Use transitional words and phrases in front of simple sentences.

- a. Transitional words and phrases are used as a means to bridge sentences and ideas. This allows the paragraph to be read smoothly.
 - i. *The girls' soccer team did extraordinarily well, and every member played to her potential. After participating in thrilling matches, they had a winning record. The up-coming season should be successful.*

OR

- ii. *The girls' soccer team did extraordinarily well, and every member played to her potential. After participating in thrilling matches, they had a winning record. **As a result**, the up-coming season should be successful.*

Transitional Words:

Therefore, then, nevertheless, furthermore, moreover, finally, first, second, accordingly, however, unfortunately, as a result, in addition, for example, in other words, on the contrary