

WRITING TIPS & TRICKS

1

USE YOUR TOOLS

1. Make spelling and grammar check work for you.

These can catch so much more than spelling typos. Set up properly, these tools can help with formatting, sentence structure, and voice.

Click [here](#) for instructions.

2. Follow format instructions.

Millions of dollars in grants are denied solely because of incorrect margins.

If there is a set of instructions, a policy, or a template available - use them and set up your grammar check accordingly.

3. Know the limits of your tools.

None of these tools catch every typo (think homonyms) or take the place of proofreading.

For example:

"Your dinner vs. you're dinner." One leaves you nourished, the other leaves you dead.



2

USE ACTIVE VOICE

Readers enjoy papers written in active voice. Grammar check on Microsoft Word can be set to check writing style - active vs. passive. See set-up instructions under "Use your tools."

Basic Structure:

Active - Subject, Verb, Object

"Passive sentences bore people."

"The police help communities."

Passive - Object, Verb, Subject

"People are bored by passive sentences."

"Communities are helped by the police."

3

ELIMINATE THE "FLUFF"

Remove qualifying words, such as very, little, and rather. These add nothing to the paper.

For example (from www.copyblogger.com):

It is **very** important to **basically** avoid fluff words because they are **rather** empty and **sometimes a little** distracting.

4

DO NOT RAMBLE

Rambling is distracting to the reader. Not as distracting as texting while driving, which is increasingly becoming a problem among younger drivers. Speaking of which, some phones now have a driving mode that places the phone in the "do not disturb" setting...

The point is, stay on topic. **Don't write and ramble.**

5

EDIT. EDIT AGAIN.

It can be difficult to edit your own work. Leave yourself enough time to follow these steps.

1. **Finish the paper.**

2. **Let it sit.** If you can, leave it overnight. Otherwise, go grab a coffee, take a walk, do something completely different. Come back with fresh eyes and an open mind.

3. **Read the paper out loud.** When we read silently, our brains will fill in the blanks or even skip words. Reading aloud will help catch more typos, long sentences, and repetitive or awkward wording.

4. **Have someone else read the paper.** Find someone who your trust and ask he or she to read your paper. Make sure the person you ask is willing to provide constructive criticism. Bonus points if it is someone who is unfamiliar with your topic and can provide feedback on readability and details.

5. **Make edits and repeat.**