

# Common Academic Writing Errors

In pursuing a university education, the attending scholar must demonstrate an ability to write well.

Reporting solely research data or personal opinion is insufficient to demonstrate command of written communication; a thesis must be stated and developed through the application of introductory, body, and concluding comments. Each paragraph, as well as the whole paper must have these elements, as should the overall work.

Demonstrated command of the assigned material content is insufficient to earn a passing grade on an academic paper. Successful academic writing requires a demonstration of higher-order learning skills, including critical thinking, and an ability to communicate efficiently both details of the learned material and an analysis or evaluation of the material's applicability.

I have posted writing support materials that augment our university's resources to my student resources site, <http://cogitoveritas.com/>. I hope that you will find these references helpful in preparing your written work.

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<b>Common Errors</b>	
<b>Academic Dishonesty</b>	
Plagiarism, the use of another's words or ideas without full and complete attribution (citation & reference; quotations require additional identification)	
Allowing another to aid in the development of an academic work.	However, inviting assistance in proof reading is acceptable.
<b>APA Formatting</b>	
Abstract not included or identified if paper exceeds eight main pages or if the instructor requires an abstract.	
Material requiring a citation & reference included in abstract. An abstract should include only a restatement of the work's thesis and conclusion.	
Title not repeated and formatted as a first level APA heading on the first main page	
All contributing authors not properly identified in a citation or reference	
APA headings not properly applied and formatted	
APA page header not properly applied and formatted	
Times New Roman 12 point type not used throughout document	
Nonbreaking hyphen not properly used to prevent end-of-line hyphenation breaks	
Nonbreaking space not properly used to prevent end-of-line separation of multiword proper nouns	In Microsoft Word for Windows, use the keystroke, [Ctrl+Shift+Space] to create a nonbreaking space.
Citations not properly formatted	
References not properly formatted	
Direct quotations of fewer than 40 words without quotation marks	
Direct quotations of 40 or more words not formatted as a separate, block-indented paragraph	

<b>Composition &amp; Grammar</b>	
Passive voice	Constructing a sentence in which the object of a verb is in the position of the subject is the most common cause of passive voice. Examples: 1. The dogs were kenneled for the weekend. 2. The report was written by a committee. Corrections: 1. The family kenneled its dogs for the weekend. 2. A committee wrote the report.
Lack of thesis development or inclusion of extraneous content	
Paper lacks a strong introduction. The introduction serves as an opportunity to capture the reader's attention by identifying the paper's content, the thesis statement.	
Paragraph lacks a strong introduction, clear development, or transitioning conclusion.	
An essay's conclusion should serve several purposes: it should return to the main idea and summarize it. Avoid introducing new ideas at the end of an essay.	
Comma splice / comma fault. Use of a comma without a conjunction to conjoin two independent clauses	Example: I went to the bookstore, my wife stayed home. Correction: I went to the bookstore, and my wife stayed home.
Punctuation error	
Sentence construction / clarity	
Misspelling or inappropriate vocabulary	
Lack of demonstrated critical thinking	
Sentence begins with a conjunction (e.g., and, but)	
Colloquial language, slang, or jargon used other than in a quotation	
Lack of parallelism in a series of items	Example: I went to the store to buy shoes, shirts, and a few socks. Correction: I went to the store to buy shoes, shirts, and socks.
Indefinite pronouns without clear antecedent (it, this, that, they, us, we, he, she)	Examples: 1. He is a great student. 2. The organization thinks highly of her. Corrections: 1. Charles studies each evening; he is a great student. 2. The organization thinks highly of Susan.
Plural pronoun (their/them/they) referring back to a singular noun. Use his/her or rewrite the sentence with a plural noun	Example: The family enjoyed their vacation. Correction: The family enjoyed its vacation.
Split infinitive	Example: The weather service expected temperatures to not rise. Correction: The weather service expected temperatures not to rise.
Misplaced or dangling modifier	Misplaced modifiers can lead to confusion. Example: He served steak to the men on paper plates. Correction: He served the men steak on paper plates.
Lack of hyphen in compound adjectives	
Misuse of apostrophe to indicate possession or plurality	
Punctuation not placed within quoted material	Place commas and periods within quoted material; place question marks, exclamation point, colons, and semicolons outside quoted material.
Single quotation marks not used to indicate quoted material within a larger quotation	
Colon not used to introduce a series	
Misuse of comma, comma, or semicolon	
Penultimate item in a series not followed by a comma	
Nonessential element not set off with commas	
Introductory phrase not set off with a comma	
Abbreviation, acronym, or initialization not expanded upon first use	

Improper use of abbreviation (initialism or acronym)	Use only commonly accepted acronyms and initialisms after full expansion (e.g., National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA; National Security Agency, NSA; Federal Bureau of Investigation, FBI)
Use of contraction	Examples: can't, don't Corrections: cannot, do not
Lack of subject-verb plurality agreement	
Clause terminates in a preposition	Example: Where are you going to? Correction: To where are you going?
Lack of pronoun gender or plurality agreement	
Misuse of objective case	Example: It is me. ( <i>objective case</i> ) Correction: It is I. ( <i>nominative case</i> )
Lack of subjunctive mood (a.k.a. conjunctive mood) in states of unreality, such as supposition, desire, and possibility.	Example: If I was to go to school, I would learn. Correction: If I were to go to school, I would learn.