

Name: _____

ENG1D7 – Mr. Ko

Tips for Improving Writing (and marks!)

1. Double Spaced, Times New Roman Font, Size 12

2. Do the **process/rough work!**

- Will improve your writing and your mark every time
- Brainstorm
- Prewriting
- Paragraph outlines
- Rough drafts
- Edit, revise

3. **Grammar**

a) Commas

- Link with rules and examples for when/how to use commas
- <http://www.grammarbook.com/punctuation/commas.asp>

b) Semi-colons

- when to use?
 - To connect two closely-related independent clauses
 - If you are going to use a semicolon to connect two clauses, it is very important that the two clauses are both independent. That means that each clause has to be able to stand alone and make complete sense without the other. If either one cannot stand alone, a semi-colon **cannot** be used
 - e.g. Alex always slept with the light on; he was afraid of the dark.
- to sort out a complicated list containing many items, many of which themselves contain commas
 - e.g. In the meeting today we have Professor Wilson, University of York; Dr. Watson, University of Toronto; Professor Hunt, Dalhousie University

Examples: Semi-colon or no?

1. I would love to go to France ___ Paris is a lovely city.
2. Havana is a lovely city ___ rice pudding is one of my favourite foods.
3. Understanding grammar is very important ___ despite its complexity.
4. Understanding grammar is very important ___ clear communication is an essential skill.

4. Consistent Tense

- whether you write in the present tense or the past tense, be consistent
- common mistake is to change tense in the middle of a sentence or paragraph
- Examples:
 - I **was** quite surprised how well I **feel**. (Past tense becomes present)
 - Tim **wants** to get a job but he **didn't** know what to do about it. (Present tense becomes past)
 - She fully **intended** to do her homework but she **forgets** and **goes** out with her mates (Past tense becomes present.)

Practice

Which sentences have inconsistencies? How could these be corrected?

1. Jim wanted to visit his grandma but cannot find the money for a train ticket.
2. We were able to travel to Athens but could not find a hotel.
3. They left the house around eight, walked to town and end up in their favourite pub.
4. If I had seen the car earlier, I would have been able to avoid the accident.
5. I couldn't come out with you because I don't have enough money.

5. Using Quoted Material

- **where** to put the quote
 - embed the quoted material in the main body of the text if three lines or fewer
 - an embedded quotation should not stand alone as a complete sentence in the middle of your text.
 - if the quoted passage is longer than three lines, indent the quoted material
- **when** to use a quote
 - avoid quoting for the sake of quoting
 - ensure that the quoted material adds to, illuminates, explains or illustrates the point you are making
 - quoted material should **not** be altered, even if it contains spelling or other errors
- **punctuation** when quoting
 - The punctuation mark needed to introduce an embedded quotation will depend on the structure and flow of the sentence and the quotation. The quotation can be introduced with a colon (but never a semi-colon), a comma or nothing.

Examples:

- Hilary Clinton is keenly aware of the opportunities she has had: "My mother and grandmothers could never have lived my life; my father and grandfathers could never have imagined it."
- Moore believes that "dentists must have gotten together and decided that the real money was in root canals and a full set of X-rays every time you go in"
- Bill said, "I just got back from my trip, and I had a good time."

Practice:

1. Vincent describes how one of his patients “always trying to learn new vocabulary, but finds it extremely difficult.” (Cognitive Psychology, 17).

- a) no reference given
- b) incorrect use of quotation
- c) incorrect placing of full stop
- d) whole sentence does not make sense on its own

2. During the stormy night, Terrence decides he must: “get home.”

- a) No need for any punctuation to introduce the quote
- b) The quote is not adding anything substantial
- c) Quotations marks are used incorrectly
- d) No reference given

Basic Tips for Essays

Make sure each paragraph is related to the assigned topic.

It's easy to go off on a tangent. The purpose of an essay is to discuss a particular topic, not show off the breadth of your knowledge. Never lose track of the main topic/focus.

Ensure each paragraph has a topic sentence and all sentences are relevant to the topic sentence.

It can be tempting to jump into a paragraph with a quote or idea that you believe is important, but the key idea should be clearly stated. Think about each paragraph as an individual unit or a mini essay.

Make sure your introduction has a clear thesis statement (or topic sentence).

A good introduction will orient the reader to the topic, provide some general information, and make a clear thesis statement. It is not necessary to say, "It is the purpose of this essay to discuss..." But make a clear statement that you intend to prove through the body of the essay.

Include a quote, citation, or fact in each paragraph and explain its importance.

Learning to properly use citations is one of the keys to developing your academic writing skills. Each paragraph (with the possible exception of the introduction and conclusion) should cite some authority (includes the text itself) so the arguments that you are developing in that paragraph carry more weight.

Summarize, but don't repeat in your conclusion.

Your conclusion could remind the reader of your major points or it could make a recommendation based on the thesis statement (preferred). Conclusion should be clearly related to thesis statement.

Make an outline first, and then follow it.

Essays that are written without outlines tend to be disorganized. The logic doesn't flow. There are often bits that don't relate to the theme, or ideas that are repeated. You could have some great insight, but if it's presented in a disorganized mess it will be lost on the reader.

Edit, Revise, Edit, Revise...

Always leave yourself enough time to step away from your essay for a while before editing and rewriting.