

EDITING SUGGESTIONS

The writing process includes rigorous editing practices. Below are some points to keep in mind as you re-read and edit your papers before turning them in. You may also wish to look at the brief guide to writing by W. Strunk and E.B. White called the *The Elements of Style*.

Some Rules

1. Avoid passive constructions. "The chair was seen by me," is not as forceful as "I saw the chair."
2. Use the past tense when describing historical individuals and events, not the present tense.
3. Avoid unnecessary words. After you have drafted your essay, set it aside for a day or two. Then reread it, eliminating every word that is redundant or does not add to your meaning. Prime candidates for deletion are adverbs such as "very," "quite," "extremely."
4. Never use the phrase "I feel that...." This lends a subjective air to your argument that tends to discredit you. Write "I think that...."
5. Learn how to use the spell-checker on your computer program.

Six Questions to Ask Before Turning in Your Paper

1. Is the title of my essay informative?
2. Do I state my thesis point soon enough, perhaps even in the first sentence, and keep it in view throughout the paper? Is the opening paragraph interesting, and by its end, have I focused on the topic?
3. Is my organization clear? Does each point lead into the next, without irrelevances and without anticlimaxes?
4. Is each paragraph unified by a topic sentence or topic idea?
5. Are sentences concise, clear and emphatic? Are needless words and inflated language eliminated?
6. Is the final paragraph conclusive without being repetitive?

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