

a Few, Common Problms that Effect student Writing;

Contractions



No contractions in formal writing, EVER. This is when you combine two words by taking out some letters and glue them together with Satan's favorite punctuator: the apostrophe. (Don't, won't, can't, etc) This will never change. Never ever. Contractions are to formal writing what Jar Jar Binks was to *Star Wars Episode I: The Phantom Menace*. It will be this way until you die, which will happen to you very soon if you continue to use contractions in your formal writing, so get over them and live long.

- **Find apostrophe help with a sense of humor here:** <http://theoatmeal.com/comics/apostrophe>

Semicolons

Reading student essays can sometimes feel like a semicolonoscopy. This tricky bit of punctuation is for combining two independent clauses, which is something you should not do that often to begin with. Semicolons are a lot like watching a bear ride a bicycle: rare and beautiful when executed properly, but if you come across it too often something may be seriously wrong. A rule to live by: if you are using more than one semicolon per page, you have issues.

- **See “The Oatmeal” for some great semicolonology:** <http://theoatmeal.com/comics/semicolon>

Affect and Effect

Affect is a *verb*, effect is a *noun*. There are exceptions to this of course, but whatever – just stick to basics for now. Overly concerned, or dying to know more? Google “affect versus effect” and allow the internet to berate you. Really brave? Try Youtube.

- **Now practice:**
<http://english.clas.asu.edu/files/shared/enged/AffectvsEffect.pdf>

AFFECT VS. EFFECT



Citing Sources

Seriously, you *have* to cite them throughout your paper. Citations help readers understand the thoughtfulness and context of your argument, credit research and ideas that are not yours, give your thoughts and ideas a sense of legitimacy, and demonstrate your integrity. And because reading research papers with no evidence is a lot like beating yourself over the head with a porcupine.

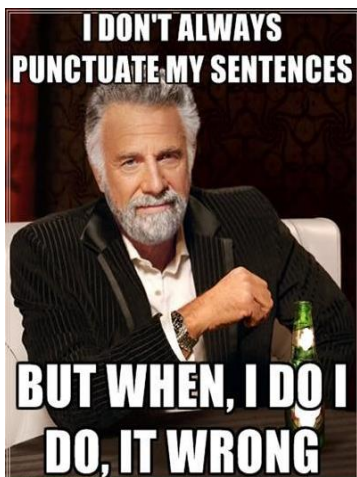
- **Go here for a great writeup:** <http://library.albany.edu/usered/cite/citing.html>
- **See also:** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/01/>

Paragraphing

Are your paragraphs too long, too short? Do they contain more than one main idea? Do you struggle finding the right places to split them up? Check out this OWL resource and use it to tighten up your paragraph structure. (Stuck? Don't forget your TEAs)

- **Paragraphs:** <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/606/01/>

Comma Usage



Commas are what ninjas use when they write because punctuation should be fast, precise, and deadly. Although there are oodles of ways to use them, there are more wrong ways than right ones. Not knowing how to use commas properly is a fast way to a C Minus. Those of you who struggle with comma usage (you know who you are...) fear not: There are some excellent online resources to help you sort out these comma-n mistakes.

- **Take the comma quiz:**

<http://www.towson.edu/ows/exercisecomma2.htm>

- **Ur doin it rong:** <http://www.howstuffworks.com/10-wrong-ways-to-use-commas.htm#page=5>

- **More mistakes:**

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/21/the-most-comma-mistakes/>

- **How to do it right:** <http://grammar.quickanddirtytips.com/where-do-i-use-commas.aspx>

Use your formal voice!

Would you show up to prom wearing your dad's extra-short cut-off jean shorts? Mom's bra on your head? This is what you are doing when you do not write an essay using your formal voice. There are seven simple rules to follow. Know them, use them, love them. Keep it classy, and don't be that guy (or gal). Go here for the 7 Deadly Ins, and a cool video:

- **Seven Rules:**

http://www2.ivcc.edu/rambo/tip_formal_writing_voice.htm



Titles of Sources

Not sure if you should put that sucker in quotes, or make it all fancy and slanted with italics? Check out the link below.

- Quoting v. Italicizing titles of sources: [Click here](#)

Block Indenting of Quotes

Block indenting (with quotes that span 4 or more lines of text). Get rid of the quote marks, put the quoted text on a new line and indent the entire quote 1" from the left margin. Put the period after the sentence and then page number in parenthesis after the period.

Example:

In “Women’s Autonomy and Its Correlate in Western Nepal,” Bhandari notes that:

Women’s education, husband’s education and economic status of the household were found as key predictors among several demographic and socioeconomic variables...women’s education was found to be a key predictor. Husband’s education and economic status of the household were other important mediated factors of the pathways.(6)

As this article depicts the factors contributing to women’s autonomy in Nepal, education is a determining factor in the independence of women.

Senior Thesis Revision Checklist

Below is a list of things you should check and double-check before you turn in your final draft.

Thesis and Big Stuff:

___ Every part of your paper does what the Elements handout says it should do (remember, you have the option of smashing together Part III and IV- if you do this, you’ll only have 4 total parts)

___ Thesis clearly answers your research question

___ Entire paper is set up in MLA formatting (see Purdue OWL for guidelines here)

___ Each part of your paper is clearly labeled with a bolded centered heading. Example:

Part I: Introduction

Organization:

___ Paragraph sequence makes logical sense (Struggling with transitions? This may be why)

___ Topic sentences for every paragraph

___ Topic sentences guide paragraph content

___ Topic sentences connect back to main argument/thesis

___ Transitions present between all paragraphs and sections

Argumentation:

- ___ Every paragraph connects back to the main argument
- ___ All evidence has sufficient context
- ___ All evidence is analyzed and clearly connected back to your main argument

Evidence

- ___ Quotes are set up correctly, using one of the three methods we discussed in class
- ___ Quotes have follow up (no dropped quotes!)
- ___ All evidence is cited in-text using correct MLA format
- ___ Long quotes (over 4 lines) are block quoted

Sentence Craft and Proofreading

- ___ Sentences are focused, with concrete subjects and strong verbs
- ___ No contractions are used
- ___ No first person (“I”) is used
- ___ Semicolons are used sparingly, and only to divide complete sentences
- ___ Commas are used correctly (see resources above to help you with this)
- ___ You have page numbers (in Word, go to Insert, then page number)
- ___ You’ve run spellcheck
- ___ You’ve had at least 2 other people carefully proofread your paper

Bibliography and Title Page

- ___ Bibliography is at the end of the paper, on a separate page
- ___ All sources are cited correctly using MLA
- ___ Sources are in alphabetical order (use the first letter in the citation to do this)
- ___ Title page is formatted correctly, with all required information

