

Writing the Research Paper

Formal Rules of Writing

When writing a formal paper, there are certain things you can do to make your paper sound more formal. Look through your paper for these items and edit it to make it more formal.

Audience – your audience would be the potential readers of your paper. When arguing, you should make sure your arguments appeal to the senses of your audience. Since, for the purposes of this paper, your audience is a teacher, go through and get rid of:

- Slang
- Texting abbreviations
- Clichés (overused expressions such as, “If guns are outlawed, only outlaws will have guns.”)

Contractions – spell out all contractions (can’t = cannot, don’t = do not)

Numbers – check all numbers against these guidelines:

- Spell out whole numbers one hundred or under. Remember that a hyphen goes between the tens and the ones when spelling out numbers.
- Use numerals for numbers 101 and over and for numbers with fractions and decimal points, even if these numbers are under one hundred.
- Do not use a numeral for a number beginning a sentence. If the number would be too long spelled out, re-arrange the sentence so that the number is not the first word.

Passive Voice / Active Voice – when possible, write sentences in active voice. What is the difference? Active voice has the subject performing the action of the verb (Our team won the football game). Passive voice moves the action away from the subject (The game was won by our football team).

Keep it simple – *Elements of Style* suggests that if you can say the information in fewer words, say the information in fewer words.

Avoid first person pronouns – Rewrite sentences that use I, me, my, mine, our, ours, we, and us. These are usually simple to do. For example, “I believe that video games do not cause violent behavior in teenagers,” can be altered by deleting the part with the first person pronoun, “Video games do not cause violent behavior in teenagers.”

Avoid second person pronouns – Rewrite sentences that use you and your. This is sometimes harder to do. These pronouns can sometimes be substituted with “a person” or the more formal pronoun, “one”. Be careful to avoid overusing the pronoun “one” too many times in the paper.