

Tips for Writers • Writing Checklist

This checklist was compiled by the staff of the Speaking, Reading, and Writing Center. It is intended as a tool for brainstorming, organizing, composing, and editing academic writing. Because writing is a recursive process, students should ask these questions multiple times to clarify, refine, and strengthen their text.

Tutors in the SRWC work through this process in face-to-face tutoring sessions, but the goal is always for students to learn to use these strategies independently. As each writer develops, he or she will become fluent and confident in the self-editing process.

Subject, Audience, and Purpose

- ✓ Who is the intended audience/reader for this paper? (Peers, co-workers, general public, those holding the power to change policies, etc.)
- ✓ What does the audience already know about this subject? How will I build from that foundation to create new knowledge or understanding?
- ✓ How is this subject relevant or important to the audience?
- ✓ What type of writing will help me to meet the instructor's goals, i.e. to inform, persuade, describe, critically analyze, compare/contrast, propose?

Organization

- ✓ What type of introductory technique is best suited for this paper, and will it capture the reader's attention?
- ✓ Have I given enough 'space' for the introduction to develop?
- ✓ What type of thesis statement is being used? Does the thesis define the main points upfront, or does it give a more general, broad summary of the issue/subject/proposal?
- ✓ Will the length of this paper require multiple paragraphs to develop each main point?
- ✓ What order should the main points/paragraphs be placed in for maximum reader impact? How would changing that order affect the message?
- ✓ Have proper transitions been incorporated between the introduction and the body, the main points, and the body and conclusion?

Paragraphs

- ✓ Does each paragraph contain a clear main idea and relate back to the thesis?
- ✓ Do specific examples, details, and research strengthen each paragraph?
- ✓ Have I included appropriate critical analysis in each paragraph?
- ✓ Are the paragraphs too heavy with citations?

Sentences

- ✓ Do the individual sentences represent variety in length, type, and structure?
- ✓ Have I used appropriate college-level vocabulary and self-edited for vague, awkward, or casual language?
- ✓ Are there redundant statements or overuse of certain words?
- ✓ Can any of the sentences be combined with each other for clarity or complexity?

Final Checks

- ✓ Have I been cognizant of grammar or punctuation problems from previous writing assignments and worked proactively to avoid them in this paper?
- ✓ Did I accomplish, deliver, explain, clarify, analyze, or prove what I intended to with this paper?
- ✓ Does the paper meet the original assignment goals outlined in the instructor's assignment sheet?
- ✓ How does the paper sound when read aloud? Are there any gaps in information or awkward/incomplete transitions?
- ✓ What are this paper's strong and weak points? What needs reworking?

And finally, what did the SRWC tutor say about this paper? ☺

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