

High Advanced Writing Steps to Take When Submitting Your Essays



Check the First Draft

Check for a Title The title of an essay should be the topic of the essay.

- Does the essay have a title?
- If an essay does not have a title it tells the reader that the writer is not clear about his/her topic. Since the purpose of an essay is to explain or argue the validity of a central main idea, or thesis, and because a thesis is based on a topic (a thesis expresses an idea about a topic), the lack of a title is good sign that the writer does not really know what he/she is writing about and that it may be difficult to find a clear thesis.
 - NOTE: This is a [pet-peeve](#) of mine. Of course a writer could have a clear idea of his/her thesis and simply forget to put a title on an essay, but it is still a sign of hasty work that can be avoided with an equally hasty review of the essay before submission.

Check the Introduction The introduction is the first paragraph or two of an essay. It should begin with a general statement about the topic and end with a more specific statement of the main idea, or thesis, of your paper. Check that you can answer the following questions after reading the introduction:

- What is the topic?
- What is the thesis? (Remember that a thesis expresses an idea about the topic.)
- Can you underline the sentence(s) that state(s) it?
- Does the introduction make you want to read more of the essay?

Check the Body The body consists of paragraphs that each focus on one idea that in turns works to explain or validate one aspect of the thesis. Check that you can answer the following questions after reading each body ¶:

- Is each new ¶ apparent? (Indented 5 spaces or an extra line skipped.)
- What is the main idea of the ¶?
- Does the ¶ focus on one main idea or more than one?
- Does the ¶ explain or validate its main idea by [downshifting](#) to specific examples (3 layers)?
- Are [transition words](#) or phrases used at the beginning of ¶s to signal the move to a new ¶?

Check the Conclusion The conclusion is the last paragraph of the paper. Check that you can answer the following questions after reading the conclusion:

- Does the conclusion revisit the thesis (remind, restate)?
- Does it summarize body ¶ main ideas and show the reader how they are tied to the thesis?
- Does it end with a suggestion as to what the reader might do or think next?

Print out Your Draft Bring a printed hard-copy of your essay to class so that a classmate can review it.

Revise the First Draft

1. Read your reviewer's analysis/comments.
2. Read your essay. Since you have not read it for a few days, it will be easier to view your work objectively and see any gaps or problems ... and you can decide if you agree with the reviewer's analysis/comments before you revise.
3. Revising involves rethinking your ideas, refining your arguments, reorganizing paragraphs, and rewording sentences. You may need to develop your ideas in more detail, give more evidence to support your claims, or delete material that is unnecessary. For more advice on revising and a sample revision, click [here](#).
4. Read your paper out loud. This sometimes makes it easier to identify writing that is awkward or unclear.
5. Have somebody else read the paper and tell you if there's anything that's unclear or confusing...and see if they can help you with articles & prepositions.
6. Type your revisions into your paper.

Proofread, Layout and Submit the Final Draft

1. Read your revised draft. Look for errors such as misspelled words and incorrect [punctuation](#) and [capitalization](#).
2. Errors are harder to spot on a computer screen than on paper, so print out a copy to proofread. Remember, spell checkers and grammar checkers don't always catch errors, so it is best not to rely on them too much.
3. The final draft must be word processed (not simply typed in the body of an email message). Be sure that your paper is double-spaced with a font size between 10 and 12. Margins on all sides of the paper should be 1 inch. Use the header function within the word processor to put your last name and a page number on each page of your paper (in case they get separated when printed out).
4. If you use pictures, give references for them. In addition, do not use large pictures to "cushion" the length of your paper.
5. Email me < lmiller@gmu.edu > the final draft. If you would like, you can also print it out and turn it in, but you do not need to do this.