

## Basic Academic Writing Tips

- Carefully read and follow the assignment directions. Ask the professor to clarify if needed.
- Be simple and clear but not too casual.  
Say what you mean (don't try to be wordy or academic). Say it in the appropriate tone.
- Most papers should have an introduction with a thesis statement/main idea, body paragraphs that support this main idea, and a conclusion. (see handouts on How to Organize a Paper and Thesis Statements)
- A **sentence** has the following 3 components: a subject (the actor in the sentence), a predicate (the verb or action), and a complete thought (an independent clause).
- A **paragraph** is made up of sentences that form a unit. Each paragraph should relate to the main idea (or thesis) of your paper. Paragraphs should also be coherent, logical, and well-developed with evidence and details. A paragraph generally has the following components:
  - a main idea/topic sentence
  - an explanation of the idea
  - an example
  - an explanation of the example
  - sentences that complete the paragraph's idea or transition to the next paragraph.
- **Word Choice:** be precise, use variety, be careful with unfamiliar words/using the thesaurus.
- **Avoid clichés.** They are too vague, general, and colloquial (including: in modern society, throughout history, in this day and age).
- **Be concise:** Replace phrases with words. Don't use unnecessary **qualifiers** (for example: very, really, a lot), but do use them when you are not making an absolute or universal claim (Women *seem to be* smarter than men. Not: Women are smarter than men.).
- **Use active voice and forceful, engaging verbs**  
Jones wrote the paper in 2020. (Not: The paper was written by Jones in 2020.)  
The Bible contains 66 books. (Not: There are 66 books in the Bible.)
- **Revise, Revise, Revise** (see handout on Editing and Proofreading)  
Reconsider arguments, review evidence, refine purpose, reorganize paper, revive stale prose, fix errors (proofread)  
Ask: is it worth saying, what you wanted to say, if a reader will understand it, does it fit the assignment? Does it follow the thesis and introduction?

### Sources and Useful Resources

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/tips-and-tools/>

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/index.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/index.html)