

STRONGER SELF-EDITOR CHECKLIST

The Writing Lab aims to help students become stronger self-editors so that you can learn to revise and proofread your writing holistically. Writing is a process; ideally, you need enough time to draft an essay, revise the overall content and structure of the piece, and then proofread for stylistic and grammatical issues. Use the following checklist as a guide to self-editing your writing.

INTRODUCTION

- Does your introduction begin by grabbing the reader's attention?
- Does your paper contain a thesis that consists either of your paper's main argument or theme, depending on the type of essay?
- Is your thesis arguable? Your thesis should not simply be the statement of a fact because a statement is NOT arguable.
- Does your thesis match your assignment? A thesis for a compare-contrast paper is constructed differently than a thesis for a personal narrative or a research paper.
- Is your thesis placed correctly? Normally the thesis should be the last sentence of your introductory paragraph.
- Does your thesis provide a clear outline for the entirety of your paper?

BODY PARAGRAPHS

- Does the topic sentence of each body paragraph summarize the entirety of that paragraph?
- Does each topic sentence correspond with your thesis statement?
- Does all of the information in your paragraph support your topic sentence?
- Does each body paragraph appear in the same order presented in your thesis?
- Is the final sentence in each body paragraph a sentence that either summarizes the paragraph or transitions to the next point?

CONCLUSION

- Does your conclusion restate your thesis statement (not verbatim)?
- Does it summarize the main idea of each paragraph or section, depending on the length of the paper?
- Does it call the reader to act, respond, or conduct further research?
- Does it only contain information previously mentioned in your paper?

INTEGRATION OF SOURCES

- Do you introduce your quotes and paraphrases with signal phrases?
- Are all your direct quotes included in quotation marks?
- Are your paraphrases written in your writing voice, including significantly different wording and sentence structure from the original quotes?
- Do you provide commentary on the research that connects the evidence back to your main point?
- Are all your paraphrases and direct quotes cited according to your formatting style?

FLOW, TRANSITIONS, & KEY TERMS

- Do you consistently use key characters or terms that unite your paragraphs and sections together?
- Are your transitions from one idea to another smooth and clearly explained, so the reader does not need to make any leaps in logic?
- Are your sentences of varied lengths and complexities? A paper is stronger when it has a mixture of sentences versus all short sentences or all long sentences.
- Have you removed unnecessary hedges that weaken your arguments such as probably, might be, somewhat, or kind of?
- Has all slang and conversational language been removed? The exception is when writing a personal narrative where this type of language may be appropriate.
- Have you removed any offensive language, such as gender-based or biased language?

GRAMMAR & MECHANICS

- Do you have parallel sentence structure (matching subjects and pronouns, verb tenses, person & voice)?
- Is your paper free of fragments and run-on sentences?
- Have you read through your paper out-loud to catch errors that you may miss reading silently?

FORMATTING

- Are the margins, page numbers, titles, line spacing, citations, and bibliographic information formatted correctly as specified by MLA, APA, Turabian, or a style indicated by your instructor?
- Have you selected a title that will interest and engage the reader? A restatement of the assignment, such as "Argumentative Essay," is not a strong choice.