

COLLEGE WRITING: MAKING THE TRANSITION

Whether you are a freshman who just graduated high school or an adult learner returning to school after many years, the transition to college can be a difficult one. Perhaps one of the most challenging aspects is getting accustomed to academic writing. Here are some tips to make your transition easier!

The Regent University Writing lab is here to help you with the transition to college writing!

CONTENT

1. **Always follow the prompt** – The prompt is the information a student uses to start their paper. Make sure to cover every topic the prompt proposes. If the prompt encourages you to “talk about x,” talk about x. If the prompt asks “y?” answer y. The prompt provides your Professor’s expectations.
2. **Stay on topic/focus on your thesis** – Everything in your writing should focus on a central topic. As you are writing your assignment frequently ask yourself, “does this sentence/passage contribute to the main idea in a meaningful way?” If it does not, get rid of it or re-work it. Straying too far off topic makes your writing seem disorganized at best and ill-informed at worst. In longer works, your topic is referred to as your thesis.
3. **Have a solid thesis** – Your thesis is essentially the main idea and organizing principle of your paper. Your thesis should be clear and concise. Consult the Writing Lab’s resource on thesis writing to perfect this crucial skill.

STYLE

1. **Avoid contractions** – A contraction is the shortening of a phrase using an apostrophe (e.g. can’t -> cannot; shouldn’t -> should not). Do not use contractions in academic writing.
2. **Avoid passive voice** – Passive sentences combine any to be verb with a past tense verb (am, is, are, was, were, be, being, and been) and place the “doer” as the direct object as opposed to the subject. Active voice places the “doer” as the subject. Active voice sounds more assertive, clear, and concise. Refer to the writing lab’s resource on passive vs. active voice for more information.
3. **Write in the third person** – In general, you should write your papers in the third person. Do not refer to yourself (me, I, my, etc.) or to the reader (you, you all, etc.) unless specifically allowed by the assignment.

AVOIDING PLAGIARISM

Academic writing has extremely strict guidelines regarding plagiarism. Plagiarism is the act of knowingly or unknowingly using someone else's ideas or words and presenting it as one's own work. Use these tips to avoid plagiarism.

1. **Always cite sources in text** – Anytime you mention information that you got from another author, cite it. This includes quotes and paraphrasing. If the idea is not your own, cite it. If you are not sure if you should cite something, cite it. The only exception would be commonly known facts (e.g. "George Washington died in 1799" would not need a citation).
2. **Paraphrasing is more than just changing the wording** – Paraphrasing is the art of putting another person's ideas in your own words. It is not using a thesaurus to change keywords and keeping the structure of the sentence the same.

EXAMPLE:

Original sentence: "Many historians are skeptical of Herodotus' account of the Hanging Gardens."

BAD Paraphrase: "A lot of those who study history don't believe Herodotus' writings about the Hanging Gardens."

GOOD Paraphrase: Even though Herodotus' writings acts as a crucial resource to understand ancient Greek society, a large portion of historians have reason to believe his accounts of the hanging gardens are based on little evidence.

PRACTICE NOW