

Tips for writing clearly

- Always write clear topic sentences that adequately summarize the points you will make in the paragraph. Check your topic sentences after you are done writing. When read in isolation, they should summarize the main points of your paper in a logical sequence. Never use semicolons or informal language in your topic sentences, they are too important! Topic sentences are approximately 30% of your grade, so make them good.
- Do not over-use semicolons. Their use in formal writing is very specific. Too often students are using them in place of commas and periods (must be a strange fad?).
- Re-read your paper when you've finished writing, always checking for the following common mistakes:
 - 1) typos
 - 2) clauses that can be deleted (brevity is the quickest way to clarity)
 - 3) incorrect grammar
 - 4) run-on sentences (a maximum of three lines per sentence is a good rule of thumb)
 - 5) awkward writing (if it sounds slightly off to you, it will sound terrible to a first-time reader).
- Avoid the use of passive constructions, almost always used in conjunction with the verbs 'is' and 'are'.
Example: The expansion of PV is largely limited by high prices. [BAD]
Versus: High prices have limited the expansion of PV. [GOOD]
- The brief is no place for your personal opinion. You are summarizing the speaker's main points, no editorializing please.