

Editing checklist

- Re-read the assignment prompt and make sure you have done everything required
- Check your paper for unsubstantiated claims. These are assertions that are not backed up with evidence. If you find any unsubstantiated claims, add citations to the appropriate scholarly studies.
- Check your paper for overgeneralizations. Words like “always” and “all” (instead of “many” and “most”) are red flags. If you find overgeneralizations, replace them with more accurate statements that effectively convey the complexity of the phenomena you are describing.
- Break up paragraphs that are too long. Each paragraph should cover one idea.
- The first sentence of every paragraph should be a topic sentence that effectively introduces the rest of the information in the paragraph.
- Use transition sentences between paragraphs. The last sentence of every paragraph should summarize the preceding paragraph and show how it relates to the topic of the next paragraph. The coherence and unity of your paper depends on drawing clear connections between the argument and the supporting evidence.
- Break up sentences that are too long. A good rule of thumb to use is that sentences should not take up more than three lines of text.
- Define words and terms the first time you use them.
- Make sure you know what the words you use really mean. If you are unsure, use a dictionary to look it up or replace it with another word.
- Replace passive voice with active voice. This is easier to read and provides more information about exactly who is doing the action you are describing. For example:
 - Passive: A colonial administration of the former Inca empire was set up after conquest
 - Active: After the conquest, the Spaniards set up a colonial administration of the former Inca Empire.
- Get rid of colloquial uses of language in your paper, unless they are part of a quote. An academic paper should not be written in the same way that you speak. (This does NOT mean, however, that you should use big words and long sentences. Aim for simplicity and clarity even when expressing complex ideas.) For example:
 - Colloquial: Scholars are really into this argument.
 - Formal: Many scholars support this argument.
- Replace contractions. For example, write “it is” instead of “it’s” and “do not” instead of “don’t.”
- Proofread and spell-check your paper. Allow yourself some time between writing and proofreading since this will give you a chance to review your paper with a fresh mind.