

Helpful hints about an academic paper:

1. Do not use contractions, in other words, DON'T use Don't.

2. Make sure your modifiers actually modify something. The main mistake most people make is the use of the word "this". They will start a sentence with "this". "This" is a modifier, so there should be something that it modifies, for example:

Wrong: I am going to put my students in a cooperative learning group in my classroom. This is a good way to improve student achievement.

Right: I am going to put my students in a cooperative learning group in my classroom. This method is a good way to improve student achievement.

3. Do not end the sentence with a preposition. This mistake (see, "this" is used correctly here to start the sentence) used to earn a grade of "F" on papers.

Wrong: The class has many materials to work with. (with is a preposition).

Right: The class has many materials with which to work.

4. Subject/verb agreement. This one (again, I had a word for "this" to modify) is so basic that it should never happen and with modern word processing programs, the program will often point out this mistake. But, it happens.

Wrong: One of the centers that my students will be using are the science and math centers.

Right: One of the centers that my students will be using is the science center.

Or

Right: Two of the centers that my students will be using are the science and math centers.

5. Long, run-on sentences. Try not to have a sentence that goes on and on forever, with all kinds of thoughts, usually separated by commas, when, in fact, it would be better to have a couple of shorter sentences, that are getting the same points across, and create less confusion for the reader. Uh-oh, that looks like a run-on sentence.

Right: Try not to have sentences that go on forever. Use commas sparingly. Use shorter sentences to get your points across. Long run-on sentences do not make you appear more educated.

6. Take the time to read your paper out loud. You will be amazed at the mistakes you find. If it doesn't sound right, it probably isn't. (if this paper was an academic one, I would not have used those two contractions.

7. Be careful with numbers. Small numbers should be written out as words. Only large numbers should be written as a number.

Wrong: 2 or 3 groups of my students will work at the centers while I work with another group.

Right: Two or three groups of my students will work at the centers while I work with another group.

8. Remember, spell check will not pick up words that are actually words but are misspelled for their use in your paper.

Wrong: One of the rewards for my students will be a fare ticket.

Right: One of the rewards for my students will be a fair ticket.