

Checklist for Papers

NAME _____

Before handing in your paper confirm (by initializing) that you:

_____ **PROOFREAD ONLY ON PAPER COPY.**

- Proofreading transcends simply identifying and correcting misspellings. Read aloud your assignment word-by-word and sentence-by-sentence. In addition to confusing your argument, errors of style severely damage the rhetorical power of your paper. Do the words on the page convey your thoughts AND do so using correct grammar and style? The only way to proofread effectively is on paper; it is simply too easy to miss errors on a computer screen – especially missing words and homonyms. By proofreading in a different medium than the one in which you wrote, you are more likely to see what you actual wrote, rather than what you thought you wrote.

_____ **Use as concise and clear language as possible at all times.**

- No sentence (or even word) in a short paper can be wasted. Write as though ink were the world's most precious resource.
- If you are not 100% certain about the definition of a word, it should not appear in your paper.
- Avoid the use of weak adverbs such as “really, obviously, truly, very, etc.”
- If a phrase seems awkward to you, it will annoy and confuse anyone not privy to your private thoughts and intentions. Avoid unnecessarily verbose constructions like “the interesting thing about Achilles in the *Iliad* is that...” – you can **always** rephrase in a way that makes your point clearer.
- You must be very precise when discussing literary phenomena. In a phrase like “Virgil takes up the Underworld from Homer,” “takes up” is far too vague to convey your analysis to your audience.

_____ **Compose your academic paper using academic language.**

- Academic style is emotionally detached, logical, and persuasive.
- The first person (‘I’) is almost never appropriate in academic style.
- Avoid slang and derogatory terms unless they are necessary for your argument. If you are uncertain whether a word is appropriate, verify its usage in a (good) dictionary or ask me.

_____ **Include the following in your first paragraph:**

- An introduction to your essay; *i.e.* what is your topic
- A preliminary statement of your thesis, *i.e.* what do you hope to demonstrate in the essay
- The titles of the text or texts (or other evidence) you plan to use to prove your thesis
- When you have finished your rough draft reconsider your introductory paragraph. Rewrite if your introduction fails to announce the topic and problems to be discussed, explain their background and context, formulate a thesis, and set out how and in what sequence the issues will be presented.

_____ **Compose every paragraph to fulfill a specific purpose.**

- While every paragraph need not follow the typical format of **topic sentence, illustration, explanation**, each paragraph must have a purpose and fulfill a specific step towards supporting your thesis.

_____ **Use footnotes to cite sources, add tangential (but not unrelated) information, and further elaborate a point not integral to your argument.**

- The footnote reference (¹) always comes after all punctuation in the sentence.
- Footnote references should only be placed in the middle of sentences when placing it at the end would cause severe confusion or incorrect attribution.

_____ **Avoid self-referential statements** such as: “as I was saying” or “as I said above” or “to continue.”

- Such statements probably indicate a breakdown in the logical development of your argument.

_____ **Use the correct format for citations.**

- ALWAYS *italicize* or underline titles
- When referencing modern literature, use a consistent format (either in-text or footnotes)
- The proper format for citing classical texts: [Author], [Title] [Book/Section],[Line #s cited]; *e.g.* Homer, *Iliad* 18.141-143; Sophocles, *Antigone* 904-922; Cicero, *First Catilinarian* 14.2
- If you are generically citing a specific book in a work, capitalize both elements (Book Eighteen or Book 18 or Book XVIII); generic references, such as “several books in the *Iliad*,” should not be capitalized.
- If you are including a parenthetical citation at the end of a sentence – *e.g.* (Homer, *Odyssey* 1.1-3) – the period follows the citation.
- In formal usage “quote” is a verb; “quotation” is a noun. You give a “quotation.” You “quote” a source.

_____ **Use the correct format for quotations.**

- Quotations are not substitutes for argumentation but should support your argument. The importance of quotations is not self-evident. Explain why you are introducing them and what conclusion a reader should draw from them.
- For quotations over 4 lines long: omit quotation marks, **indent 1 inch** but do not reduce size or spacing.
- **Commas and periods** are placed **inside quotation marks**; **colons and semicolons, outside quotation marks**; **dashes, question marks, and exclamation points, inside quotations if part of the quotation.** The closing quotation mark comes after all punctuation.
- If you omit words in a quotation, use an ellipse, three dots (...), or four at the end of a sentence.
- If there is a grammatical or factual error in a quotation, you should insert “[sic]” immediately following the error. *E.g.* “In 1961 [sic], the Civil War began.”
- For poetry, preserve the divisions between verses: *e.g.* “Son of Atreus, the Greeks are out to make you, / My Lord, the most despised man on earth” – the “/” indicates a new line.

_____ **Underline or italicize foreign words and phrases:** *e.g.* pietas; *xenia*.

- Note: *i.e.* introduces an alternative, clarifying word or phrase; *e.g.* introduces examples.

_____ **Use the small 'g' god when writing about Greco-Roman divinities.**

- Capital “G” God is reserved for a monotheistic deity.

_____ **Spell characters’ names correctly.**

- In general, remember that small errors can have a large impact on the authority of your argument.
- Don’t be afraid to add the correct spelling of foreign names and words to your spellchecker’s dictionary.

_____ **Correctly indicate possession.**

- *E.g.* Hector’s honor; Achilles’s honor; the Greeks’ honor, their honor, its glory

_____ **Differentiate between “there” and “their” and other homonyms** (words that sound the same but have different meanings).

- With the rise of computer-assisted spell checking, this is a particularly relevant issue while proofreading.
- *E.g.* “there”: the opposite of here, *i.e.* “over there”; “their”: 3rd person plural possessive, “their book”; “its” is used to indicate possession; “it’s” is an abbreviation for “it is”

_____ **Correctly use “which” and “that.”**

- “That” always introduces a restrictive clause (contains information critical to the meaning of the sentence).
- “Which” introduces a non-restrictive clause (adds information about its antecedent without limiting it to a particular individual or group). Non-restrictive clauses are set off by commas.

_____ **Format your paper per assignment instructions.**

_____ **Include page numbers on bottom of every page.**

_____ **Attach a cover page** including your name, course name, and **an attention-grabbing title** that indicates the subject and thesis of your paper.

_____ **Attach a properly-formatted “Works Cited” page** to the end of your paper (if applicable).

_____ **Verify that you have satisfied the requirements for avoiding plagiarism as specified in your student handbook.**

After verifying that your paper adequately fulfills the injunction of each item, check each item on the list and STAPLE THIS CHECKLIST TO THE FRONT OF YOUR PAPER. I will accept neither papers without this sheet attached nor those that do not demonstrate that the items herein were followed to the best of your ability.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FORM OR CONTENT OF YOUR ASSIGNMENT PLEASE CONTACT ME. It’s always better to ask a question than make a mistake.