

WRITING GUIDE FOR ANALYTICAL ESSAYS

Prof. Eve Bratman

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MUST-HAVES

- **A Title.**

Titles help get the reader excited and let the reader know what you plan to say.

- **A Thesis**

A thesis statement is your main argumentative point. It summarizes the point of the essay (or research paper) and is distinct from the topic.

- **Citations AND Literature Cited**

Citations are in-text references to the sources of your ideas. I recommend APA style (6th ed.), or Chicago (16th ed.). Stylistic consistency is key!

(There is no need for annotated bibliographies). Please *do not* include references in the literature cited list that you didn't actually cite in the paper.

- **Abide the Word Count**

Citations count in the word limit; Use the “word count” function in Word.

+/- 300 words in most cases is a good ballpark. Slightly over the “max” is not usually something I penalize students over unless exceeding 20% over the maximum.

IMPORTANT TIPS:

TITLES

- “Paper 3” is a really lousy title.
- Subtitles are handy in helping to specify your topic.

CITATIONS

- Citations are important. but fussing over italics, periods, and colons in references can easily become the bane of your existence. To avoid this common nuisance, check out Zotero, EndNote, or Mendeley. These software programs have plug-ins with Word, and will make your life as a student significantly easier. ***See also my preferences and tips on Slide 7!***

STRUCTURE

- Strong introductory paragraphs will often include a ‘roadmap’ for the rest of the paper. Following the thesis statement, for example, you might want to devote one sentence to a brief synopsis of your paper outline, so that the reader knows what to expect. Don’t forget, too, that introductory and conclusion paragraphs are key in orienting your reader and for clarity!

MORE IMPORTANT TIPS

- **Tone makes a difference.**

- E.g.: They're often confused, but there's still a difference between ontology and epistemology, and it's important! Vs: They are often confused, but there is still a difference between ontology and epistemology, and the difference is important.

(Hint: the second phrasing is preferable)

- Using the first person is sometimes a lot less awkward than trying to avoid using the first person.
- **Trust your natural voice.** If you can explain something clearly verbally, you should strive to write it that way as well. **DO NOT try to sound more “academic” by imitating some of the scholarly writing styles you see.**
- **Read your writing out loud.** (Or at least in a loud whisper. It's the best way to catch typos and awkward phrasing).



COMMON MISTAKES

AND HOW TO AVOID THEM IN YOUR WRITING

WHY DOES GOOD WRITING MATTER?

- **The stakes are high.** A simple mistake can raise a red flag and get someone else the job you wanted.
- **You never know who is reading.** And most people assume you are uneducated if you use bad grammar. Most of the stuff in this guide is basically a 6th grade level.
- **Defy low expectations.** Let's face it, you're in the ROTFLMAO generation. Older folks will often assume that millennials will write emails that start with 'hey' and end with Thanks, or "tty soon." You will likely delight someone with your charmingly old-fashioned etiquette, if you use it well and judiciously!
- **Grammar: For Strength!**
 - Careful writing leads to careful reading. It is actually pretty thrilling to catch typos in the *New York Times* (trust me!). Once you hone these skills, you can edit other people's work more effectively.
 - The world is full of people who care about paying attention to detail. Even if you're not one of them, the detail-oriented people are out there, still caring.

CITING ENOUGH (AND TOO MUCH)

Do NOT use full article titles and author's names in your text. Citations function like a shortcut for a shout-out. Give your props, then move on. Using the title *and then* citing a piece is generally redundant, and I consider it a waste of space in most instances.

* The only exception to this stylistic guideline is when you're quoting a seminal piece of work, such as *The Brothers Karamazov* or *A Sand County Almanac*.

Remember: one of the skills you're learning through these essays is writing succinctly. Avoid filler, at all costs! This is the most common 'cheap filler I see.

Amount of citations: Citations are used to demonstrate your research and back up facts and evidence-based points. It is important to cite even if you are a subject expert. Students usually have too few citations, not too many.

Patchworking: Every single sentence should not involve a citation (unless you are doing legal writing or striving for a scientific publication). For analytical essays, it is important to make a point – one you yourself thought of, through synthesis and analysis, and then back it up with citations to demonstrate your research. Also, **there's usually no need to paraphrase and quote.** Lead up to your quote with summary or analysis, then use the quote to richly illustrate the point.

1. QUOTE & PARAPHRASE CONFUSION

A paraphrased citation looks something like this:

Falgotta (2014) explained the importance of using citations.

To directly quote citations, it should look something like this:

“Citations may be paraphrased or directly quoted” (Hamilton, 2014, p. 1).

- Using quotes: Note author’s last name, date, page number. (list n.d. if no date is listed).
- It’s generally redundant to write the name of the author and article, and *THEN* additionally add a citation.

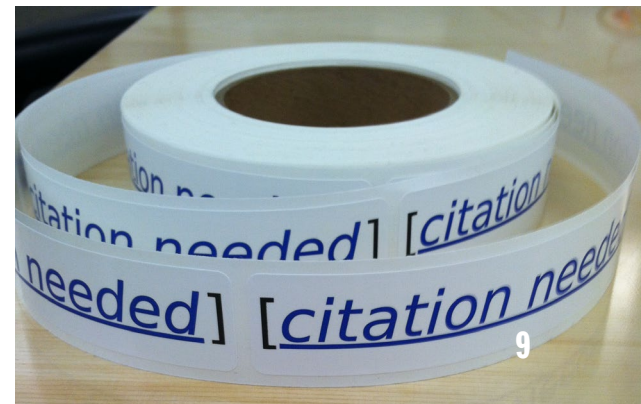
A bibliography at the end of your paper should encompass both paraphrased and quoted sources. “Works Cited” is different from “References”

APA style is a good standard for bibliographic sources to use.

Consistency is key, no matter which format you choose.

WHAT ARE THE PROBLEMS HERE?

Falgotta's work (2014) was the definitive statement on writing with appropriate sources. Falgotta says in *How to Write Well* that citations should always be used for direct quotes (2014). "Using citations is a fundamental part of substantiating argumentation and convincing readers that there is scientific and scholarly support for novel evidence or non-intuitive statements." (Falgotta, 2014, p. 23).



2. (IN)APPROPRIATE SOURCES

Blogs: Blogs may sometimes contain news-worthy information, and reading blogs is usually fun. Don't stop reading them. Remember, usually they contain opinions, and other information that has not been peer-reviewed.

DO NOT use blogs as a source in your research papers. Exception: they could be a good first-hand source if you are doing a research paper, say, about social media and the Arab Spring.

Also avoid:

- Wikipedia, Dictionary, eHow, Q & A sites
- Going to Google before going to the library website in search of scholarly sources.

Long direct quotes have unique indentation requirements. I recommend avoiding long direct quotes (more than 5 lines). They are usually used as another cheap filler. A great testimony or a specific poetic excerpt may be exceptions.

3. THE THIRD PERSON, & YOU

- **Do not write a paper that begins with something like: *I chose to write about this because* _____.**

There is no need to mention the author (aka the student). Just write about the topic.

- In a reflection, first person is fine, but you still need to be mindful of when to situate yourself in the work, and when to be an observer.

It is more important for me to see you analyze than summarize. In other words, try to emphasize what you think about what an author is arguing, rather than just summarizing their argument.

Examples:

1. Taking in Rio's culture by walking its streets, eating its food and trying to pick up the local language has made me grow in ways I can't put into words but the feeling of which is felt very strongly by me.

2. I feel like utilitarian ethics are more compelling because...

- I don't really care what you feel. I care about what you THINK and WHY.
- Writing tip: Reword to avoid ending the sentence with the subject "me". E.g. "but I feel these changes very strongly." ('the feeling of which' is too passive) (you only need to put your "I" into the sentence once).

4. GOOFY APOSTROPHES

- Its: a possessive pronoun
- It's: It's can be possessive, but it's really a conjunction.
 - It's is a merging of 'it' and 'is.' (or it has, in past tense).
- S' is possessive for a word that ends in S.
 - Eg.: Jeffrey Sachs' book, *The End of Poverty*...
 - and: The Kuznets curve predicts...
- Example: It's the Alot's turn to speak. No one can take its place.
 - Tip: Try replacing your "its" with "his" in the sentence. If it comes out sounding right, "its" can stay

WHAT'S WRONG HERE?

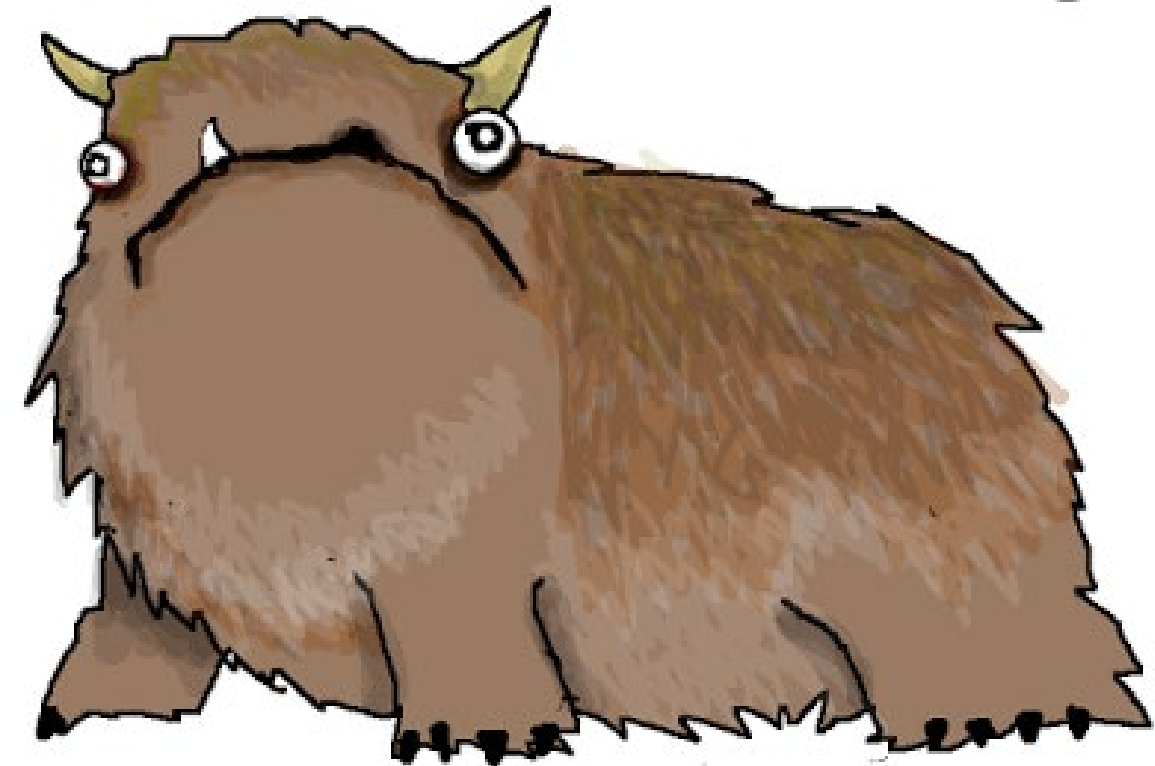
Since the return to power of the old-guard authoritarian Party of the Institutional Revolution (PRI) with Peña Nieto on December 1st, 2012, Mexico has experienced a systematic unravelling of the rule of law and human rights. Mexico is today one of the most dangerous country's in the world for the press, with frequent assassinations and threats against journalists. Freedom of assembly is also systematically under attack, with the number of political prisoners and arbitrary detentions of activists skyrocketing in recent years. Plurality in the media has also been significantly reduced with the recent arbitrary firing of Mexico's leading independent news anchor, Carmen

John M. Ackerman, Professor, UNAM-Mexico City; Editor-in-Chief, Mexican Law Review; Columnist, Proceso and La Jornada. "Toward the 'Normalization' of US-Mexico Relations," *Huffington Post* Blog. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-m-ackerman/toward-the-normalization-of-us-mexico-relations_b_7789804.html

Posted: 07/14/2015 1:40 pm EDT Updated: 07/14/2015 2:59 pm EDT

5. CONJUNCTION ABUSE

ALOT



It has become almost fun for me to come across people who take the phrase "a lot" and condense it down into one word, because when someone says "alot," this is what I imagine:

I CARE ABOUT THIS ALOT



ALOT OF FIRE

ALOT OF BEER CANS



ALOT MORE DANGEROUS



...baby less dangerous

I HEAR THAT ALOT...



5. OVERLY-ENTHUSIASTIC CAPITALIZATION



Quiet Please!
Others Are Working
Sounds in the stairwell can be
Disturbing to those working
in the Offices Nearby.

- Capitalizations should **NOT** be used for emphasis. Capitalize proper nouns. And Acronyms (LOL!).
UNLESS YOU USE ALL CAPS AND WANT TO CONVEY SHOUTING VOICE, ALL CAPS SHOULD BE AVOIDED(!)
- Try **bold**, instead. Or *italics*. Or, underlines.
- ***Or, all of the above.***

gerard-gay:

there is A REASON I TYPE LIKE THIS

it BUILDS UP THE EXCITEMENT

this is too boring

THIS IS OBNOXIOUS

look its THE PERFECT BALANCE

Each caplet contains:

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Posologie :

Emploi déconseillé. Utiliser un
produit BENADRYL® pour enfants.

1 à 2 caplets toutes les
4 à 6 heures. Ne pas dépasser
8 caplets en 24 heures.

CAPITALS ARE APPROPRIATE IN:

Months, days,
holidays

- November (NOT: november)
- Thanksgiving, Thursday

I

- Just the pronoun “I”, not you, not me.

Names

- JFK, John F. Kennedy, European Union (EU)
- Chicago, Bangladesh
- British, Indonesian, Muslim, Jewish, Urdu, Creole
- Directions: lowercase, unless describing a group or region: Global South, or Midwest

Titles

- Professor Bratman, Dr. Martin Luther King
- NOT: Economist Jeffrey Sachs
- Cry Me a River: Blues and sorrow in the American South

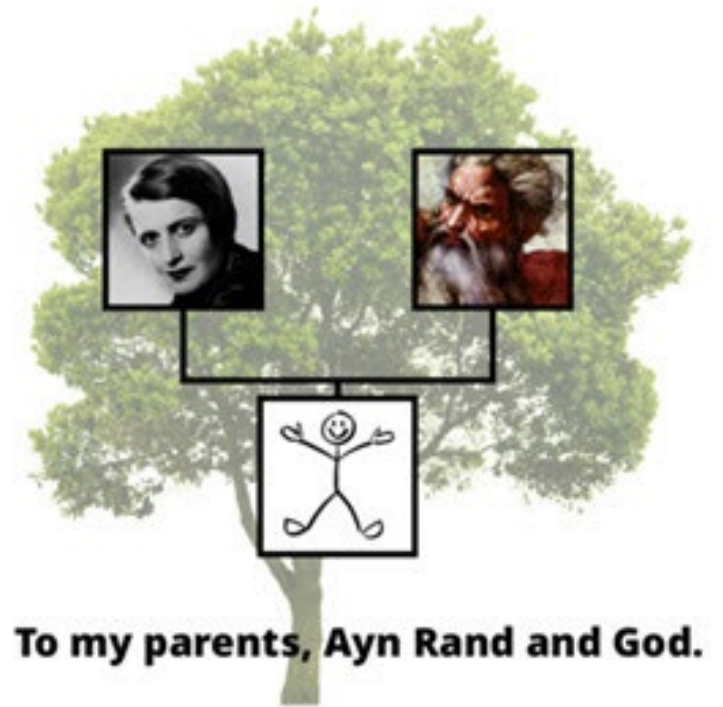
Sentences

- Dear Mrs. Grammar,
- Each sentence should begin with a capital letter.
- Cordially Yours,

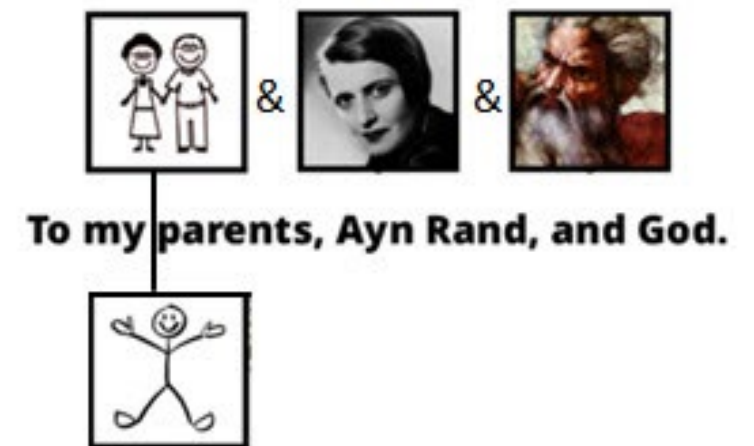
6. WAIT, WHAT? STRANGE COMMAS

Let's eat grandpa.
Let's eat, grandpa.

**correct punctuation can
save a person's life.**



OR



7. BAD WORD CHOICES

Insipid vs. Insidious
vs. Insinuating vs.
Insolent

Tenant vs. Tenet

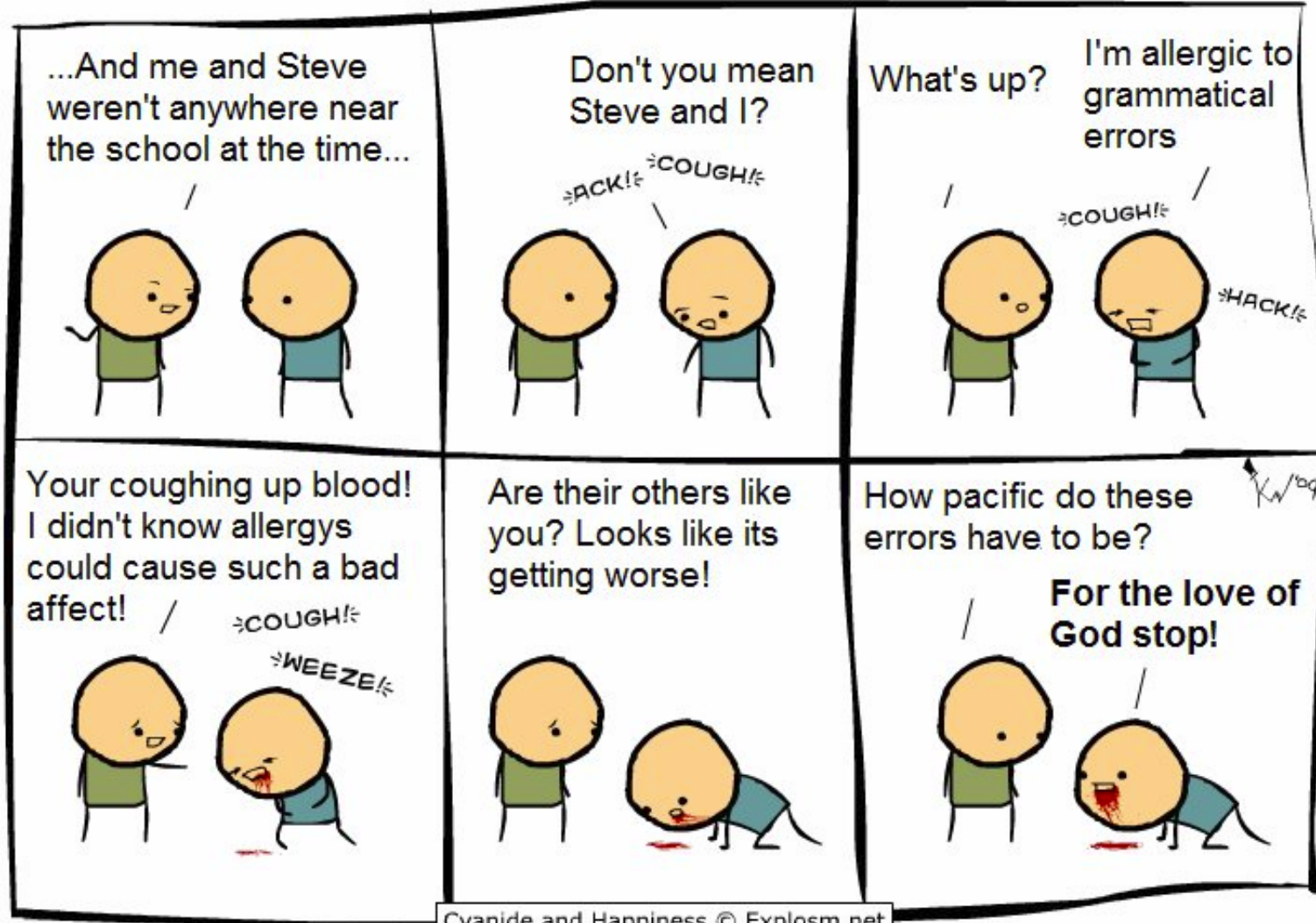


AVOIDING THIS MISTAKE:

- **Intelligible content and good prose go hand-in-hand.**
 - Careful not to exaggerate or undermine your case by choosing a word that is extra punchy. Also, being elusive does not help your writing.
- **Don't try to sound so darn smart. Use words you are comfortable with.**
 - A 10 cent word correctly used is worth more than a \$1.00 word, incorrectly used.
- If you're in doubt, **look it up!**
- Use a thesaurus if you need to avoid repeating the same word over again repeatedly.
- *Clarity is the key to good academic writing.*
 - For a reader, it's a lot harder to figure out what you mean than when you're speaking to someone. What you write tends to stay put as the written record. Choosing the wrong word can confuse – or mislead – your reader.

8. TORTUROUS GRAMMAR

COMIC REWRITE CONTEST





SOME REAL LIFE EXAMPLES FROM MY STUDENTS...

- The Kuznet's Curve is Simon Kuznet's graphical representation of inequality ...He speculates that nations transitioning into an industrialized nations are like slinkies (that's the way I interpret it).
- Stiglitz? I forget his first name....James? John? Joseph? I know it started with a J.
- It doesn't explicitly assert that people at this level of income or purchasing power may at all be engorging their leisure on the work and circumstance of the people on the left.
- "The bankers consider women loonies as higher risk than men loonies."
- Countless intergovernmental bodies have erected as a result of these debates; a way to properly measure and implement change.
- ...the Plutonic River, in Washington DC...
- However the United States became a main player in the developing of the Iraqi constitution and other tenants of freedom that they thought the Iraqis needed.

HOW TO WRITE GOOD

By Frank L. Visco

My several years in the word game have learnt me several rules:

1. Avoid alliteration. Always.
2. Prepositions are not words to end sentences with.
3. Avoid cliches like the plague. (They're old hat.)
4. Employ the vernacular.
5. Eschew ampersands & abbreviations, etc.
6. Parenthetical remarks (however relevant) are unnecessary.
7. It is wrong to ever split an infinitive.
8. Contractions aren't necessary.
9. Foreign words and phrases are not apropos.
10. One should never generalize.
11. Eliminate quotations. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once said: "I hate quotations. Tell me what you know."
12. Comparisons are as bad as cliches.
13. Don't be redundant; don't use more words than necessary; it's highly superfluous.
14. Profanity sucks.
15. Be more or less specific.
16. Understatement is always best.
17. Exaggeration is a billion times worse than understatement.
18. One-word sentences? Eliminate.
19. Analogies in writing are like feathers on a snake.
20. The passive voice is to be avoided.
21. Go around the barn at high noon to avoid colloquialisms.
22. Even if a mixed metaphor sings, it should be derailed.
23. Who needs rhetorical questions?