Tierney’s Rules for Scholarly Writing:

1. Papers should follow the latest guidelines outlined in the APA Manual. Download the APA template from Microsoft to ensure your papers are formatted correctly. Manuscripts should be double-spaced, with 1” margins, no gaps between paragraphs, and one space between periods and the start of a new sentence.

2. Everything you turn in must be without errors or typos. Have someone else proofread your work before you hand it in for grading.


4. Provide the reader with an outline for your writing (a roadmap) at the end of your introductory section. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. The reader should know where the paper will take them, be provided a clear journey, and then be told from where they have come in the conclusion.

5. Writing should be clear, concise, and to the point. Do not waste words! Be sure to write simple, direct sentences- If there is a shorter way to write a sentence, do so!

6. Do not overstate your point (e.g., Colleges must produce dramatic change if they are to survive).

7. Be conscious of what a paragraph is (i.e., they are usually more than 3 sentences, and generally less than 1 page).

8. Keep in mind that paragraphs contain only one idea. Paragraphs should be able to be summarized in just a few words.

9. Do not use sentence fragments. In scholarly writing, only use complete sentences.

10. Try to avoid -ing verbs (present participle) when possible. USE ACTIVE VOICE.

11. Do not split compound verbs, or subject and verb (e.g., College administrators have constantly increased student fees).

12. Avoid split infinitives (e.g., Miller College took steps to dramatically increase enrollments).

13. Remember the either/or and neither/nor rule. Be sure to pair the word “either” with “or” and pair the word “neither” with “nor” in a sentence.

14. When using “him/her, this, that, these, those” be sure to include the antecedent preceding the sentence. Mitigate unclear referents!

15. Avoid using there is/there are, contractions, qualifiers (e.g., I believe, I think, I submit, etc.) modals (e.g., would, could, should, etc.), jargon, colloquial terms, and/or informal language.

16. Always avoid double negatives (e.g. Graduates should not presume that learning does not occur in the classroom).

Source: Adapted from W.G. Tierney’s Rules for Writing

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