

A Practical Guide to Preparing Your Final Draft

FOR ALL PAPERS:

Have you carefully proof-read your paper for **spelling and punctuation**? Have you used your computer's spell-checker and then checked your paper over yourself for anything the computer might have missed?

Are there **paragraphs** that seem to be too long (say, a page or more), or which seem to deal with two distinctly different ideas? If so, find a way to split such paragraphs into smaller paragraphs.

Are there **paragraphs** which seem to short (say, a sentence or two) for no recognizable purpose? If so, join the short paragraph with another nearby paragraph or move it to another part of the paper.

Have you looked at your **transitions**? Look at the first and last sentence of each paragraph. Do you lead your reader through the paper, preparing him or her for what is to come and making clear connections and distinctions between one paragraph/section and the next?

Have you examined your paper for excess **repetition**? Does any particular word appear too often? If you find that you are using very similar thoughts, ideas, or sentences over and over, can you group them together or add a new spin the second or third time around?

Have you varied your **sentence length and structure**? Do you avoid using the same word to begin several sentences within the same paragraph?

Does your **conclusion** do more than simply repeat the introduction? Have you used material in your conclusion that might work better if it were moved to the introduction? Does your conclusion leave the reader something to think about?

Have you provided dates and place names and other **details** where they would be helpful?

Have you give your paper a unique and helpful **title**?

Have you numbered your pages?

Have you stapled or paper-clipped your paper, according to the wishes of your instructor?

Please turn this sheet over to find additional advice for writers of research papers

FOR RESEARCH PAPERS:

Have you accurately and consistently cited your **sources**, using a style (MLA, APA, Chicago, etc.) acceptable to your instructor? Have you been sure to cite quotes, paraphrased material, and summaries?

Have you used a sufficient **variety of sources**, according to the wishes of your instructor? Have you mixed those sources instead of using just one for several pages at a time?

Do you use **signal phrases** (or “lead-ins”) to prepare your reader for quoted material? Will your reader fully understand why you’re using each particular quote?

Have you checked to be sure that your **quotations** are not unnecessarily long? Can you delete portions of the quote or use ellipses to shorten any overly long quotes and still make the same point?

Have you set off (correctly indented) any quotes longer than three full lines?

Have you underlined (or italicized) **book titles**? Have you used quotation marks for **article titles**?