

Elements of an Academic Paper: Checklist

Format

- Citation style: MLA, APA, Chicago, or other format style
- Original title: Title should describe your paper
- Double-spaced, 12-pt. Times New Roman font (unless otherwise specified)
- Introduce authors with their full name the first time you use their name. After that, use the author's last name only, or repeat the author's full name. Never refer to the author only by their first name.

Context

- Complete introductory paragraph with a thesis/topic statement
- Well-developed body paragraphs that support and develop the thesis/topic
- Complete concluding paragraph that effectively brings the paper to a close

Organization

- Clear transition between each sentence and each paragraph
- Topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph
- All paragraphs develop the main idea of the paper
- Well-incorporated quotes
 - Signal phrase—for example: Woolf says,...; Silko writes,...
 - Quote in quotation marks
- Page number for quote in parentheses
- Adequate explanation of how quote develops the topic of the paragraph

Tone and Style

- Middle style—no slang or clichés; no unnecessary fancy language
- Active voice—strong subjects and verbs
- First-person pronoun okay in moderation
- Clarity and concision—no “fluff”. Fluff includes useless adverbs (very, really, especially, etc.), lengthy quotes, unnecessary words, and repetition.

Proofreading

- Check for spelling errors and misused words—for example: “a viscous dragon” instead of “a vicious dragon”.
- Eliminate sentence-structure errors like sentence fragments and run-ons.
- Correct logical errors like dangling modifiers and faulty predication.
- Learn to use commas, apostrophes, and other punctuation marks correctly

Resources

- UNT Writing Center
- Purdue Online Writing Lab (O.W.L)—example papers, guidelines for APA, MLA, and Chicago formatting; and writing tips: Owl.Purdue.edu/Owl/Purdue_Owl.html

Handout created by Erica Peterson