

Essay Editorial Advice

What you ought to try to avoid in your essays for this class:

- Use “you,” “the reader,” or “one” because you are assuming that any possible reader will have the same opinion that you are presenting. You should only use these forms of address when you are making a specific and well researched argument about the reception of a particular text.
- Use “I” or “me” unless you are using personal experience to back up your argument(s)
- Use “I believe” or “I think” because those phrases allow you to hedge your arguments instead of just saying “this is so”
- Use contractions because they are informal language structures
- Use questions because you, as the writer, should be answering questions not asking them
- Use the phrase “the fact that” because it is just extra wordage
- Use the words “thing,” “some,” or “many” when you should name the object particularly – be as specific as possible
- Use “there is/are” or “it is” because in using these sentence structures you are avoiding clearly signaling to your reader who/ what is the subject of your sentence
- Use “this” as the subject of a sentence because this construction tends to obscure the actual subject of the sentence
- Use passive voice when active voice is more appropriate (ex. “The building is considered by Ruskin.” – should be “Ruskin considers the building.”)
- Use ellipses at the beginning or end of quotations – simply quote the phrase (ex. “. . . never to yield . . .” should be just “never to yield”)
- Use the words “many” or “thing” in your introductions

What you ought always to do in your essays for this class:

- Use commas after introductory clauses, connecting two independent clauses, and with items in a series
- Use “female” and “male” when you are writing about biological anatomical facts, and “woman” and “man” when you are writing about the gendered identity of either sex.
- Use present tense when discussing a text unless you are making some sort of temporal based argument (ex. “Wilde argues” not “Wilde argued”)
- Look up any questions you may have about parenthetical documentation or grammar in The MLA Handbook or some other grammar handbook
- Talk to me regarding things you are unsure about