

10 TIPS TO TAKE

YOUR WRITING

TO THE NEXT LEVEL

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TIP NUMBER

ONE



Define your
topic.

Identify the subject, focus and scope of your paper.

You can't assume your reader knows what you're talking about or why it's important, so you need to specify this. Tell your reader **what** you're talking about and **how** you're approaching it.

Use specific, objective, and concrete language.

Prose is a **window to your ideas**. One of the best ways to help readers "see" your ideas is by using **visual, concrete language** to **paint a picture** in their **mind's eye**.

Start general before building to the more specific.


Begin with a **commonly understood idea** your reader can relate to and then **connect** it to more **specific and abstract** information.

Example:

Currently, in the fashion sector, the proposal of an optimal organizational structure and interdepartmental communication for interpreting and improving customer experience is particularly pressing as fast-paced technological progress, real-time big data processing for instantaneous marketing decisions, and growing expectations for fast and reliable services require a rapid improvement cycle.



Revised:



In the workplace, teams need strong communication and collaboration skills to function properly, especially when working with customers. This is especially true in the fashion industry, where new technology and big data continuously shape consumer expectations. To provide the best customer experience possible, companies need strong internal structure and clear communication strategies, and implementing Design Management strategies that will . . .

TIP NUMBER

TWO

**Explain why it's
important.**

Express your own ideas or understanding.

Professors generally aren't looking for perfect information on a topic, instead they want to know **what you understand and think** about it. Be sure to state that clearly.


Share your analysis, opinion or argument.

Don't assume your readers are making the same connections or conclusions about the information you've given them. After you give them the facts, **tell them** what the **takeaway** is using your **own words**.

Add to the conversation.

Especially in upper-level and graduate writing, you can think of your writing as a way to **join the conversation** about a particular topic. It's your job to say something **relevant, unique** and **new**.

Example:



A 2009 *New York Times* survey found that 72 % of Americans still believed it was possible to start poor, work hard, and become rich in America (Alvaro 11). In the same survey, Americans were also asked questions about what they believed constituted being “successful.” The majority named things such as a steady job, financial security for the future, and having a secure place of residence.

Example:

Less common were responses about owning a home or car and being able to buy other expensive goods, implying a subtle shift from the American Dream of the past to a more modest one today. In many ways, the American Dream of today is a trimmed down version of its former self. Today, most people do not strive for a rags-to-riches life. Instead they prefer a stable, middle-class lifestyle that allows them to meet basic needs and save for the future.



TIP NUMBER

THREE



Support your claims.

Provide relevant and appropriate evidence.

Whether it's logical, anecdotal, factual or theoretical, the examples you include should **illustrate your ideas** and **support your argument**.

Explain the connection.

Don't assume your readers will understand the **relevance or importance** of your examples. Be sure to **explain your reasoning** using **your own words**.

Reference sources properly.

If you're writing an academic essay and using scholarly research, it's very important you **cite sources correctly** according to the rules of the citation guide you're using. Failure to do so can be **plagiarism**.



Example:

A somewhat less innocent ad appeared more than a decade later for Lux soap. It also prescribes a daily hygiene regimen, but it differs significantly from the Resinol message in that it never mentions marriage and uses a clear-skinned movie star as proof of effectiveness. Instead of touting marriage, Lux teaches that “a girl who wants to break hearts simply must have a rose complexion.”

Romance, not marriage, is the woman’s goal, and competition among women is emphasized because “girls who want to make new conquests . . . [are] sure to win out!”

TIP NUMBER

FOUR



**Structure ideas
logically.**

Organize ideas clearly.

While there is generally no one way to structure a paper, your **organization must make sense** and you **should follow your pattern**.

Signal your structure.

Use **topic sentences**, **transitions**, and **signal phrases** to guide your reader and be sure to stop **relate your ideas** to **what's come before** and **what's coming next**.

Don't surprise your reader.

Readers want to know how each **sentence is related to** the preceding one, and how **each section connects to** what's next. **Don't** make your reader **figure it out themselves**.

Example:

Film plays a major role in people's lives due to the release it provides from their daily routines. Whether a motion picture, television series, or photoplay which includes a series of different scenes, they all serve as a form of entertainment. During filmmaking, long takes are used to draw the viewer into the story world and can have a significant effect on the passive and active gaze with introduction of information through the scene, which also determines the level of audience engagement and interest.

The terms of passive and active gaze refer to the amount of movement required by the eye to process an image.



TIP NUMBER

FIVE



**Use appropriate
language.**

Prioritize the simple, clear and correct.

Your prose is a **window to your ideas**, and you **don't want to distract your reader** with fancy or abstract language. Keep it real.

Consider the tone of your language.

Words have **literal denotations** and **evocative connotations**. Consider each and what your audience will find appropriate.

Omit unnecessary words.

If you **don't need it, delete it**. Every word – and every sentence – should be **new and important information**.



Example:

Sampson's new novel suffers from padding (what the French call remplissage), from improbable plot contrivances, mawkish sentimentality, and unevenness in prose quality.

Additionally, the mawkish and maudlin drama is very unrealistic and makes the audience lose interest in the story.

Example:

L name?


Sampson's new novel suffers from padding (~~what the French~~
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mawkish sentimentality, and unevenness in prose quality.

unrealistic

Additionally, the ~~mawkish and maudlin~~ drama is ~~very~~
~~unrealistic~~ and makes the audience lose interest in the story.

TIP NUMBER

SIX



**Vary sentence
structure for
clarity and effect.**

Establish meaning with short, focused sentences.

The **most important ideas** should be introduced in **short, direct** and **clear** sentences. **Expand** on ideas later in **longer** sentences.

Use a variety of sentence types.

While **subject + verb** sentences are often clearest, they get **boring** if **repeated** too many times. **Switch up** your **sentence structure** once your audience **knows** what you're talking about.

Play with the rhythm of your prose.

Alternate long, medium and short sentences. Consider **parallelism**, **patterns**, and even **fragments** for effect.



Example:

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words.
Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become
monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is
getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record.
The ear demands some variety.

Example:

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes, when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.



TIP NUMBER

SEVEN



Verb well.

Make sure your verb tense is correct and consistent.

Use **past tense** for events that happened in the past, **present** for information that is present or always true, **progressive** to represent the **relationship between** two times, and the **conditional** for **hypotheticals**.

Utilize strong verbs, not zombie nouns.

Say "Appear," not "make an appearance;" "he graduates in" not "his graduation is in." Nominalizations **sound smart and feel safe** but make your **writing tedious** and **unclear**.

Use passive voice with caution and intent.

Ninety percent of the time, **active voice is best**, but when you want to **emphasize the object** instead of the subject of your, use passive voice.

Example:

The proliferation of nominalizations in a discursive formation may be an indication of a tendency toward pomposity and abstraction.

Writers who overload their sentences with nominalizations tend to sound pompous and abstract.



TIP NUMBER

EIGHT



**Reverse-engineer
what you read.**

Study what you love.

And what you hate. Whenever writing **evokes a strong emotion** from you, it's touching on **something you care about**. Take note.

Demystify the writing process.

Good writing is rarely a coincidence or natural-born talent. Like all other forms of arts and crafts, there are **rules and reasons** that make it so. **Figure out** what they are.

Incorporate these lessons in your own work.

Develop your own "**writer's toolkit**" of the tricks, techniques and strategies that **work best** for you.

TIP NUMBER

NINE



**Own your own writing
process.**

Pay attention to what works for you.

Different things work for different people. Don't compare yourself to others. Instead, take note of whenever **you feel productive** or particularly **good** about **your work**.

Build it into your schedule.

Incorporate these habits to develop a **writing routine** that works for you to ensure your process is as **effective** and **stress free** as it can be. Don't be afraid to **adjust** as needed.

Remember writing is a process.

A **completed draft** isn't a **final draft**. Budget time to brainstorm, plan, draft, write, revise and edit your paper.

TIP NUMBER

TEN



Revise.

Plan time to take a break.

Budget time to **step away from and come back** to your work so you can look at it with **fresh eyes**.

Read your work out loud.

If you can't say it, someone else will **struggle to read it**. You're far more likely to catch your own typos, awkward phrases or confusing sentences when you **read out loud** to **yourself**.

Get help.

Whether you need help **brainstorming** at the beginning, **drafting** the middle, or **revising** at the end, everyone can **benefit** from getting another person's feedback.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Tell me **what** you're talking about and **why** it's important.

Begin with something your **reader can relate to** and build from there.

Conjure **clear, concrete visuals** in your reader's mind.

Every sentence should add **new** and **important** information.

Write with **nouns** and **verbs**.

Repeat **subject matter nouns**. **Play** with specific **verbs**. **Delete adjectives**.

Use the **thesaurus** to find **words** you already **know**.

Sound like a **real** human being.

Beware the "**curse of knowledge**."

Good writing is good logic.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

A Writers' Reference by Diana Hacker

The Elements of Style by Strunk and White

The Sense of Style by Steven Pinker

On Writing Well by William Zinsser

They Say, I Say by Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff

Writing Tools: 55 Essential Strategies by Roy Peter Clark

Eats, Shoots & Leaves by Lynne Truss & Pat Byrnes

Line by Line: How to Edit Your Own Writing by Claire Kehrwald Cook

The Classic Guide to Better Writing by Rudolf Flesch & A. H. Lass

Writing with Style: Conversations on the Art of Writing by John R. Trimble

Style: The Basics of Clarity and Grace by Joseph M. Williams & Joseph Bizup

LET US *KNOW*

TAKE OUR SURVEY

***WHAT YOU* THINK!**



QUESTIONS



THANK YOU!

FOR MORE HELP

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