

English 131 and 132

Professor C. Smalls

Guide to Using Correct and Acceptable English in Your Essays

- 1) Always give your essay a title.
- 2) Always place the author's full name and the title of the selection within the first two sentences of your essay. Within the essay, always use the author's last name.
- 3) Use the present tense of the verb when you discuss literature.

Example: In his essay, "A Modest Proposal," Jonathan Swift uses irony to evoke a debate on poverty and political inaction.

- 4) Try to use action verbs and the active voice in your essays.

Example: The trees are down. (State of Being Verb; Nonaction Verb)

Example: The trees were broken down. (Passive Voice)

Revised: The storm pulverized the trees and cast them across the fields. (Active Voice)

- 5) Do not use "you" or any form of the second person in your essays. Use words or phrases such as "the reader," "the listeners," "an individual," "a person," "the critic," or "an observer."

Ex. You might think English is an easy subject to grasp, but try studying and memorizing twenty grammatical rules in one night.

Revised: A student might think English is an easy subject to grasp, but if he tries studying and memorizing twenty grammatical rules in one night, he might change his mind.

- 6) Do not use the first person point of view in your essays. Pronouns-- such as “I,” “me,” “my,” “we,” “our,” and “us” –should not be used in your essays. You should use the third person point of view with pronouns such as “he,” “she,” “his,” “her,” “they,” or “it.”

Example: I think the author is making an assertion about man’s inhumanity to man. (First Person)

Revised: The author asserts that man’s inhumanity to man is intolerable. He proceeds to propose some solutions for the problem. (Third Person)

- 7) Do not use abbreviations and symbols in your essays. Do not use “yrs,” “&,” and other abbreviations.

- 8) Do not use colloquialism, slang, clichés, and texting language in your essays. Refer to Chapter 37---“Using Appropriate Language”---on pp. 510-529 (502-511 in the new edition) in LBH.

For example: The color of the sweater was red in u can see the beauty n it. (Texting Language)

Revised: The sweater was a beautiful red garment.

Example: That was a pretty bad case. (Colloquialism)

Revised: That was a very bad case.

- 9) Do not use contractions in your formal writing.

- 10) Use the editing checklist on pp. 58-59 (60-61 in new edition) in LBH to proofread and edit your essays.

