Five Simple Rules for Writing

1. Write for **clarity**. This means, you must know for whom you are writing, that is, who your audience is. Imagine your audience while you are writing.

2. Always use **formal English**. Formal English does not use informal, slang or colloquial expressions. It minimizes second person (you, yours). If you are in doubt, look up a word in the dictionary, which will tell you what the usage is.

3. **Reread** all of your written work—on paper, not on the computer screen! Ask yourself once again if your audience would clearly understand what you mean. Check to see if you have left out words. All writers, including student writers, commonly make errors of omission. Be especially careful to make sure that each pronoun clearly refers to a noun. If in doubt, use the noun. If you are having consistent trouble with pronouns, don’t use any in your first draft! You can always substitute a pronoun for a noun in your second and third drafts.

4. **Review** all of your written work with a peer, using a checklist for each draft. Collaborate with your reviewer to make sure that your writing clearly states what you want it to state. Make sure your spelling, punctuation, and capitalization are correct. Check for proper verb forms. Look for and correct confusing run-together sentences. Sentence fragments can hide in a paragraph, so be on the look-out for fragments; correct them as soon as you see them!

5. **Rewrite** as necessary. Again, when you do so, it should be to achieve clarity. With your audience in mind, ask yourself—always, “Does this clearly express what I want to say, what I think, what I want to communicate?”

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**Tips for English Language Learners**

All of us learn a language by hearing first, reading second, and writing third. A way for you to catch and correct your errors involves listening to what you have written: After you have written something (following the rules above), have someone else read it aloud exactly as you have written it. Your ears will hear mistakes that your eyes might not notice. As you hear your errors, correct them on your paper. After you correct yourself several times making the same error, you will find that you will simply stop making the error as frequently. This technique will allow you to be your own best editor as you revise your work. And, it will help you improve your writing very quickly!

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Re-Read, Review, Re-Write!

And remember, **writing is a process**, not just a product!