

Basic Checklist for Papers

Your Arguments

1. Do you have a clear, precise thesis?
2. Have you outlined your argument?
3. Have you written an abstract that summarizes your argument, method, and expected conclusions effectively?
4. Do you orient the audience as to the substance of the paper and how you will proceed?
5. Do you contextualize the issue, argument, or object of analysis properly?
6. Do you argue for all your claims, and not just assert them?
7. Do you consider seriously opposing arguments and perspectives?
8. Do you demonstrate your understanding of opposing viewpoints?
9. Do you go beyond the sources and accepted positions in a field and engage in synthesis that produces insightful conclusions?
10. Are your arguments substantial with no fallacious reasoning or conclusions?
11. Have you stopped throughout your writing to consider the logic of your argument?
12. Have you included logical sections and subheadings that help the reader follow your argument?

Your Writing

1. Are your paragraphs more than one or two sentences?
2. Do all paragraphs have a topic sentence?
3. Does your topic sentence carry the tune of your thesis/argument?
4. Are your transitions metastatements or merely words such as "also," "more," "and," "moreover," etc? Do they help establish a flow from paragraph to paragraph that connects the arguments you are trying to make?
5. Do you use active voice? ("Bill decided to run for..." **NOT** "It was decided by Bill to...")
6. Have you avoided slang and cliché phrases?
7. Have you thoroughly taken into consideration your audience(s)?

Quality of Your Sources.

1. Did you use books (not from vanity presses) and refereed journals, and did not rely solely on websites, television shows, or other low quality publications?
2. Did you conduct high quality research, and have enough sources to demonstrate extensive knowledge of your subject matter and argument?
3. If necessary, have you consulted sufficient sources from an opposing viewpoint?
4. If using website information, have you properly documented the owner, accession date, when the information was updated, and other pertinent details?
5. If you downloaded a document from a government agency web site, did you document the source appropriately?

Textual Evidence

1. When you cite material (textual evidence) do you cite it properly by:
 - Not placing it as a stand-alone sentence but rather contextualizing it to the arguments you make?
 - Following proper guidelines for setting it off the regular margins if it is an extended citation?
 - Keeping spacing consistent with the rest of your text?
 - Appropriately indicating any changes you have made to the material?
 - Selecting only the amount of material needed to make your case?
 - Providing appropriate source information in a proper style?
2. Do you use your research effectively to support or extend your case and not just to insert quotes?
2. Do you have quotation marks where appropriate?
3. If you have cited a source, do you have it listed in your "works cited" page?
4. If you paraphrase any outside source information, do you make significant changes in wording, put it in your own words, contextualize it to your argument, and reference the source?

Revision

1. Have you read your paper aloud?
2. Have you let it rest for a day then returned to it with a fresh mind?
3. Have you given it to somebody else to read and edit?
4. Have you run a spellchecker?
5. Have you revised the paper after running the spellchecker?
6. Have you stapled it before turning it in to your professor?

Comments & Feedback

1. Have you considered that your professor will spend a considerable amount of time reading and thinking about your paper, and that his/her comments are designed to help you improve your writing, and not to importune or fail you?