

Essay Do's and Don'ts
Mr. Burgess

1. Punctuation goes inside quotation marks
e.g. "He drove the car."
Exception: When citing page numbers only the number goes in the parentheses while the punctuation goes after the parentheses.
e.g. "He drove the car" (34).
*do not write "page" or "pg." in the parentheses.
2. Avoid the use of contractions:
e.g. don't = do not
they're = they are
aren't = are not
3. "It's" only means "it is"; (but refer to #3 if you want to use it)
e.g. It's cold out here. (It is cold out here.)
"Its" is the possessive form.
e.g. Its (the dog's) bone is buried in the back yard.
4. Avoid conversational/slang writing styles:
e.g. Well, you can see that the story is about the loss of innocence.
5. Include a creative title for your essay. Do not write "To Kill a Mockingbird" or "Animal Farm." These are the names of the books, not your essay. Do not write "My Romeo and Juliet Essay."
6. Do not use the following words:
thing, stuff, a lot, a lot, lots, a bunch
7. Keep yourself out of the essay. Do not write:
In my opinion....
I'm going to write about....
My essay is about....
8. Keep the reader out of the essay. Do not write:
As you can see...
You may be wondering...
9. Do not begin your sentence with a conjunction.
e.g. but, because, and
10. Titles of books, newspapers, and large publications are in italics
e.g. *Animal Farm*
Titles of short stories, poems, and non-fiction essays are in quotation marks
e.g. "The Most Dangerous Game"

Never underline **anything** in your essay when it is typed.

11. Spell out all numbers between **zero** and **nine** but use **10, 11, 12, 13, 20, 112...**

12. Do not abbreviate or use symbols for words.

e.g. & = and

= number

@ = at

w/o = without

b/c = because

13. Watch your word choice of *there/their*, *then/than* and *to/too/two*

14. Avoid sentence fragments/incomplete sentences. (**frag.**)

15. Always use the spellcheck option (**sp.**)

16. Check your capitalization (He was Walking down the street.)

17. Tenses need to remain consistent.

e.g. "He walked down the street and was singing."

Correction: He walked down the street and sang.

18. Make sure your sentences are not awkward. (**awk.**)

Write as if you were explaining/supporting your point to someone in authority.

19. Avoid opinions:

e.g. "I believe..." "I think..." "I really liked..."

Only provide analysis of story:

e.g. "The significance of this..."

20. Do not ask questions, just make statement.

e.g. Wrong: Have you ever been in love?

Correct: Love is a wonderful emotion.

20. Do not over-summarize; the reader will be familiar with the story

21. Use Times font, size 12, and double-space your sentences

23. Do not skip lines between paragraphs, simply indent at the beginning of each.

24. Proofread, Proofread, Proofread!

25. DO NOT PLAGERIZE!