

# Writing Tips Handout

## Tip #1: **Don't** use CONTRACTIONS

Bad: The research didn't indicate that watching violent television programming caused violent behavior in children.

Good: The research did not indicate that watching violent television programming caused violent behavior in children.

## Tip #2: Do NOT use SLANG or COLLOQUIAL phrases

Bad: My internship was hella useful in providing valuable job experience.

Good: The internship was very useful in providing valuable job experience.

**Tip #3: TOPIC SENTENCES**—topic sentences need to summarize the main idea or theme of the paragraph. **Every** paragraph should have a topic sentence. Topic sentences are located as the first sentence of a paragraph.

Bad: Ross, Smith, and Barney (2004) demonstrated that violent TV programming caused at-risk behavior in children. Furthermore, the research indicated that children were more likely to strike their siblings after watching programs such as *Pokemon* or *Yu-Gi-Oh* (Ross, Smith, and Barney, 2004).

Good: At-risk behavior in children is influenced by a variety of sources such as television. Ross, Smith, and Barney (2004) demonstrated that violent TV programming caused at-risk behavior in children. Furthermore, the research indicated that children were more likely to strike their siblings after watching programs such as *Pokemon* or *Yu-Gi-Oh* (Ross, Smith, and Barney, 2004).

## Tip #4: NO Use of PERSONAL PRONOUNS (I, you, we, us, me)

\* *"I" can only be used in Analysis of Experience (Soc Sci 194/97) or Campus Resources (Soc Sci 189)\**

Bad: Mr. Smith told me that the majority of interns enjoy sales and marketing at Merrill Lynch.

Good: Mr. Smith indicated that the majority of interns enjoy sales and marketing at Merrill Lynch.

## Tip #5: Do NOT use VAGUE/BASIC LANGUAGE

Bad: Overall, the internship experience was very nice.

Good: Overall, the internship experience was very beneficial; it taught the intern effective marketing skills.

**Tip #6: Do NOT use PASSIVE VOICE (Watch forms of the verb “to be”).**

\*Passive voice occurs when the verb does not show a clear relationship between the subject and predicate.

Bad: The desk seems to be brown.

Good. The desk is brown.

**Tip #7: EXPLAIN QUOTES/EVIDENCE (A+B = C)**

*\*Your argument will always have a pretense (A), evidence (B), and a conclusion (C).*

A: At-risk behavior in children is influenced by a variety of sources such as television.

B: Ross, Smith, and Barney (2004) demonstrated that violent TV programming caused at-risk behavior in children.

C: Findings that support a correlation between violent TV programming and at-risk behavior demonstrate the influence of outside sources upon children.

**Tip #8: Remember that WHICH and THAT are NOT interchangeable.** WHICH is used for personal nouns or pronouns, and THAT is used for objects, ideas or non-personal nouns.

Bad: The copier, which is now broken, was used to make the copies.

Good: The copier, that is now broken, was used to make the copies.

Good: My friends, which are much older now, are very mature.

**Also watch out for:**

- ✓ Length of paragraph—it should be an average of 4-6 sentences. (no less than 3, but not the whole page).
- ✓ Use consistent language throughout paper. Do NOT call James Smith as Mr. Smith in paragraph 1, and then call him James in paragraph 2.
- ✓ Use the funnel effect—go from general to specific.
- ✓ When you introduce an acronym such as SSARC, you must first introduce it as: the Social Science Academic Resource Center (SSARC), before you can refer to it as SSARC in the rest of your paper.
- ✓ **Do NOT start a sentence with THIS or THAT.** Specify to what you are referring.
- ✓ Make use of transitions—but do NOT overuse them.