

Miscellaneous Tips for Effective Writing

- Have a clear understanding of what you are doing. Make sure you have re-read the professors guidelines and instructions.
- Understand the differences in the styles required by a reflection paper, a sermon, a journal entry, a Blackboard posting, and a scholarly essay. One style does not fit all.
- Brainstorm for elements of an outline by doodling, making lists or diagrams, or talking things over with a friend.
- Arrange those elements in a logical order. Use notecards to shuffle them manually, or a word document to cut and paste. Or create a simple grocery list. Whatever works best for you.
- Keep it simple. Test yourself by reading what you have written out loud. If it doesn't make sense when you hear it, it won't make sense to your reader.
- Keep sentences crisp and clear. If a sentence is too long, cut it into two sentences.
- Punctuation is important. Correct punctuation is even more important. When in doubt, ask.
- Unless you are a thirteen-year-old girl, avoid exclamation points!!!
- Avoid slang. Like, totally dude. Also euphemisms, jargon, and acronyms.
- Verbs convey meaning more powerfully than adjectives. Use active verbs. Avoid "to be."
- Unless you are really, really, really secure in your vocabulary and spelling, keep a dictionary close at hand. And a thesaurus. And the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*.
- Use the thesaurus but try not to sound like you have used the thesaurus.
- Avoid repetitive catch phrases that just act as filler: "to make a long story short," "to say the least," "as it were," "if you will."
- Commit. Modifiers such as "frequently," "often," "sometimes," "really," "very," "generally," etc. mean little and weaken your argument.
- Review, revise, and re-write.
- Dew knot re-lie on spell czech. Invest in a \$10 gift card and reward a trusted friend for proofreading your work.
- Writing the best way you can, whenever you write, is good practice. If you develop the habit of taking care with your email and FB posts, it will carry over into your more formal work.

Spelling Pitfalls:

to, two, too

there, they're, their

Calvary/cavalry

Lay/lie

(The verb "lay" requires a direct object. Enough said.))

Adjectival Outlaws:

Complex

Interesting

Beautiful

Wonderful

Terrible

Horrible

It is better to describe *how* something is complex, interesting, etc. and use examples.

Quiz

Who can answer this question: Is anal retentive hyphenated?

Suggested reading:

Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*

Joseph Williams, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*

Karen Gordon's *The New Well-Tempered Sentence* and *The Deluxe Transitive Vampire*.