

Common Issues in Writing

Every sentence must have a subject and a predicate. This is a common error.

Do not begin a sentence or independent clause with “It is” (unless an antecedent is present) or “There are.” For example, the following is an incomplete sentence, since it does not have a subject. “It is important to remember to write well.”

Do not split infinitives. Example: “I want to thoroughly read your paper” is incorrect. The correct form: “I want to read your paper thoroughly.”

Academic work should be in third person.

Do not use contractions in academic work.

Avoid passive voice. Example: “Small groups have been proven by research to be effective in making disciples” is bad form. Instead, say, “Research proves that small groups are effective in making disciples.”

Use adverbs sparingly. You do not need to say, “this is a very important point.” Simply say, “this is an important point.”

Be careful with number agreement. One common error looks something like this: “A selfish person [singular] will soon find that they [plural] do not have many friends.” Instead, say, “A selfish person will soon find that he [or she] does not have many friends.”

Be consistent (like with tenses, such as “he wrote . . . he writes”).

Use the correct form of first person personal pronouns. Do not say, “Me and him wrote a book together.” You would not say, “Me wrote a book,” or, “Him wrote a book.” Also, do not say, “A gift was given to her and I.” You would not say, “A gift was given to I.” Learn which pronouns are subjective and which are objective.

Be careful with categorical assertions. Example: “Christians just do not share their faith anymore.” What you just said is that no Christian anywhere—including yourself—shares his faith.

Never use unsubstantiated assertions. Example: “Expository preaching is on the decline.” Before making a statement like that, you need some reputable data to back it up.

Footnotes go below the text (as opposed to at the bottom of the page).

Use only one space between sentences.