

KYLE BISHOP

## GRAMMAR AND STYLE HOTSHEET

1. Avoid using the word *you* in formal academic writing—you aren't giving a speech, writing a letter, or having a conversation with someone.
2. Avoid first-person plural pronouns in academic writing (*we*, *us*, or *our*) unless you are sure of your audience and their opinions/beliefs/characteristics.
3. Use first-person singular pronouns sparingly and/or in personal writing only (*I*, *me*, or *my*).
4. Avoid asking rhetorical questions of your audience unless you clearly answer them later.
5. Avoid incomplete sentences, fragments, and run-on sentences (especially comma splices).
6. Only use commas when the sentence structure demands it—avoid the “shotgun approach.”
7. Always place periods and commas **inside** quotation marks in American English.
8. Always place semicolons and colons **outside** quotation marks.
9. Put question marks and exclamations points with the element they modify.
10. Only use the person's last name when referring to an author or other figure.
11. Make sure pronouns and antecedents agree in number and gender.
12. Avoid gender bias—use both gender-specific pronouns or speak in plurals.
13. Make sure verbs are correctly conjugated with their subjects.
14. Be consistent with verb tense—things that continue to exist (essays, articles, movies, etc.) are considered to be in the present tense.
15. Avoid unnecessary or redundant words and phrases (avoid *that*, *in order to*, *whether or not*, or unnecessary/dangling prepositions)
16. Do not preface an observation with obvious statements like “I think that” or “I feel that.”
17. Use *who* with people and *that* or *which* with things (animals are considered things).
18. Use *which* with non-essential clauses (offset by commas) and *that* with essential clauses (no commas).
19. Italics and underlining are the same thing, but be consistent (italics are preferred).
20. Use italics (or underline) for large publication titles (books, movies, magazines) and quotation marks around shorter publication titles (articles, chapters, poems).