

### Revising, Part 7: Academic Style Final Checklist

At the advanced level of graduate writing, there are some things that should be expected:

About Sentences and Organization:

1. Combat wordiness – Always consider what you believe your audience needs to know, and try not to say more.
2. Keep things concise – Only one or two ideas per sentence. Split paragraphs when new topics are discussed. Keep paragraphs about half a page long.
3. Consistent subheadings are key – Make sure your headings and subheadings are clear, relevant to your topic, and similar in length and style.
4. Sentence variety – Use a mixture of simple and complex sentences to keep the flow of your writing interesting for the reader. This is important even in academic writing. There is no hard-and-fast rule for this, but try one simple sentence for every three complex sentences or so.
5. Thoroughly proofread and check for errors—but not until you are done with your content revisions. This is where peer review can be handy.

About Style:

1. Use concrete examples – Abstract concepts must be followed up with explanation and clarification. If you cite someone or discuss a new concept, you generally want to cite either what that means or why it matters in the context of your topic. (“For instance” “For example” “Therefore” etc)
2. Limit addressing the audience directly (2<sup>nd</sup> person). Especially when addressing a public, academic audience, it may come across as too informal or distracting.
3. Use mostly third-person writing- Using personal pronouns, “I” or “me” statements, or discussing your process directly is usually fine, as long as it remains relevant to the topic or methodology.
4. Maintain authorial voice - Limit referring to the manuscript directly (“in this paper, in this thesis, in this chapter, in this section”) except when unavoidable.

About Content (based on Clark 100):

- Credibility - Are you citing your sources properly? Are you bringing in your citations *enough*? Are you doing more than quote them? Are you thoroughly offering analyses or explanations of the significance of your sources? In a section like a Literature Review, you might use several citations in tandem in a short amount of space, but later sections might use fewer citations or space them out. It's important to know the needs of the field you're working with and what their writing would normally do.
- Are you supporting citations with *evidence*? Are you using a mix of sources in order to properly support arguments, syntheses, or main points?
- Can you say *more*? Are you leaving out information, and if so, why? Are you using only the information that is relevant to your argument? Does anything in your review feel like *filler* or something that could be cut? Often, your paper actually needs *more* detail and not less, so it's

usually better to keep things longer in the revision stage or even *add* more, even after you've already cut some parts out.