

Feedback on Writing Style
Micro Level – “Word” Issues

1. Spelling error
2. Plural / singular errors
3. Ineffective or incorrect punctuation / missing or incorrectly placed apostrophe
4. Inappropriate change in verb tense
5. Poor grammar
6. Omitted words/phrases or duplicate or extra words/phrases
7. Poor word-choice, or sub-optimal word-choice *given the audience*
8. Use subjunctive mood for hypotheticals.
9. Redundant words (within a sentence or across sentences) without parallelism
10. Ineffective prepositions: Limit prepositions to no more than two between verbs.
11. Preposition at end of sentence: Reserve “stress position” (a sentence’s ending) for more impactful words.
12. Ambiguous pronoun use (e.g., to whom does “it”, “s/he”, or “they” refer?)
13. Avoid “prove” or “proof” (reserve those for complete certainty, i.e., mathematical proof).
14. Locating the action - (s/b in the verb) –
Use action verbs rather than “being” verbs such as “is”“are”“was”“were” “be” “been” “become”.
Avoid nominalizations - substitute “using plants” for “the use of plants”.
15. Exaggeration (“incredibly”) or Cliché or Personification

Mid Level – “Sentence” Issues

16. Lapse in succinctness (limit sentences to no more than 35 words) (omit the phrase “in order”) See **1, 2, 3**
17. Lapse in clarity
18. Lapse in logic: A non-sequitur occurs when a conclusion does not follow from the premise(s).
19. Awkward phrasing or informal phrasing
20. Ambiguous comparison, ambiguous negation (“not A or B”), or incorrect negation (“all that glitters is not gold”).
21. Lapse in parallelism
22. Subject / verb separation – s/b short or zero. Also, minimize the separation between items being contrasted.

Macro Level – “Paragraph” Issues

23. Ineffective transition between sentences, or paragraphs – To improve *coherence*, put in the topical position old info that links back to the prior unit of discourse (sentence or paragraph). Put in the stress position new info that you want to emphasize to the reader. Also avoid “pseudo transitions” - placing the topical sentence for one paragraph as last sentence in the preceding paragraph.
24. Poor organization at the paragraph level. Each paragraph should begin with a topical sentence. Each subsequent sentence must relate to the topical sentence. Each unit of discourse should make a single point: one idea per sentence, one theme per paragraph.
25. The idea (a) lacks originality or requires (b) additional development, (c) context, (d) citation(s), or (e) evidence.
Emphasizes summary or opinion over analysis, synthesis, or argument. (Connect; Compare / Contrast; Pros / Cons)