

44 Writing Myths: Rules that Don't Exist (or Here Anyway)

1. That a good essay is written in the Five Paragraph Essay form (intro, three paragraphs each with one developed supporting point, conclusion). *Sometimes five-paragraph essays are good, though usually when the form is transparent, secondary to the ideas.*
2. That five paragraphs is required for most essays. *Although sometimes a teacher will specify a five-paragraph essay form, the form is not assumed by all teachers, and teachers in the FYW program are not fans of the form.*
3. That academic essays must be written in the third person; the first person is prohibited. *In fact, the personal point of view should be determined by the writing assignment: the genre, the audience, the topic, and what is most effective.*
4. That every paragraph needs a topic sentence at the top of the paragraph. *Readers need to be able to tell they have to have clear topics or purposes for existing,*
5. That the thesis statement has to be the last line of the first paragraph.
6. That the thesis statement has to be one sentence long.
7. That the thesis statement has to be in the form of a statement
8. That the conclusion is a restatement of the introduction.
9. That the first-person ("I") is not allowed in academic writing.
10. That every paragraph must contain 5 – 7 sentences.
11. That I weaken my own argument if I admit to any weaknesses in my argument.
12. That academic Writing must be "objective," that is, written in third person with "facts." This stands in opposition to "Subjective" writing that is in first-person and gives your opinion.
13. That block quotes have to be single-spaced. *Wrong. That used to be true, but it is no longer. Block quotes are double-spaced.*
14. That slang is not allowed in an academic paper.
15. That conclusions must be rewordings of introduction that cannot include any new ideas or concepts.
16. That "research" papers (or documented essay) don't have an angle, vision, or point of view; that is, research is "objective."
17. That a paper's central claim must also be definitive rather than suggestive or exploratory.
18. That questions are now allowed in papers.
19. That good grammar makes a paper a good one.
20. That I have to know exactly what I'm going to say before I begin to write.
21. That each new paragraph must start with a transitional word such as *hence, therefore thus* or *moreover*, or the following set: *first, second, third, and in conclusion.*

22. That you have to write an outline first.
23. That you should never write an outline first.
24. That the conclusion is a repetition of the introduction; that is, that is restates the central claim and all the supporting points of the paper.
25. That "In conclusion" is a good way to begin a conclusion.
26. That contractions are not allowed in academic writing. *In fact, contractions are often not noticed or not objected to by academic readers.*
27. That the central claim, or thesis, must be the last sentence of the first paragraph.
28. That papers should have an intention statement, "In this paper I am going to...."
29. That your opinion, or better yet, point-of-view, are not allowed in academic writing.
30. That personal experiences are not allowed in academic papers.
31. That a "funnel essay" is a great way to approach essay writing.
32. That discussion a position that contradicts your central claim should be avoided.
33. That revision = editing.
34. That there is no need to document before the final draft.
35. That a central claim must be articulated in a single sentence, and in statement (not question) form.
36. That you can't start a sentence with "although" or "because" or "but."
37. That you must summarize the reading in the introductory paragraph.
38. That you cannot change your central claim during the drafting process.
39. That you are not allowed to use quotes in the introductory or concluding paragraph.
40. That you must use quotes in the introductory or concluding paragraph.
41. That each body paragraph must have one quotation.
42. That your introduction must begin with a "hook."
43. That you can only use one quotation or piece of evidence per paragraph.
44. That your introduction must list every point you will make in your essay.