

CHECKLIST FOR ACADEMIC WRITING

Academic writing (seminar papers, notes, etc.) has a specific organization and structure. When writing, you should also conform to Bluebook conventions, and use a succinct and clear writing style.

The following checklist is a basic guide to help you polish your piece of academic writing. Check issue specific Writing Center handouts for a more in depth review.

Macro-level Organization

- Introduction
 - Identifies the topic and states the thesis
 - Summarizes content and includes a roadmap of the analysis
- Background
 - Contains sufficient factual and legal background to give context to the analysis
 - Does not include unnecessary background information
 - Divided into logical sections
 - Sections are arranged in a logical order
 - Sections are connected by roadmaps and transitions
 - Sections are roughly of equal length
- Analysis
 - Focuses on topic and does not include unnecessary analysis
 - Divided into logical sections
 - Sections are arranged in a logical order
 - Sections are connected by roadmaps and transitions
 - Sections are roughly of equal length
- Conclusion
 - Restates the thesis and summarizes the content, stressing the most important points
 - Does not introduce new ideas or information
 - May offer recommendations based on the implications of the thesis

Micro-level Organization

- Headings
 - Headings express a complete thought and clearly indicate what the text will cover
- Umbrella sections and conclusions
 - Umbrella sections
 - Previews the thesis or arguments of the section
 - Conclusions
 - Summarizes the points or arguments raised in the section
- Paragraphing
 - Paragraphing makes information easy to follow
 - Paragraphs are developed around clear topic sentences
 - Paragraphs develop one topic
 - Paragraphs are cohesive - ideas are related to each other
 - No paragraph is a page or longer
- Topic sentences and transitions
 - Uses topic sentences to indicate paragraph content and situate the paragraph logically in the overall organization of the analysis
 - Contains signaling transitions between points and paragraphs

General Editing

- Citations (Bluebook)
 - Uses authorities accurately, without misleading readers or omitting important information
 - Includes citations as necessary
 - Places citations appropriately
 - Uses full and short-form citations correctly
 - Citations have pincites, where appropriate
 - Uses signals correctly
 - Includes explanatory parentheticals, when necessary
- Writing Style
 - Writing is simple, clear, powerful, and precise
 - Writing is concise
 - Writing is professional and engaging
 - Uses active voice
 - Uses correct grammar
 - Avoids excessive quotation
 - Every sentence serves a purpose
 - Every sentence contains a subject and a verb

- Sentence length is varied
- Logistics
 - Spell-checked digitally and manually
 - Proofread
 - Compliant with submission guidelines
 - Pages are numbered
 - Within the page limit