

AHST 3318 001
Contemporary Art and Architecture
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University of Texas at Dallas
Arts & Humanities
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HH 2.402
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Writing Tips

The following is a list of tips, some of which relate directly to the assignment and others that are generally useful for becoming a better writer.

1. Syntax: a. the study of the rules for the formation of grammatical sentences in a language. b. the study of the patterns of formation of sentences and phrases from words. Many of you had problems with syntax.
2. In order to avoid errors in syntax, you must proofread your essay.
3. Try proofreading out loud to a friend. Or, call a family member and ask them to listen to your short essay. Even if you're alone, you're better off reading your essay out loud than not.
4. Please use spell check.
5. Do not use stilted language. Stilted language is "stiffly dignified or formal." It is pompous language. Be thoughtful about the words you choose.
6. In review writing, you should avoid the voice of the first-person ("I was overwhelmed by the exhibition.") You can use it sparingly. And, in the case that you do use it, please avoid expressions of sentiment and emotion.
7. Please make certain that the logic of your essay is in order, that one sentence logically follows another and that each paragraph logically follows from the last. You should begin within an outline in order to ensure such order. There should be transitions from paragraph to paragraph.
8. Please use standard margins and double space throughout. When your margins are huge and there are three to four spaces in between paragraphs, I know immediately you're trying to get away with fewer words. You are better off with proper margins and spacing and a shorter paper.
9. Please write simple sentences using simple language.
10. Its = possessive; it's = it is
11. Please avoid repetition of the same word.
12. Please avoid saying the same thing over and over again. Even if you say the same thing in a different way, you are still saying the same thing.
13. Be certain to place quotation marks around titles of works of art.
14. Quotation marks are not necessary when you have a quote of over three lines set off by indentation.
15. Do not use ellipses. [i.e. "..."]
16. Indent the first sentence of a new paragraph.
17. Make certain you have spelled the artist's name correctly.
18. Please try to avoid starting a paragraph with a question. This is of course a stylistic preference. But a question is such a simplistic way of embarking on a subject.
19. If you choose to include biographical information about the author, do so for a reason. Place it in the portion of the essay that fits within your argument.
20. Be certain to follow the directions.
21. When in doubt about format or grammar, please refer to a writing guide, such as the MLA handbook or the *Chicago Manual of Style*.
22. It was refreshing to see so many of you making connections between the information in the lectures and Mark Handforth's sculpture. It shows me that you're learning. However, artists such as Yves Klein and Arman have little to no direct relationship with the work of art at hand. Think carefully about the connections you are making between artists. Ask yourself, "Is this arbitrary, based on my new knowledge of an artist from class? Or is it accurate and persuasive?"
23. When making connections between artists, such as Oldenburg and Handforth, please be careful to state that one is "reminiscent" of the other, that "it brings to mind the work of..." or that "it is similar to the work of..." rather than claiming that Handforth directly drew upon the artist. It is one thing to make visual comparisons

- and completely another to claim something erroneous – something of which you are not sure.
24. *Concentrations* is a series of exhibitions at the DMA devoted to contemporary art. It is the general rubric under which the exhibition falls, not the title of a work of art.
 25. There are two secrets to learning how to write. The first one is **active and frequent reading**. In order to be a good writer you must read a lot and you must take heed of the writer's use of words. I advise you to start by reading the newspaper on a daily basis. I learned how to become a better writer by religiously reading *The New York Times*. The other secret to good writing is writing itself. You might think about keeping a diary, starting a literary magazine, publishing in the campus newspaper, **publishing on-line in a blog of your own or in an electronic journal**. With respect to the latter, publishing on-line, choose a topic that makes you passionate – art, architecture, politics, sociology, economics, etc.