**Using Formal Grammar and Punctuation**

Do not start a sentence with a coordinating conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*).

Do not use contractions in academic writing (*Example: use “do not” instead of “don’t.”*).

Do not use first person plural in academic writing (*we*).

Do not use second person in academic writing (*you*).

Do not use authors’ first names after the first time you mention them.

You do not need to include any titles (Doctor, Professor, Mr., Ms., etc.) in the text. Use the author’s last name only (*Gingerich argues that we need to devote more time to studying history.*) .

**Making a Strong Argument**

I advise against using subjective words like *think*, *feel*, or *believe* and recommend instead objective words like *argue*, *posit*, and *state* in order to add strength and credibility to one’s academic writing.

**Discussing Literature**

Use the present tense when referring to a text because no matter how many times you read the text, the same things happen (*“is”—not “was,” “are”—not “were,” ”go”—not went, etc.*).

Avoid re-using language that may be considered offensive to any particular race or ethnic group in modern society—even if the literature you are reading uses these terms. If you must refer to them in your paper, always place them in quotation marks and cite them properly.

**Quoting**

Unless you have a parenthetical citation following the quoted material, place all periods and commas **inside** the quotation marks. If you have a parenthetical citation, put the citation after the quotation mark and before the period. *Note the location of the periods that are used in the examples below.*

 *Cats frequently “prefer to play indoors” (Millis).*

 *According to Millis, cats “prefer to play indoors.”*

Periods and commas belong inside quotation marks.

Colons and semicolons belong outside quotation marks.

Question marks and exclamation points can be either inside the quotes or outside the quotes depending on the context of the quoted material. (*“Strike one!”* ***--or--***  *I couldn’t believe that he “didn’t know” her!)*

Use double quotation marks to indicate quoted material.

Use single quotation marks inside double quotation marks to indicate quoted material within the text that you cite (*“‘Get over here!’ Marcus yells” in The Best Story Ever.*).