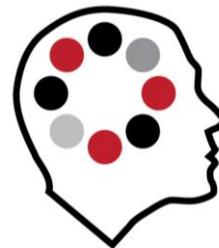


Habits of Mind: Tips to Improve Your Writing Style & Research



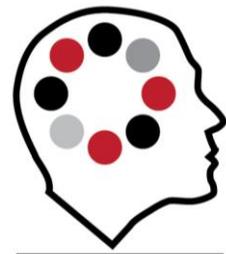
Making a few simple changes improves writing drastically. Find some tips below.

- I. Use mostly short sentences.
 - A. For every long sentence, write two short ones before and after it. Think, short-short-long-short-short-long.
 - B. Shorter sentences make your ideas clearer and more powerful.
 - C. Shorter sentences tend to seem more argumentative in tone as well.
 - D. They make your paper more readable and engaging.

- II. Use active verbs instead of passive verbs.
 - A. Passive verbs include verbs similar but not limited to “are,” “was,” “were,” “be”, “would have”, “had been”, etc.
 - B. Active verbs give your sentences power.
 - C. They make them clear and engaging. For example, consider these two sentences:
America is best defined by opportunity vs. opportunity best defines American. The American Revolution would have been radical if the founding fathers would have freed the slaves vs. The founding fathers’ refusal to free slaves nationwide undermined the American Revolution’s radicalism. Do you see the difference?
 - D. Active verbs make your prose argumentative, which is the goal of writing in most classes.
 - E. One trick for eliminating passive verbs involves reversing the order of sentences containing them, beginning with the end; this enables you to find a new, active verb more easily. You can see this trick in the examples provided above.

- III. Work with the Writing Center, Tutoring Center, or the Student Success Lab.
 - A. Each center provides tutoring/consulting for free.
 - B. They all offer verification that you worked with a tutor or consultant.
 - C. Many professors offer extra credit if you work with a tutor or consultant.
 - D. The handout “Additional Help Outside of Class” on the BC Habits of Mind website contains information about the centers’ locations and phone numbers, or you can visit the Academic Develop Website:
<http://bcacademicdevelopmentdepartment.weebly.com/>

- IV. Attend the free Critical Academic Skills (CAS) Workshops.
 - A. The Department of Academic Development offers a variety of free, fifty minute workshops weekly.
 - B. They offer workshops on punctuation, proofreading, plagiarism, fragments, and run-ons, as well on many other topics.



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- V. Always provide evidence to support your thesis.
 - A. This presupposes the idea that every essay you write for most classe) must contain a thesis, an argument you make to structure your essay.
 - B. The first paragraph must include your thesis.
 - C. Use evidence/examples to “prove” the validity of your thesis/argument.
 - D. “Key Terms” from both your reading, research material, and lecture provide excellent evidence to use in your essays.
 - E. So, if each paragraph begins with a small argument that supports your main argument, each paragraph must include evidence that supports your small argument.
 - F. Include analysis as well.
 - 1. Analysis involves explaining why your evidence/key terms support your argument.
 - 2. Use language that convinces readers your evidence supports your arguments.

- VI. Read your papers aloud, forward and backward.

Every good paper begins with thorough research. Utilize the resources available through BC’s Grace Van Dyke Bird Library.

- I. Work with the library and the librarians.
 - A. Use the library website: <http://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/library>
 - B. Take a library research workshop:
<http://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/library/workshop.asp>
 - C. Take a research methods class: <http://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/library/eng34.asp>
 - D. Work with a reference library:
<http://www.bakersfieldcollege.edu/library/contactFall.asp>
 - E. Use the Assignment Calculator:
<http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/library/modules/freecalc/index.php>