

## **College Writing: The Basics**

In college or in any work or professional setting, students need to put their best foot forward, both in dress, in timeliness, and in writing.

People write more now than ever before: texts, social media posts, emails, notes, papers, and more. Writing is often one's first impression, the first point of communication.

All writing in college, from an email to an art instructor to a 20 page research paper, should be written at college level, in a professional manner. Below are some basic guidelines for college writing. These are general guidelines: make sure to always check with the instructor to follow specific guidelines for the specific writing assignment.

### **Basic Writing Guidelines:**

- Use full sentences
- Use correct capitalization (no little "i")
- Spell-check (and look for homophones like its/it's)
- Use professional but not overly formal language (avoid slang )
- Be respectful (don't swear or be confrontational)
- Write your own work (don't plagiarize)
- Cite sources if used in the paper

### **Resources**

*Capital Community College* [Guide to Grammar and Writing](http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/)  
(<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/> Email Guidelines)

*Purdue OWL* [Guidelines for Writing in North American Colleges](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/683/01/)  
<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/683/01/>)

### **Email Guidelines**

- Have a professional greeting (Dear Professor Xavier—not "hey dude")
- Introduce yourself
  - For a class, state your name, class, and section if possible
  - For professional emails, explain who you are, background
- Explain why you are emailing

- For classes, summarize the issue and give details if possible
- For professional emails, give specific details
- Be positive
- Use emoticons and exclamation points sparingly
- Have a respectful sign off (Sincerely, Thank you for your time—not Thank you in advance)
- Take time to compose emails—don't rush sending an email, especially if you are upset about the issue

## **Resources**

*UndercoverRecruiter* "[12 Professional Email Etiquette Guidelines](https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/write-professional-emails/)"  
(<https://theundercoverrecruiter.com/write-professional-emails/>)

*Purdue OWL* "[Email Etiquette for Students](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/694/01/)"  
(<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/694/01/>)

## **Papers/essays**

1. Follow basic college writing guidelines (above)
2. Always follow specific instructors for the specific assignment
3. Have a clear and specific thesis or claim
4. Have an interesting introduction, conclusion, and title
5. Organize the paper clearly and logically
6. Tie ideas together with transitions
7. Use support (examples, details, experience, and research)
8. If using outside sources, introduce and cite sources and follow citations style (MLA, APA, etc.)
9. Be original and surprising
10. Avoid wordiness and use active, interesting language
11. Have a clear and consistent style (especially in tense and point of view)

## **Resources**

*Context* "[The College Writing Guide](https://findyourcontext.education/the-college-writing-guide/)"  
(<https://findyourcontext.education/the-college-writing-guide/>)

*Purdue Owl* "[Essay Writing](https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/01/)"  
(<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/685/01/>)

[Excelsior College Online Writing Lab](https://owl.excelsior.edu/) (https://owl.excelsior.edu/)