

## tips for writing with style

1. Use idiomatic expressions and phrasal verbs, but avoid clichés.
2. Avoid generic words: *thing, stuff, good*, etc. Vary your vocabulary.
3. Use quotations to express ideas. *The narrator seems to be saying, "Life is all a mess and we can't do anything about it."*
4. Vary your punctuation. Use semicolons (;), colons (:), long dashes (--), appositive commas (*Edgar, who never smiles, represents...*), etc.
5. Avoid exclamation points and parentheses whenever possible.
6. Use strong, clear verbs; avoid "be" verbs, complex verb phrases and passive sentences whenever possible.
7. Make abstractions clear with illustrations, analogies, your own metaphors and concrete details.
8. Avoid intensifying adverbs like *very, extremely, quite*. Instead, find the word that has that intensification included.
9. Vary sentence length. If you have lots of long sentences, put in a short one, and vice versa. Have at least one very short sentence (less than six words) in every essay you write.
10. Use transitions: *however, in other words, in addition, for example*, etc.
11. Use the fewest words possible. Try to cut 10% of the words from your final draft.
12. Make sure lists have parallel structure. *He likes swimming in the river, walking in the city streets and drinking cappuccinos in the cafes.*
13. Pose questions, and then answer them.
14. Try to be funny, but appropriately.
15. Read your work out loud as part of the revision process.