30 Writing & Editing Tips for Graduate Students

1. Know that writer's block is all about fear

2. Start with the end in mind (have a clear goal for the paper)

3. Use a timeline to stay on task

4. Write with your reader/audience in mind

5. Be concise

6. Be direct

7. Be clear

8. Write, cite, number, space, and format according to the style assigned (MLA, APA, Chicago)

9. Use active voice whenever possible; use passive voice only when necessary

10. Avoid biased and/or sexist language

11. Use tense and person consistently and according to style dictates (MLA, APA, Chicago)

12. Use an outline to stay focused and to help structure content

13. Don't get stuck in information gathering paralysis; gather resources based on your thesis statement and get writing

14. Name and save your document immediately; set your document to auto-save; consider using *Cloud* storage

15. Write with authority (don't hedge)

16. Credit all sources

17. Remember that more words do not necessarily convey more meaning

18. Expect to write at least three drafts

19. Know the meaning of every word you use; when in doubt use a dictionary (or www.dictionary.com)

20. Use a thesaurus, in addition to the dictionary, to find the best word (or www.thesaurus.com)

21. If the first sentence stymies you, begin with the second sentence then fill in the first sentence on the second draft

22. Wait at least a day (preferably at least two or more) before you reread and edit

23. Ask someone else to read and critique your second draft; return the favor

24. Save second and third drafts with another name; add a v2 or v3 or dates so that deleted material is never lost

25. When editing, read out loud to hear not only the rhythm, cadence, and flow of a sentence or paragraph but also the meaning

26. Use the **Review** function in Word for **track changes** editing; use the **final no markup** drop down menu to see all changes as if they are accepted

27. Use **find/replace** for global changes

28. Use the **Spell Check** & **Grammar Check** functions in Word but DO NOT assume they will always be correct; do not substitute computer generated suggestions for your own knowledge

29. Use the **References** function in Word for style formatting help and for table of contents, footnotes, and citations

30. Read a printed paper version of your final draft before turning it in