

Writing De-brief

Problem/Areas to Improve	Likely Comments on Essay	Possible Solution
Using 2 nd person pronouns (you, your, yourself)	Generally “you” is not used in academic essays	Specify whom you are actually referring to: citizens? Americans? Teens? Smokers?
Using 1 st person pronouns (I, me, my, mine)	Generally “I” is not used in academic essays	Instead of prefacing your statements with “I think” or “I feel,” just say what comes after that and delete the “I think” and “I feel”
Using collective pronouns and superlatives/absolutes (everyone, anyone, someone, all, always, never)	Really? Everyone? Always? Proof? How do you know?	Practice specifying exactly who you mean and qualifying exactly when a principle or statement applies. This is critical thinking. Oversimplification is all that can be achieved otherwise.
Proliferation of “be” verbs (is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been)	None written but duly noted mentally	Re-order the sentence pattern to eliminate the “be” verb and concentrate on using vivid, specific verbs
Lack of text evidence/support	Proof? Evidence? No text support	Each time you make an assertion or a statement, you must exemplify, elaborate, and add specific details
Plurals that create only sweeping generalizations	Details? Evidence? Which? How? Why? Unclear; not sure what you mean here	Each time you use a plural, such as rights, you should then write a sentence that enumerates or specifies which rights you mean; or erase the plural “rights” and say which ones you actually mean
Not proving your thesis or not having a clear thesis	Thesis? This does not match your thesis	Be sure that you have a specific, clear, insightful answer to the question/prompt to begin with. Then touch back to it after you write each topic sentence.
Not having topic sentences or having ineffective topic sentences	No topic sentence; how does this relate to or support your thesis?	Outline before you begin writing to be sure that you have a plan for proving or supporting your thesis. Just as the thesis should answer the prompt, the topic sentences should prove the thesis.
Using quoted material without sources	Source? Who said this? How is this relevant?	Be sure to contextualize each piece of quoted material so that you are using it to support your ideas and not to speak for you.
Shallow thinking or writing	Why? What’s the point? Really?	Pre-write, plan, or conference before you write. Practice deepening your thinking and writing on topics so that you know when you have reached insight.
Essay is too short	Is this all? What else? And?	Complex ideas require explanation. Practice explicating your thinking so that your ideas and assertions are fully formed and articulated .

Run-ons/Comma splices (joining 2 sentences with no punctuation or with only a comma)	R-O; insert a semicolon	Review/learn rules for joining ideas effectively; practice comma/semicolon rules
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