

AP Analytical Writing Musts

- 1) Tone. All assignments for this course are academic assignments, and as such, you must use an appropriate tone. Do not be conversational! Keep your editorial comments to yourself.
- 2) Avoid clichés and colloquialisms. That ties in with tone. Do not be conversational!
- 3) Avoid contractions. They are inappropriate for academic papers.
- 4) Avoid pronouns. Do not use “you”, “your”, “we”, “our”, etc. It weakens your argument. You may always use “the reader”.
- 5) Avoid pronoun confusion. Be wary of confusing usage of multiple “he”s in a sentence.
- 6) Word choice. You are AP students. “Bad,” “good,” “thing,” etc. are not acceptable. You can do better, so do better!
- 7) Tense is very important. Be consistent. Stories should be described in the present tense.
- 8) Never refer to an author by his first name. You don’t know him personally, and you are not friends. Also, do not use Mr. and Mrs. either! Simply use the last name.
- 9) Organization. Unless SPECIFICALLY told that structure does not matter, always observe organizational rules. This means that you must formulate a strong, clear thesis and include an introductory paragraph, body paragraphs with strong analytical points and textual evidence as support, and a conclusion paragraph. This is not optional.
- 10) Treat every response like an argument. All academic papers are arguments, for your task is always to prove something. Therefore, build your case with strong analytical points and convincingly support these points with reliable textual evidence.
- 11) Avoid “I”. Do not use “I think,” “I feel,” “I believe,” or anything of that ilk. Duh. You wrote this. Of course, you think it, feel it, believe it. It is unnecessary and only serves to weaken the argument.
- 12) Thoroughly respond to all tasks of the prompt/question. If a question asks you to describe why you would choose a particular character as a friend, you cannot merely describe that character. You must CLEARLY provide justification for why that character’s traits and/or actions appeal to you. Or, if the task is to argue that a particular theme is prominent in a work, merely asserting that it exists in the work is not answering the task.
- 13) Effectively build your case. Always lead with analysis. Open body paragraphs with strong analytical points that also link to your task (set up the point you will prove). Then thoroughly discuss, analyze, and support with textual evidence that point. Finally, end body paragraphs with a strong summative statement that again connects clearly to your task. Basically, show your reader that you are building your case.
- 14) Connect your analysis to your task. Always make clear connections (or links) to your thesis statement so that your reader is certain that you are indeed making your case. Your reader should not have to work hard to make the connections; make them for him!
- 15) Do not rely on quotes to make your argument for you. Quotes from the text should not comprise the bulk of your argument. They are merely support. Consider them to be like spices. Use them sparingly but effectively, as they pack a punch.
- 16) Do not rely on plot summary. Assume you have an educated reader. Do not waste time summarizing whole stories. Keep it analytical and focused on what proves your case. Focus on your points and then bring in the appropriate textual evidence.
- 17) Set up your quotes well. You must introduce a quote; you cannot simply stick it in the midst of your analysis without introducing and assume your reader will make the leap you want him to.
Example: Throughout the series of awakenings experienced by Edna Pontellier, both the audience and the characters in the story are given strong hints of what is to come. A perfect example is something Edna says to Madame Ratignolle that clearly takes issue with Victorian societal ideals for women: “I would give my life for my children, but not myself” (Chopin 98).
Also, be sure that you do not end a paragraph with a quote. You must explain it and how it helps your case.
- 18) Cite your quotes correctly. Follow MLA format (no commas!) and always include a bibliography if you cite anything.
- 19) Proofread. Typographical errors are inexcusable. Be wary of typing the wrong words as well. It makes you, the writer, look careless, and your argument weaker. In addition, a lack of proofreading equates to a lack of respect for your reader, and you NEVER want to convey that!