

Before Handing in a Paper. . .



Make sure your name, the date, the class, and the professor's name are on it.

Make sure it has a title.

Make sure it is double-spaced and in 12 pt. font.

Unless your professor tells you otherwise, make sure your paper has a thesis—i.e. an opinion not everyone will agree with—and that this thesis appears towards the end of the introduction.

Look at the structure of each paragraph. Make sure that every body paragraph supports your thesis and that every body paragraph's first sentence introduces the paragraph's topic. If you have more than one topic in a paragraph, you may need to create more paragraphs.

Check for repetition and cross out anything you've already said.

Make sure you've introduced quotes properly; that it's clear what they are and why you're using them. Make sure you mention the author's name and the name of the article or book that you're quoting. Make sure the titles of articles are in quotes the titles of books are italicized. Make sure all the quotes you use illustrate the author's opinions. Make sure the quotes don't merely express facts. If they do, put them in your own words.

Make sure that you've cited sources correctly, using either Chicago or MLA style. If appropriate, make sure that you use footnotes and a "Work Cited" section.

Make sure you speak about articles/books/other sources in the *present tense*. "The author *states*," rather than "the author stated."

Copy and paste the text into gmail and see what gmail's grammar and spell check catches. Gmail's grammar check is better than Word's.

Do searches for the words "it," "they," and "this," and replace them with more specific nouns.

Cross out everything that your audience already knows or could easily guess. Also cross out cliches and broad generalities. The following won't fly in academia:

"Life is all about ..."

"Life is full of beautiful moments and some not so beautiful moments."

"Family is very important for most people."