

Old people love to complain about students' inability to write well. Essays that ought to be orderly and intelligent can be rather pathetic if the writer does not know what he/she is not supposed to do when writing an essay. Most students know how to write a five paragraph essay with an introduction, a thesis statement, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. However, this article will explain how to be a better writer, and avoid common mistakes.

There are rules for writing good sentences. 78 students out of one hundred do not know that they ought to avoid beginning sentences with numbers.\* Run-on sentences are very common in casual conversation, and sometimes are very difficult to notice, especially when they are being spoken instead of being read on a paper, but when a person is writing, a sentence that goes on and on is easier to see and is very annoying for the reader because the reader would rather see a paragraph that explains something in an organized way than see one long sentence that seems to go on without end, and yet, run-on sentences still appear in some writings by students, and adults as well, so now it is time for people to quit it with the run-ons. Prepositions are those words such as *at* or *by* that sentences should never end with. And, sentences must not begin with *and* or *but*. Sentences must end with a period, question mark, or exclamation point

There are certain words and phrases that should be avoided. Clichés are for the birds. It would be redundant for a repetitive sentence to be filled with redundancies. Students sometimes use words or phrases that do not actually exist in the English language, such as *guyses* or *on accident*, and these students are really hurting themselves. You should never address the reader as “you.” Teachers do not want to see writers addressing themselves as “I,” or at least that is what I have found most of the time. Many students have made the mistake of mixing up their homophones, and sadly, Google Docs does not always catch it. Also, writers shouldn't use contractions. Word choice is important, but whatever the words one uses may be, they must be

\* This statistic is completely made up.

## How (NOT) to Write an Essay

J. D. Hansel

spelled correctly.

As for rules of thumb, they change with the teacher. Some teachers are picky about words or phrases that are somewhat informal, silly, or totally wacked out. Writers who criticize people too harshly are often considered unkind, and they are complete idiots. Most teachers do not like to see things described with broad, non-descriptive terms, such as the word *things*. Professors will definitely deduct points from an essay for beginning the closing paragraph with "in conclusion."

In conclusion, it is easy to make mistakes, unless of course a student has as much experience as the brilliant J. D. Hansel, who clearly makes no mistakes. Despite all of these rules, the most important part of an essay is communicating the message well. Make logical points and grab the readers' attention! Humor is a great way to keep the attention of the reader, but it is important not to repeat the same joke over and over again.