

ENG 103 – The Research Paper Dragan

TOP 10 THINGS TO WORK ON IN YOUR FINAL DRAFTS

Does
this apply
to me?

(CHECK OFF ALL THAT APPLY – YOU SHOULD THEN PRIORITIZE WHAT TO FIX FOR THE FINAL DRAFT.)

1) **Add MLA page numbers to your drafts** (including last name + page in top right corner)

2) **Fix instructor's edits with AGR, ww, awk, etc.**

Remember the final draft IS NOT just to make instructor changes.

Review common 'error codes' (standard in the LaGuardia English Department).

3) **FIX ANY MISSED QUOTES (MARKED IN HIGHLIGHTER).** When you are in a hurry, it's easy to 'accidentally' use words from an encyclopedia article. **YOU MUST USE QUOTES (OR PARAPHRASE COMPLETELY).**

4) **FIX ANY MISSING CITES.** (These are marked with 'MISSING CITE' or 'CITE.')

You must cite facts from your sources. Ask yourself, "How do I know this? What source told me this fact?" Facts about a mental illness like schizophrenia or the life story of a person like Temple Grandin come from somewhere. **In a formal research paper, they need to be attached to sources.** If you understand this basic principle, you understand how academic / college writing works (and has worked for over 300 years)! Academic writing is writing from sources, not blog writing, not personal writing, not writing from your knowledge for a midterm or final. This is a hard concept for beginning college writers to understand, but once you do, you can write successful college papers for your whole academic career and get better grades. Plus you will never have to worry about plagiarism.

5) **Are you using a psychological study** on schizophrenia / autism, etc.? If not, find one on JSTOR.

Summarize the findings of that study for half a page. Tie it to YOUR topic. Perhaps schizophrenia or autism is much harder to treat in real life than in the movies? The 'expert' opinion from the study says this, but the film doesn't acknowledge the realities of a mental condition or illness.

6) **Fix the wording of your thesis statement to fit your evidence.** (Several drafts had evidence that contradicted the thesis statement. That's not surprising because you did the research and found sources that may have said different things than the original

'hypothesis.' So you need to go back and align the thesis statement to the argument of the paper. Two options: Change the thesis (easier) or change / add evidence (harder) to fit the original thesis (if you believe that thesis is still true).

❑ 7) **Find a counterargument. Is your evidence too one-sided?** Play the believing and doubting game. (If you 'cherry pick' your evidence that only agrees with you, it looks one sided.) It's better to present a taste of the other side. For example, while some researchers think autism can be largely cured with different interventions; most do not. A paper that samples a bit of both sides (while ending up on your position) is better than a paper that quotes a single source and takes that for a simple truth, when it is not. (For example, Ray Kurzweil is an extreme techno-romantic. If you quote him straight up without any other sources for 'balance,' you aren't doing justice to the complexities of the potential problem of 'runaway AI.')

❑ 8) **Upgrade a source or two.**

Suppose you use Wikipedia (ugh) for a definition of schizophrenia. Instead, find a real encyclopedia from Gale Virtual Reference Library. Change your quotes--use a 'responsible' source instead. This doesn't 'break' the form of your paper at all, just a section of the evidence.

Suppose your film review is from an obscured newspaper from Australia. Why not upgrade to a 'reputable' newspaper or magazine, such as:

(LexisNexis)

The New York Times
The Washington Post
The Nation

The New Republic
The Guardian (UK)
The New Statesman (UK)

Again, you can 'replace' evidence with new quotes from this new review.

❑ 9) **Add a new paragraph with 'close reading' of a film based on two film stills using the techniques discussed in ENG 103.**

Remember when describing a scene (or a still) from a film, you just cite by the name of the film, *in italics* e.g. (*Temple Grandin*) or (*A Beautiful Mind*).

❑ 10) **Work on paragraph structure.**

Make sure your body paragraphs have:

*A topic sentence

*2 or 3 full quote sandwiches for evidence

*Sentences that connect that evidence back to your argument (called a 'warrant')

*Aim for about 3/4 of a page for your body paragraphs. (Paragraphs in formal essays should be about 200 words at least.)