

A Matter of Time
Comp Lit 65/Math 5
Winter 2009

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A Brief List of Solutions to Common Stylistic Problems

Here are several writing issues that you should keep in mind when writing your papers in this the course. The list is by no means exhaustive, but was initiated by past TAs in response to problems that we all observed.

- Always proofread.
- Citations: Always use the correct format for citations. All direct quotations and paraphrases **must** be followed by a citation. Instructions for how to cite everything from poems to class lectures to information off the web (yes, all must be cited) is available in the booklet *Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgment*, which you received at the beginning of your first year here. If you no longer have this book, the same information is available on the web at <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/sources/>. Remember that, if you want to save space in your paper, you can use footnotes instead of the more familiar parenthetical notations. Footnotes and bibliographies can appear on a separate page from your essay. We expect you to cite correctly, and you will be penalized if you fail to do so. Carelessness is unacceptable.
- Thesis statements. Many students have trouble with their theses. A thesis should be well-developed and specific. It should provide a controlling idea/argument that guides the rest of the essay. A thesis like "Although the concepts of infinity, immortality, and eternity have many similarities, they are also all different" is too vague and general to give a paper direction and punch. A good thesis statement should give the reader some idea of the answers to questions such as: Where will you go from here? What will your paper's structure be? What is the idea behind your paper? In the example of an inadequate thesis statement, a better thesis would say something like: "Although the concepts of infinity, immortality, and eternity all deal with limitlessness, infinity is ... whereas eternity ... Immortality relates to both because ..." A statement like this implies a structure for the rest of the paper, and it makes it easier to discuss the course readings because you know what you have to use them to prove.
- Use of course readings. Your citations from the course readings, including the math sections, should follow a logical progression that allows you to make your arguments and establish your case. You want to demonstrate that you know the significance of the texts you have chosen, how they relate to one another, and how they bear on the point you are trying to make.

We will be reviewing these issues in more detail once we get closer to the first writing assignment.

Dartmouth Composition Center

Remember too that the College maintains extensive resources for student writing. For example, the Composition Center is now part of RWIT, the Student Center for Research, Writing, and Information Technology. Online materials for students can be found on the Writing Program Web site at www.dartmouth.edu/~writing/materials/about.html. For example, you can find advice about organization, logic, and style. These all are important issues that you should pay careful attention to as you develop your papers. Good clear thinking and good clear writing go hand in hand.