

Learning Commons

Academic Writing Center - Graduate Students



The Style of Graduate Writing

DOs and DON'Ts

DO: State your purpose/thesis early – think about the most important thing your reader needs to know and put it at the beginning of your work

DON'T: Write your paper like a joke, with the punchline (the most important part) at the end

DO: Follow the structure you set up in your introduction

DON'T: Confuse your reader by not letting them know where you're going in your essay

DO: Include one or two ideas per sentence

DON'T: Write a sentence that is so long the reader loses track of what you're saying

Wonder Woman is the daughter of Hippolyta and was raised on the island of Themyscira. 😊

Wonder Woman is the daughter of Hippolyta, she rides on an invisible jet, and she first appeared in a 1987 comic co-created by Harry G. Peter, who started his career at the San Francisco Chronicle. 😞

DO: Use transition words/phrases (e.g. however, whereas, as noted) to guide your reader

DON'T: Rely solely on transition words/phrases – follow a logical structure that also guides your reader

Wonder Woman's real name is "Diana of Themyscira," however she goes by several aliases. 😊

Wonder Woman spoke Themyscirian, but she learned English, however she still had to use the Lasso of Truth when words were not enough. 😞

DO: Use clear, carefully-chosen words

DON'T: Use unnecessary jargon

Wonder Woman traveled to Olympus to talk with the gods. 😊

Wonder Woman navigated an excursion to Olympus where she dialectically interfaced with the gods. 😞

Further Resources:

Williams, J.M. (2007). *Style: Lessons in clarity and grace* (9th ed.).

New York: Pearson Longman.

The Writing Center at UNC-Chapel Hill (online resources)

Purdue Online Writing Lab

The Academic Writing Center
401N Langsam Library
Phone: 513-556-3912, uc.edu/awc

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DO: Use direct language to write easy-to-follow sentences

DON'T: Use too many nominalizations in a sentence (nominalizations = verbs or adjectives as nouns, e.g. "they had an argument" vs. "they argued")

DON'T: Use excessive prepositions (e.g. "is" and "to")

Wonder Woman fought the drug dealer Michael Boyd, a.k.a. Skeeter LaRue. 😊

Wonder Woman got in a fight with Michael Boyd who is a drug dealer and goes by the alias Skeeter LaRue 😞

DO: Use "strong" verbs that describe exact actions

DON'T: Overuse "weak" verbs, such as the "to be" or "to have" verbs

Wonder Woman unleashed her Golden Lasso and it forced the villain to tell the truth. 😊

Wonder Woman used her Golden Lasso and the effect it had on the villain was making him tell the truth. 😞

DO: Use parallel structure (i.e. each clause or phrase has the same grammatical structure)

DON'T: Use inconsistent verbs conjugations (e.g. run and running) in the same sentence

Yesterday Wonder Woman flew her invisible jet, saved a child, and met with Superman. 😊

Yesterday Wonder Woman flew her invisible jet, saved a child, and had a meeting with Superman. 😞

DO: Be deliberate about using active or passive voice (active voice = the subject does the action, passive voice = the object has the action done to it)

DON'T: Use active and passive inconsistently, unless you have a reason to do so (in general, academics prefer active voice because it is direct and concise; however, science writing often calls for the passive voice)

Wonder Woman joined the Justice League of America 😊

The Justice League of America was joined by Wonder Woman. 😞

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