Formal versus Informal Writing

Academic writing should be formal unless otherwise specified by your professor. Some characteristics of formal writing are:

1. Contractions should not be used.

Incorrect: The boy doesn’t like school.

Correct: The boy does not like school.

1. First or second person should be used.

Incorrect: You should not incur student debt.

Correct: One should not incur student debt.

1. Prepositions should always have an object.

Incorrect: The boy wondered who his sister was talking to.

Correct: The boy wondered to whom his sister was talking.

1. The active voice should be used instead of the passive voice.

Incorrect: One’s credit score is negatively affected by student debt.

Correct: Student debt negatively affects one’s credit score.

1. Casual language that may be appropriate for conversation should not be used in writing.

Examples: “You know,” “Kinda,” etc.