TEN COMMON WRITING ERRORS TO AVOID

1. **Comma Splice**: A comma placed between two complete sentences is a comma splice. Of course, comma splicing can involve more than two complete sentences as well. **Incorrect**: Sarah is an excellent nurse, she graduated at the top of her class. **Solution**: Sarah is an excellent nurse. She graduated at the top of her class. **Or**: Sarah is an excellent nurse; she graduated at the top of her class. *There are other solutions, but the two offered here are the simplest.*

2. **The Passive Voice**: Avoid the passive voice, especially in academic writing which demands strong, dynamic, and direct writing to enhance credibility. **Incorrect**: The chart was read by Nate. **Solution**: Nate read the chart.

3. **Wordiness**: Wordy sentences employ useless, *filler words* that clutter writing. **Incorrect**: For all intents and purposes, the reason Katie didn’t show up at the clinic was due to the fact that she misread the appointment book she habitually carries in her briefcase and by the time we reached her on her cell she was 50 miles away on a stretch of country road, always beautiful at this time of year. **Solution**: Katie missed her clinic appointment because she misread her appointment book.

4. **The Run-on Sentence**: Run on sentences join two or more complete sentences with no punctuation. **Incorrect**: Diane loves to talk she knows more about football than you would imagine. **Solution**: Diane loves to talk, and she knows more about football than you would imagine.

5. **Jumping From Singular to Plural**: Verbs must agree in number with their subjects. **Incorrect**: A typical Mercy student, the brightest of all students, study every evening. **Solution**: A typical Mercy student, the brightest of all students, studies every evening. *Don’t let the phrase in the middle of the sentence fool you. Identify subject and verb, then ignore any words that come between them.*

6. **Hyphenating Prefixes**: Generally, hyphenate only in the case of a double “a” or “i.” Exceptions occur when the original word is capitalized, e.g. “anti-American” or when using “self-,” which is always hyphenated, e.g. “self-hypnosis.” **Incorrect**: semi-colon; pre-approved; selfmotivated (ALL INCORRECT). **Solutions**: semicolon; preapproved; self-motivated.

7. **Using Two Spaces After Periods and Colons**: Not so much a mistake as a change in convention. Two spaces originated because of old typewriter fonts. With the advent and common use of word processing programs, single space is now the norm.

8. **Redundant Expressions**: The editing process should include streamlining your sentences. Look for repetition and double constructions. **Incorrect**: Brittany demonstrates insight and vision. **Solution**: Choose either “insight” or “vision.” **Incorrect**: Kelsey realized the papers were of a confidential nature. **Solution**: Kelsey realized the papers were confidential.

9. **Quotation Marks and Punctuation**: Periods and commas *always* go inside closing quotation marks. **Example**: Anastasia claims, “APA style is more difficult than MLA.” Or “The sixties were very good to him,” Samantha said.
*When a sentence ends with a citation in parentheses, however, the period follows the parenthesis. Example: “Everyone lives with at least one secret in their lives” (Stundon, 1974). Also note that in American usage, colons and semicolons go outside closing quotation marks.

10. **Semicolons:** Use a semicolon between *closely related independent clauses*. Example: Old magicians never die; they just lose their hare. Sketchy humor aside, the semicolon is **NOT** a fancy replacement for a comma,