

Taboo Words and Forms to Avoid

In high school you must take care to write with academically appropriate language. Therefore, avoid taboo words and conventions. You are held responsible for knowing these words and conventions on all academic writing, including essays, homework packets, and vocabulary sentences. Use of taboo words will lower your grade.

1. thing, things
2. stuff
3. a lot of
4. okay, ok
5. common adjectives (good, bad, happy, sad, mad) choose more precise language
6. wanna
7. gonna
8. kid
9. guy
10. kind of/sort of
11. Nowadays
12. Common modifiers such as very, extremely, incredibly (choose a precise word)
13. could of, would of, should of (could have, would have)
14. & instead of **and**
15. Contractions (won't = will not)
16. Text messaging terms: lol = hilarious, 2 = to, 4 = for, GF = death
17. First person in academic writing except personal narratives: **I, we, us, our, me**
18. Second person: you,
19. numbers ten and under should be spelled out unless part of a date, street numbers or proper names. Numbers over ten are spelled out if they start a sentence.
20. slang (my bad, emo, fugly, peeps, dawgs, homies, sup, rad)
21. anything obscene (in direct quotes, use only the first and last letters, replace each missing letter with an asterisk = s**t)
22. jargon ("technical talk" example: Bilateral probital hematoma (jargon) for a black eye, or "shiner" (SLANG))
23. prove – as it applies to arguing mean and matter (you do the proving)
24. true or truly – as it applies to the essence of something
- 25. The fact that = that**
- 26. In order to = to**

Additionally avoid

1. Avoid using "one" when referring to an anonymous person – reword the sentence to appear address the people you are actually referencing, like Americans, individuals, women, pioneers, etc.
2. "Talks about" when referencing a writer's statement in a novel
3. Being and all its forms and, as much as possible, all its forms
4. There is (are) (there is a woman I know who is insane about her dog = A woman I know is insane about her dog)

5. Gerunds are words that take a form of to and add an ing to the verb “ Paul is reflecting on the war” should read “Paul reflects on the war.”
6. The author wants to show/the author intends (assumes)
7. Do not refer to the reader (the reader will see that....) elements
8. Do not refer to the quote (the quote is important because...)
9. Passive voice. The review will be performed by Ms. Miller = Ms. Miller will perform the review; Ms. Gerber’s food was cheered by all = Everyone cheered Ms. Gerber’s food
10. “What people don’t know/realize is” (assumes)
11. Rhetorical questions except in intro and conclusion
12. The author “is able to” – this implies a lack of qualifications.
13. Syllogistic logic – we aim to prove through explanations and examples
14. Awareness of your audience – Your teacher is your audience. When you write about a work your teacher assigned, assume your teacher has read it. You do not need to summarize the story or say things like Paul, the protagonist, or a confused teenager named Holden Caulfield.
15. Know your standard heading for class work and the standard heading for MLA. They are different:

MLA Standard Heading	Standard Heading for Gerber Work
place on left side of paper Double space – no more, no less Note order and abbreviations	(place on right side of paper, at the top)
Joe M. Student	Joe Student
Ms. Gerber	Period 1
English 9 Honors	November 18, 2014
18 Nov. 2014	Ms. Gerber

Additionally:

- When you write about fiction, use present tense.
- Non-fiction is written in authentic tense
- Never critique (“Steinbeck beautifully and accurately portrays the life of disposed migrants.” This is not your job nor are you qualified to judge iconic American literature – simply argue your thesis).
- Omit all summary – ARGUE instead
- KNOW THY AUDIENCE – Your audience is me, your teacher, who has read the works countless times. You do not need to say “Jim, a slave, is set adrift on the vast Mississippi River.” I am well aware Jim is a slave. Nor do you need to relate that “The protagonist in the novel is a boy named Huckleberry Finn, who takes a

journey down the river.” Likewise, you should assume I know the name of the protagonist. This type of writing reads as fluff and filler and a pretty clear indication that you don’t have much to say regarding your argument.

- **KNOW THY REGISTER** – unless specifically stated, assume the register for academic writing is formal – do not adopt a friendly, casual demeanor with your reader, do not invoke second person, and do not **EVER** summon the egregious first person (I, we, us, our). **EVER**.