

## Tips for Strong Grammar and Mechanics

Allow the content of your paper to be the reader's focus by omitting distracting mechanical errors. Those details may seem unimportant, but they can make all the difference! Here are some common errors to check for before turning in your paper:

- **Formal voice:** Unless you are writing a narrative piece, never use 1<sup>st</sup> person (“I”/“we”) or 2<sup>nd</sup> person (“you”/“y’all”) in formal academic writing.
  - *Not:* “You can feel the author’s anguish.”
  - *Yes:* “The author’s anguish resonates with the reader.”
  
- **Consistent tense usage:** Choose one verb tense and stick with it.
  - *Not:* “Romeo was in love with Juliet, so he shows up that night below her balcony.”
  - *Yes:* “Romeo was in love with Juliet, so he showed up that night below her balcony.”
  
- **Passive voice:** Use active verbs wherever you can! Passive statements are dull and repetitive.
  - *Not:* “The ball was thrown by the pitcher.”
  - *Yes:* “The pitcher threw the ball.”
  
- **Usage of “this”/“that”:** “This” and “that” are distracting when used in excess. Try to be specific as to the subject of your sentence.
  - *Not:* “That seems odd.”
  - *Yes:* “His observation seems odd.”
  
- **Singular vs. plural pronouns:** If you are referring to a singular subject, make sure you are using a singular pronoun.
  - *Not:* “The professor will notice, and they will mark you off.”
  - *Yes:* “The professor will notice, and he or she will mark you off.”