

Dr. Irby's
Stylistic Guidelines

1. Follow Directions.
2. Proofread!
3. Keep your style concise, simple, and straightforward.
4. Do not endeavor to obfuscate your musings with manifoldly unnecessary modification of adjectives and adverbs contributing nothing to the issuant points at hand.
5. Do not use a choppy style: Penelope was a Greek woman. She lived in Ithaca. Her husband was away for a very long time. A lot of men wanted to marry her. She was very sad.
6. Try subordination: Penelope, a Greek woman from Ithaca, managed the estate well while her husband Odysseus was away at war and hoards of suitors pestered her for marriage.
7. Don't use contractions.
8. Italicize book titles: *Odyssey, Iliad*
9. Italicize non-English words: *xenia, homosophryne*
10. Use who/whom for people: Penelope *who*...
11. Use what/which/that for things: Penelope admired the *necklace that* Antinoos had given her
12. Their/there are easily confused: *Their* means "of them"; *there* means "yonder"
13. Be careful about pronoun-antecedent agreement, even if means using "politically incorrect" syntax. *Someone went to the store. He bought a gallon of milk* (we do not know the gender of the consumer). *One usually prefers his own opinions.*
14. Be consistent with verb tenses (keep everything in the present tense or in the past tense whenever possible)
15. Avoid the first person
16. Proofread!
17. Do not split infinitives: **to go** boldly where no one has gone before
18. Never *try and...*, always *try to...*
19. Be careful about subject verb agreement: men like..., a boy likes...
20. Avoid redundant repetitive use of modifiers and qualifiers.
21. Use comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs sparingly (if you have a '*very*,' strike it)
22. The passive voice in English should **be used** sparingly.
23. Do not summarize plots (e.g., write to your audience and remember that the professor knows the stories). Incorporate plot details as necessary to support your argument
24. If you choose to write an adaptation of a Greek play, incorporate dialogue from the ancient version.
25. Citations: you may use any consistent form to cite your sources within text or as footnotes. Include author and page number (Moreford and Lenardon, 523; Ovid, 39). A bibliography appended to the end of your essay will include full publication details.
26. Proofread!

For Fun and Edification read Mark Twain on Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses:

http://www.pbs.org/marktwain/learnmore/writings_fenimore.html

For even more fun and edification read the philologic wisdom of Humpty Dumpty in Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*: <http://www.literature.org/authors/carroll-lewis/through-the-looking-glass/chapter-06.html>

Humpty Dumpty took the book, and looked at it carefully. 'That seems to be done right -- ' he began.

'You're holding it upside down!' Alice interrupted.

'To be sure I was!' Humpty Dumpty said gaily, as she turned it round for him. 'I thought it looked a little queer. As I was saying, that SEEMS to be done right -- though I haven't time to look it over thoroughly just now -- and that shows that there are three hundred and sixty-four days when you might get un-birthday presents-- '

'Certainly,' said Alice.

'And only ONE for birthday presents, you know. There's glory for you!'

'I don't know what you mean by "glory,"' Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. 'Of course you don't -- till I tell you. I meant "there's a nice knock-down argument for you!"'

'But "glory" doesn't mean "a nice knock-down argument,"' Alice objected.

'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean -- neither more nor less.'

'The question is,' said Alice, 'whether you CAN make words mean so many different things.'

'The question is,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'which is to be master - - that's all.'

Alice was too much puzzled to say anything, so after a minute Humpty Dumpty began again. 'They've a temper, some of them -- particularly verbs, they're the proudest -- adjectives you can do anything with, but not verbs -- however, I can manage the whole of them! Impenetrability! That's what I say!'

'Would you tell me, please,' said Alice 'what that means?'

'Now you talk like a reasonable child,' said Humpty Dumpty, looking very much pleased. 'I meant by "impenetrability" that we've had enough of that subject, and it would be just as well if you'd mention what you mean to do next, as I suppose you don't mean to stop here all the rest of your life.'

'That's a great deal to make one word mean,' Alice said in a thoughtful tone.

'When I make a word do a lot of work like that,' said Humpty Dumpty, 'I always pay it extra.'

'Oh!' said Alice. She was too much puzzled to make any other remark.

'Ah, you should see `em come round me of a Saturday night,' Humpty Dumpty went on, wagging his head gravely from side to side: `for to get their wages, you know.'

(Alice didn't venture to ask what he paid them with; and so you see I can't tell YOU.)

'You seem very clever at explaining words, Sir,' said Alice. 'Would you kindly tell me the meaning of the poem called "Jabberwocky"?''

'Let's hear it,' said Humpty Dumpty. 'I can explain all the poems that were ever invented -- and a good many that haven't been invented just yet.'