

Formal Style Cheat Sheet

Making sure our writing is appropriate for our purpose

Do NOT include any of
the following words:

I
Me
My
Mine
You
Your
Yours

These are all first and second person point-of-view. Formal writing should only use third person point-of-view.

Be careful with your use of “we,” “us,” “our,” and “ours,” as these are also first person point-of-view.

No contractions.

Don't = Do not

Can't = Cannot or Can not

Couldn't = Could not

Doesn't = Does not

Hasn't = Has not

Shouldn't = Should not

Could've = Could have

Would've = Would have

Might've = Might have

Let's = Let us

Avoid using a
sarcastic
tone.

Refer to the author by his/her last name.

You're not on a first-name basis with him/her.
If it seems rude, add Mr., Ms., or Dr. (if applicable).

Never include slang words

None of these words should
ever be in formal writing:

- Gonna
- Kinda
- Wanna
- ‘Cause or ‘cuz
- Thru

Stay away
from weak
words.

Strong synonyms for “Uses”

- Applies
- Deploys
- Employs
- **Exploits (sometimes)**
- **Features**
- Implements
- Includes
- Incorporates
- Inputs (sometimes)
- Integrates
- Manipulates (sometimes)
- Produces
- Provides
- Recites (sometimes)
- Supplies
- Utilizes
- **Wields**

Strong synonyms for “Shows”

- Alludes [to something]
- Coerces [the audience]
- Conveys [the idea]
- Demonstrates
- Depicts
- Displays
- Educates [the audience]
- Emphasizes [the idea]
- Enforces [the idea]
- Enlightens [the audience]
- Illustrates
- Implies
- Informs [the audience]
- Insinuates
- Invokes
- **Portrays [the idea]**
- Presents
- **Represents [the idea]**
- Reveals