

Purge all forms of "to be" from the paper.

This includes is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been.

Ctrl-f for those verbs and rewrite sentences to eliminate them.

This will force you to eliminate the passive voice and space-wasting phrases like "It is clear that..." This will also keep you from writing in the continuous/ progressive aspect ("x is thinking") instead of simple aspect ("x thinks").

Eliminate as many adverbs as possible.

Anything ending in "ly" is suspect.

You can keep essential adverbs like "not."

Eliminate the following:

The verb "use" or "occur." Instead of "Plato uses words to convey his meaning," write something like, "Plato conveys his meaning through words."

The expression "try and." You can "try to" do something, or you can do something, but there is no "try and."

The noun "occurrence."

Check the following:

Did you write "societal" or "social?" If you wrote "societal," it's probably pretentious, not correct.

Do your pronouns match their antecedents in number? "They," "them," and "their" are plural pronouns, not singular.

Did you write "however?" Did you put it in the right spot? "However" is postpositive: put it after a word or phrase that you want to mark with heightened contrast. If you put it first in the sentence, you waste that power.

Check your quotations:

As a rule of thumb, quote primary sources but paraphrase and cite secondary sources.

Any quotation over three lines should be a block quotation (indented, no quotation marks). If you have a quotation this long, see if you can paraphrase it instead. A paper should show off your ability to analyze evidence and build arguments from evidence, not your skill at cutting and pasting.