10 Rules For Writing a Bad Essay

1. Using the wrong word, marked ww on your previous essays. You can avoid this by only using words that you can correctly define. Avoid the thesaurus (also known as Shift F7) unless you are willing to look up the word you select in a dictionary. Similar does not mean exactly the same.

2. Use of the words “you,” “one,” “we,” etc. In this class “you” means me – Professor Sewell and “we” means, quite literally, yourself and myself. Unless you can know for certain that you know what I think, the word “you” could get you in trouble. And unless you are planning for “we” to go on a bear hunt… While “one” does work the same way as, say, “the reader,” it is most commonly followed by some grand sweeping generalization or a moral/value judgment. By using “the reader,” you can make the point text specific.

3. Use of contractions. Take the extra two seconds and write out the word.

4. Incorrect use of the semi-colon. It is not your friend. Unless you are joining two complete sentences, use a comma.

5. Words that invalidate your argument, like “obvious,” “clearly,” etc. By telling me that something is obvious in the text, you are making it difficult for yourself as the writer to perform contextual analysis. Instead of telling me it is obvious, try explaining it to me so that it becomes obvious. This, my friends, is called analysis.

6. Missing comma after an introductory element. Review comma usage if you do not know what this means.
7. Sentences that begin with “It” or “This”. Unless the sentence directly before establishes what “it” or “this” really is, I will cry because I will have no idea what you are talking about.

8. Tense confusion problems. Write in literary present tense and avoid past tense. More importantly, avoid the presence of past and present tense in the same sentence. It (the use of past and present tense in the same sentence) makes my head hurt. I will cry.

9. Faulty sentence structure. Be sure every sentence has a subject, verb and predicate. Look this up if you do not know what I am talking about. That is why we have A Writer's Resource.

10. One person is a he or a she. Not a their. People are their.

**Honorable Mention**

11. Use of the phrase “due to”. Unless you are talking about a payment or some kind of karmic retribution, you probably mean “because”. Use “because” instead.