

Common errors/tips for better technical writing.

- Do not use abbreviations such as don't, can't, etc.
- Do not capitalize common nouns (e.g., do not write "The Response Time was too high.>").
- Be mindful of the distinction between its (possessive pronoun) and it's (it is):
 - It's his responsibility to walk the dog. (It is his ...)
 - The dog ate all **its** food. (Meaning the food that belongs to the dog.)
- Be mindful of the distinction between theirs (possessive pronoun) and there's (there is):
 - I told Bob and Alice that the race is theirs to lose.
 - There's a bird on the tree.
- Use commas after e.g. and i.e.: e.g., and i.e.,
- Avoid using etc
- Spell out numbers up to ten (e.g., one, two, ..., ten).
- Differences between "which" and "that". Use "which" after a comma and use "that" without a preceding comma. Example:
 - Bob's house, which was completely remodeled, sold very fast. (we can remove the which clause and the sentence still makes sense: "Bob's house sold very fast.")
 - The house that was remodeled received many offers. (if we remove the that clause we are left with "The house received many offers". We do not know which house received many offers)
- If you start a sentence with it or this, the it or this refer to most recent subject in the previous sentence:
 - The house had a new roof done last year. It sold for \$400K. (This is to be interpreted as the roof sold for \$400K. If you wanted to say that the house sold for \$400K you have to rephrase it as "The house, which had a new roof done last year, sold for \$400K.")
- **Between** is used when comparing two items. **Among** is used when comparing three or more items.
- Be consistent in your use of verb tense throughout the paper.
- Be consistent in your use of notation throughout the paper.
- Define all the terms and notation used in the paper.
- Avoid writing long sentences that are hard to parse. If you need to convey several ideas in a sentence consider using a numbered list such as in:
 - The system design follows four main principles: (1) blab bla bla, (2) blab bla bla, and (3) blab bla bla.
- Avoid redundancy.
- Less is more when writing.
- Use a spell checker!
- Articles are important. Use "the" when you mean a specific noun (e.g., the red dog). Use "a" when you mean a generic noun (e.g., a dog is a man's best friend). Leaving an article out is allowed when you mean a generic noun. In this case, the noun should be in the plural (e.g., Dogs needs to be walked twice a day.).