

Responding to Students Online

It is important that tutors use language that is both appropriate and professional when dealing with students, both in person and via writelab. However, online tutoring provides an additional challenge as there is no immediate interaction between the student and tutor. It is important to remember that we are not here to proofread papers, but we are here to help students improve their writing skills. The following are some good examples of the positive, educational, professional tone that should be demonstrated when responding to papers online. Please note that all comments need to be in complete, grammatically correct sentences.

This is a comma splice. "Rather" is not a coordinating conjunction and cannot be connected to the preceding sentence with just a comma. Doing so creates a run-on sentence.

I like where you are going here. Can you give more of this through specific examples or details?

Can you think of an example of this to include? It would strengthen your paper to add specific examples of the things you discuss.

There really is no situation in an academic setting where the use of second person pronouns (you, your) is appropriate. Try to rephrase your paper in third person (he, she, someone, a person).

When you have two independent clauses (clauses that can stand on their own as complete sentences) separated by a coordinating conjunction (but, or, yet, for, and, not, so), there needs to be a comma before the conjunction. In this case, the comma would go before "and."

You have made a good start as far as generating ideas here. However, I am not really sure what your thesis was in this essay. What is your main point or purpose in writing the paper? What are you trying to say, exactly? Also, you need to work on the organization of the paper. A strong thesis statement will help, but then you need to organize the paper into an introductory paragraph (ending with the thesis statement), body paragraphs outlining the major aspects of your thesis (be sure to give specific examples for each point discussed), and a concluding paragraph summing up your point of view or argument (restating your thesis in slightly different words). You might try creating an outline of the paper once you've come up with a strong thesis to see where there are holes that need to be filled in. Try reworking the paper using these suggestions and then send it back to us so we can address some of the smaller concerns. Thank you!

This is a rather abrupt way to start your paper. See if you can add some introductory material, similar to what you have in your concluding paragraph, to open this up. This first paragraph seems to be a simple recitation of the facts. I think you could work these facts into your story. Also, as the story is about one particular incident with the baby monitor, perhaps you should talk a little bit more about baby monitors in this first paragraph and less about the family. The discussion of the family could come next.

You were right in your suspicion that there were some problems in your sentence structure and punctuation. However, those problems were not consistent throughout the paper, which shows that you do know the rules, but you probably get a bit careless as you get into your writing. There is nothing wrong with that—it is good to write freely and get those ideas down. I do want to make sure that you are proofreading your work not only before you hand it in but also before you send it in to us at the lab. You may be surprised at how many of your own errors you can catch, particularly if you read the paper out loud, one sentence at a time.

These two sentences are in present tense rather than past tense. Stay consistent throughout the paper.

Commas and periods always go inside quotation marks. Be sure to apply this to the rest of the paper.

Also, you need to fix this citation. In MLA style it would look like this: (Kennedy and Gioia 333). The rest of the information would be in your works cited list. For more info on MLA citations, including Internet sources, take a look at www.mla.org or refer to a MLA handbook. We also have handouts on this information in the writing lab.

This is a term that is now part of our lexicon, so no italics or quotes are necessary.

This sentence is a comma splice, two independent clauses separated by a comma rather than a period or semicolon.

Try to use gender neutral language whenever possible. You may have to switch "person" to "people" and use "they." Try to apply this throughout the entire paper.

Is this a word for word quote? I am concerned about the agreement error between "them" and "the mother." Double check the language and punctuation in the text. It needs to be exactly the same. You will need to double check all of your quotes.

I am glad you sent your paper in early, as you have plenty of time to do some more brainstorming about this topic or perhaps a different topic. If you have any questions about the requirements of this type of paper, please feel free to contact us or your instructor. I look forward to reading your next draft!

Please give me a call at the lab so we can figure out a workable solution, as you are so conscientious about sending in your papers that we really would like to help you out with them in the best way possible.

Excellent proofreading! The grammar in your essay is sound. I enjoyed seeing you tackle issues in the essay by using quotes as examples, then furthering your point. You may want to support some of your blanket statements with examples of your own, based on your reading of the essay and your own experiences. Try drawing parallels between Richard's life and your own.

"Their" needs to match "civilian." Using "his or her" would create a parallel structure, but it could bog down your sentence. Perhaps you could change "a civilian" to "civilians" and make the following pronouns and nouns plural.

You've demonstrated the contrast between military personnel and civilians well by describing the security measures military personnel and their families face every day. A stronger opening sentence that clearly states the contrast would help the paragraph.

This last paragraph is long. It has a lot of very succinct ideas. Each idea could be a paragraph in itself if it were expanded. Either talk about the military or civilians individually or group all the similarities together and all the differences together. The examples of comparisons and contrasts are good. They are very clear and easily identifiable. Using words such as "however," "on the other hand," and "in contrast" will help make your points even clearer.

I have several suggestions for you. I noted several structural concerns within the text of your paper, but I feel that some larger issues need to be addressed. First, in the introduction, you claim that you will provide your readers with both sides of the UFO debate, but the majority of your paper is about just one side of that debate. Second, you have a number of excellent references on your reference page, but few of them are cited within the text. Readers need to be able to know exactly where you found each piece of information you provide them. To see a sample paper with in-text citations, visit <http://www.dianahacker.com/bedhandbook/subpages/pdf/dalypaper.pdf>. Keep up the good work, and feel free to send us another draft once you have made some revisions.

Because this is the first sentence of the paragraph, which is usually the place where the controlling idea is introduced, I assumed that the paragraph would be about the history of supernatural experiences. However, this paragraph actually details types of supernatural experiences, so the opening sentence of the paragraph needs to introduce that idea. In the first sentence of the paragraph, both the topic of the paragraph and the connection to the overall thesis must be established.