# Things Not to Do in Your Essays (TNTD)

* Do not pose questions to reader
* Don’t use I, me, or you
* **Don’t use the following words:**
  + Actually
  + Amazing
  + Any non-specific word
  + Awesome
  + Basically
  + Comfort zone
  + Doing, do, did
  + Due to the fact
  + End/ended/ending up
  + Furthermore
  + Get or getting
  + Go back
  + Go, going
  + Goes along
  + Going against
  + In the long run
  + Is because
  + Is when
  + Just
  + Pretty much
  + Prime example
  + Really
  + Step up
  + Stuff
  + Thing
* Don't use the phrase **their life**. The issue is one of agreement. Instead you should write his or her life or their lives.
* Don't start a paragraph with the words **To begin.** Typically kids will write: "To begin, snack machines should be banned in public schools." The problem is that the sentence begins with a verbal introductory element and such elements typically modify the subject, and this begs the question: What is beginning? The snack machine? This transition is too similar to a dangling modifier and ought to be avoided. Also, does your reader need to be informed that you are beginning the essay?
* Don’t use **passive sentences**—SEE Section on Style and Usage
* Don’t put **spaces between paragraphs**
* **Don’t write that the author *asks* or *says*** something. Those two words indicate speech. Instead write that the author ***states***or ***suggests*** XYZ, or the author ***poses*** the question that….
* Don’t use a single antecedent with a plural pronoun (we call this **agreement**).
  + **For instance:** “A person brought *their* money with *them.* BAD!!
  + **Instead:** “A person brought his or her money with him or her.

* Don’t use the word ***like*** as a conjunction; use ***as*** instead.
* Do not **split infinitives**—**to split**, **to** actually **split** an infinitive. **SEE Section on Style and Usage**
* Do not begin a sentence with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet).
* Avoid quotations in excess of three (3) lines.
* Always **place punctuation mark inside of quotation marks**; only the semi-colon is placed outside. There are reasons to place other punctuation outside the quotation marks, but for now let’s concentrate on mastering this one point.
* Don’t use **“fake” quotation marks**. Only use quotation marks when quoting material from a source.
* Do not use **clichés or trite** expressions. These are expressions that have been over-used and are now devoid of originality. Some examples:
* Come into play
* Fight the good fight
* Finish what they/you started
* Get his foot in the door
* Go with the flow
* Going through the motions
* Keep your head high
* Kept in the dark
* Long hard road
* Odds were against them
* On the other hand
* Outside the box
* Spread the word
* Turn the tide
* Two wrongs don’t make a right.
* Do not make lists of items in your essays.
* Do not use **contractions** (shouldn’t, don’t, etc.).
* Don’t use **number words** for transitions—First, second, third. Also**, firstly, secondly, and thirdly ARE NOT WORDS!!**
* Spell all numbers that are less than 101.
* Use relative pronoun ***who*** to replace people and ***that*** or ***which*** to replace things.
  + He is the person that’s in charge. BAD
  + He is the person who is in charge. GOOD
  + There is the truck that hit the garbage can.
  + You are allowed to replace people with ***that*** if the people about whom you are writing are mentioned in general, non-specific terms.
* Don’t end a sentence with a preposition. **SEE Section on Style and Usage.**
  + Behavior rests in the society one is raised ***in.*** BAD
  + Behavior rests in the society ***in which*** one is raised. GOOD
* Do not use Indefinites—**It is, There is, There are—**SEE Section on Style and Usage!
  + **It was** apparent—**it is** unclear what the antecedent is.
  + INSTEAD—Focus on the subject: Her dismay was apparent.
  + **It’s cold—**what is cold? ***It*** is unclear.🡪 The morning wind was frigid.
  + **There are** a lot of characters in *Star Wars* 🡪 A lot of characters populate *Star Wars.*