

SOME COMMON ERRORS IN RELIGION WRITING PAPERS

- Sentences without a main verb (like this one); (frag.)
- Failing to capitalize the names of languages (Greek, Hebrew) and religions (Christian, Jewish) and sacred books (Bible, Talmud, Koran). **“Bible” is always capitalized.**
- Redundancies (red.) or using the same word or expression too frequently
- Use of the wrong word (w.w.)
- Too few footnotes (or endnotes) - at least one per paragraph is normal. One must footnote not only exact quotations (four words or more in a row from an author) but also *ideas* you got from that source, even if you put them into your own words. If you do not document your sources, faculty members may spend hours checking to see where you got and how you used your information. Your grade could suffer.
- Lack of proofreading and spell-checking
- Writing unclearly or too technically. If a high school teacher in your church cannot understand what you have written, re-write it. Give it to your spouse or a friend without theological training, and ask them if they understand what you are trying to say. Re-write what they find unclear (uncl.).
- Just copying things out of books, things that you do not understand
- Over-dependence on quotations, esp. long quotations. (Biblical exegesis is not a verse, a quick summary, a quote, and moving on to the next verse.)
- Citing the editor of a series or larger volume, or worse, just the title of the book. You must cite the actual author of the commentary or article you are using not the editor(s) of the larger work. Similarly, bibliographies and note references must list the title of the actual commentary or article, not just the larger volume or series of which they are a part. See Turabian or MLA guidelines for correct usage.
- Citing a specific word without putting that word in quote marks. For example, if I want to talk about the word "putting" in the previous sentence, I must put the word "putting" in quote marks.
- Normally, we use capital "G" Gospel for references to the written Gospels, such as, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. We use lower case "g" for reference to the good news or the Christian message.
- Lack of page numbers
- Misuse of punctuation, especially of the semi-colon. Do not use semi-colons unless you know the rules.
- Lack of headings and paragraphs that are too long. These usually show a lack of clarity in thinking or organization.
- Misused abbreviations (for example, i.e., e.g., ibid, viz., op. cit., etc., et al.)
- Not using correct footnote form or bibliography form. There are standards.
- Using old, popular, devotional, or weak sources. Use only high quality, up-to-date sources. Like a river, a research paper never rises above its sources.
- Misspellings. Here is a list of the most commonly misspelled words:
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/misspelled.html>. The one I see the most is its/it's.