

**UGS 303 - EXTRATERRESTRIAL LIFE**  
**COMMON PROBLEMS ON THE PAPER - SUPPLEMENTAL**

(1) Audience

- Imagine reading this paper in five years; if there is a concept that you don't think you will remember five years from now, explain it.
- To help yourself write a more concise paper, think of the assignment as something you have been asked to write for a congressperson or the president. You know they only have 5-10 minutes to read your paper. Don't waste their time with empty phrases and unimportant details. Would they be convinced by your argument? If not, then find better support. Is there anything they would disagree with? If so, then give evidence countering their disagreement.

(2) Sources

- Avoid using encyclopedias; find a better source. Some encyclopediae list their sources for each article; look into those sources or use them as a basis to find more up-to-date information.
- Avoid using overly pop-sci sources, i.e. anything with an emphasis on entertainment over information. Do not use BuzzFeed-like lists. If you come across these, see if there are references to a better source.

(3) Citations

- Don't over-use direct quotes. See PSM 31a, pg 111.
- Be aware of any claims that you make. Include support to back up those claims, usually via outside sources.

(4) Banned words & phrases

- 'Obvious' or 'it is obvious': if it is obvious, you don't need to say it. If it isn't obvious (it usually isn't) then you need to explain. 90% of uses of this phrase are followed by an explanation, meaning it isn't 'obvious'.
- 'Of course': see 'obvious'
- 'As stated (earlier / before/ previously)': You can usually omit this phrase and often the sentence containing the phrase. The reader will either remember that you stated something previously, or can go back and re-read a passage on their own.

(5) Spacecraft, mission names, and acronyms

- Be consistent with capitalization. Whether you choose to render the name in mixed case (e.g. Messenger) or all caps (e.g. MESSENGER), use the same format throughout. Don't switch between formats.