

Writing Standards for Architecture Students at FIU

Introduction

Architects are required to be able to write clearly in diverse professional settings. These include the creation of notations on drawings, the development of concise project descriptions and the composition of materials for websites, the compilation of extensive site documentation, and the development of large-scale programs and proposals. The *Writing Standards for Architecture Students at FIU* provide a common baseline for acceptable writing in professional and academic settings and offer suggestions toward better, more effective writing.

General Guidelines

Professional architects and university students rely on word processing programs to assist with spelling and grammar. At the most basic level, all assignments completed for courses in architecture (including design studios) must be typed texts that have been composed or finished in a word processing software. Students should be vigilant users of the “spell check” and “grammar check” functions on all software, including MSWord, Illustrator, Photoshop, PowerPoint, AutoCAD, and Rhino, etc. Any error in spelling or grammar is *unacceptable* in writing assignments or on presentation drawings. Students should be particularly mindful of spelling and grammar errors in emails to their professors or other professionals. In addition to following the guidelines presented here in the *Writing Standards*, students should strictly follow the specific instructions for individual assignments laid out by their instructors.

Stylistic and Grammatical Guidelines

Please follow the specific guidelines listed below in every applicable situation.

1. Write in the active voice. Instead of “red was used for the exterior” try “Tschumi chose red for the exterior.” Make it clear that the architect (or client, or contractor) ACTS in a specific way.
2. Identify each person fully (first and last names) the first time you mention him or her, then refer to the same person by LAST NAME ONLY each subsequent time. For example, the very first time you mention the architect, identify her as Zaha Hadid, then every time after that identify her as Hadid. Avoid using the figure’s first name alone (ie. Zaha).
3. Be careful when using plural and possessive nouns. “Buildings” means more than one building; “building’s” means something belonging to the building.
4. Be accurate when using punctuation in quotations. “Note where I put this comma,” and “pay attention to this exclamation mark!” “Do you recognize a misplaced question mark?” “Please put periods where they belong.” A valuable exception is when you include a quoted phrase within your own exclamatory or questioning sentence. For example, can we all believe that Kahn “asked the brick what it wanted to be”?
5. “Then” and “than” are often confused. Examples: a) First the foundations were laid *then* the walls were constructed. b) The number of people in the room was greater *than* that allowed by the Fire Marshal. Remember that a “critic” writes a “critique,” and never the other way around.
6. Never write “I feel that...” or “My opinion is that...” or “I disagree...” because these papers are written as interpretations. Anything you don’t quote or paraphrase (anything you do not attribute to another writer) is assumed to be your opinion.

7. Of course, when you ARE conveying the thoughts of another writer (or architect, or whoever) you must either quote or paraphrase that person. The former requires quotation marks, while the latter does not. In both cases, you MUST identify the person in your text and you MUST include a citation, such as a footnote or endnote. Two examples: Louis Kahn said that bricks wanted to be made into walls.¹² (paraphrase) “I asked the brick what it wanted to be,” Kahn once claimed, “and it said, a wall.”¹² (quotation) In both cases, a footnote follows the sentence. Always include a source for a quote or paraphrase. Failing to do so may result in charges of plagiarism and disciplinary measures. See the FIU handbook for university policies concerning plagiarism.

8. Avoid repetition. Do not to use a word more than once in a paragraph, and be careful not to repeat words too much in the paper as a whole.

9. Use standard footnote/endnote formatting, as defined by the *Chicago Manual of Style* or the MLS.

Chicago formatting for footnotes/endnotes looks like this:

Dennis Doordan, *Building Modern Italy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988), 119. [book with page number]

Richard Pommer and Christian F. Otto, *Weissenhof 1927 and the Modern Movement in Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991). [book without page number]

Leonardo Benevolo, “The Beginning of Modern Research: 1930-40,” in Emilio Ambasz, ed., *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* (New York: MoMA, 1972), 308. [chapter in an edited book]

Sarah Deyong, “Planetary Habitat: the Origins of a Phantom Movement,” *The Journal of Architecture* (Summer 2001): 113-128. [journal article]

Nicolai Ouroussoff, “A Delicate Glass Roof With Links to the Past,” *New York Times*, 19 November 2007. [newspaper article]

In the bibliography, these appear like this:

Doordan, Dennis. *Building Modern Italy: Italian Architecture 1914-1936*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988.

Ambasz, Emilio, ed. *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972.

Deyong, Sarah. “Planetary Habitat: the Origins of a Phantom Movement.” *The Journal of Architecture* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 113-128.

Ouroussoff, Nicolai. “A Delicate Glass Roof With Links to the Past.” *New York Times*, 19 November 2007.