Paper Priorities Checklist

After you have completed a draft of your paper, think about each of the following questions, one at a time. If you find yourself unsure of the answers, ask a friend, your professor, or someone at the Writing Center for help. If you answer “no” to any of the following questions, you’ve probably identified a place where the paper needs a bit more work.

- Does my paper respond appropriately to the assignment? Does it answer the question? Is it in the proper form?
- Do I have a thesis statement? Does it express the specific focus or dominant idea? Is it too narrow? Too broad? Misleading?
- Is my paper well organized? Does it have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion? Do my paragraphs flow logically and smoothly? Do I include transitions?
- Is my argument well-developed? Do I give sufficient support in examples, quotations, and details? Do I use too many quotations? Do I quote enough? Do I leave any questions unanswered?
- Does all the information I have included actually relate to my thesis? Is it all necessary? Does it add to my argument or detract from it?
- Is my tone appropriate to my assignment, subject matter, and course? Do I sound too stuffy? Too informal? At any point am I condescending or offensive?
- Am I writing to the proper audience? Who am I supposed to be writing for? My professor? A classmate? A random person off the street? Is my paper geared for this audience?
- Do I use proper citations? Have I made it clear which ideas are mine and which came from my source? Have I followed the citation format my professor suggested? If there is no specification, did I use proper MLA citation?
- Have I addressed sentence-level concerns? Are my word choices appropriate? How does my paper sound?
- Have I spell-checked my paper? Proofread it for typos and grammar problems?
- Does my paper end with a strong conclusion? Does it relate back to my thesis? Do I have any loose ends? Does it feel finished?

NOTE: Grammar, punctuation, and other sentence-level concerns are very important. Before you turn in your paper, be sure that you don’t have any mechanical errors. However, DO NOT start worrying about sentence-level problems until you’re sure you’ve covered all the “global” concerns described above!