Things I Saw That Was Wrong With You’re Paper’s

1. “Things” is not a good word to use in life. It is not descriptive and does not provide the reader with enough information. In the title of this handout, I should use “Common writing mistakes” instead of “things.” Then you would know exactly what the handout is about.
2. Noun-verb agreement. Make sure the number of the subject agrees with the number of your verb. If I am talking about “things” in the title of this handout, I have a plural noun. I should be using “were”, not “was”.
3. Make sure your tense stays consistent and is accurate. It is difficult to talk about what Julius Caesar is doing in Egypt right now … No offense to one of the greatest leaders ever, but he does not currently have an active presence in Egyptian or Roman politics. Your history papers are generally going to be past tense.
4. This does NOT mean you have to use the passive voice. Be sure that your sentences remain active. The subject should be performing an action, an action should not be performed upon the subject. Passive voice makes for boring, sometimes confusing writing
5. Have someone look at your paper for EASILY fixable mistakes. In addition to having someone look at your paper to make sure it flows and to make sure that the ideas support your thesis, you should also have someone look at your paper to help you find problems in grammar and punctuation. This includes proper use of apostrophes (re: you’re and paper’s in title), the correct form of words (you’re/your, their/there/they’re, its it’s, etc.). Fixing these mistakes will make your papers much easier to read.
6. When using quotations, you should limit yourself to quoting words for which it is important WHO said them. If you are writing a paper on the dropping of the atomic bombs, it makes sense to quote someone like Truman, who made the decision to do so. It does not make sense to quote a book by an author whose name you have never heard. Instead, paraphrase these words.
7. When you do use a quotation, explain it. Tell the reader how the quotation supports your thesis, what the speaker/author meant when he said the words.
8. Draw your ideas together. Providing an excellent thesis statement does you no good if you do not refer to it later in the paper. When providing supporting detail in your body paragraphs, offer to your reader an explanation of how it supports your thesis. Do the thinking for your reader.
9. Write using a formal voice. As much as readers want to be able to hear each author’s voice, they also want to read well-written works. While it is important not to lose your voice, it is also important not to write papers as though you are having a conversation with your friend on the way to Chipotle (because I know you are all discussing history on the way to lunch). Do not say “I’m just saying,” “Like, I totally think,” and definitely not “LOLs,” “totes,” or any other abbreves that you would use in text/twitter conversations.