

San José State University
Lucas Graduate School of Business
Master of Science in Transportation Management
MTM226A Emergency Management Issues
for Transportation Professionals
Spring-A 2026

Course and Instructor Contact Information

Instructor:	Frannie Edwards
Email:	frances.edwards@sjsu.edu for non-class-work only
Office Hours:	Wednesdays, 4:15-5:15 pm, by phone only
Class Day/Time:	Wednesday, 5:30 – 9:30 pm, on January 7 through March 11
Classroom:	Virtual on Zoom

Course Format

Students must have regular access to email and the internet in order to communicate with the instructor, submit assignments, and engage in other class activities. Students attend class sessions by joining online using Zoom, SJSU's online meeting application.

Online Access via Zoom:

You can join class using SJSU Zoom from any location, as long as you:

- Are in a quiet room without distractions (e.g., no family members or colleagues walking through or asking questions)
- Have stable internet access
- Use a video camera and good quality microphone so that you are seen as well as heard
- Follow good "meeting etiquette" principles (one such list: <https://blog.gotomeeting.com/7-rulesvirtual-meeting-etiquette-every-professional-know/>)

To access class sessions by Zoom, click on the link above (that was also provided by email) from your computer or tablet at least ten minutes before 5:30 pm, to make sure you are ready when class begins. (The very first time you join from a computer or device, allow extra time for set-up.)

The university has many useful tutorials on how to use Zoom here:

<https://www.sjsu.edu/cfeti/teaching-resources/software/video-creative/zoom/faq.php>

Course Description

Examines the role of emergency management within transportation agencies and the role of transportation and related resources in community-wide responses to emergencies and disasters. Includes instruction in the California Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS).

MSTM Program Goals:

(Note: Not all program learning goals are covered in every course)

Goal One: Management of Transportation Organizations

Develop a system-level and global perspective on the management of transportation organizations.

Goal Two: Transportation Policy

Develop an awareness of the transportation policy environment, including fiscal mechanisms, legislative structures, and intergovernmental coordination.

Goal Three: Leadership

Develop potential for leadership in transportation organizations.

Goal Four: Communication Skills

Develop written and oral communication skills and techniques.

Goal Five: Analytical Skills

Develop ability to analyze management issues and situations using appropriate conceptual approaches.

Goal Six: Information Technology

Develop basic understanding of commonly used information technology applications used by the transportation industry.

Course Learning Outcomes

GOAL: To educate transportation professionals about emergency management as it applies to managing a ground transportation organization.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Ensure that the student can assess the effectiveness of an organization's emergency management plan, which is assessed in Report #2.
2. Ensure that the student knows where to obtain guidance on emergency management, which is assessed in the Sources Consulted list of the Seminar Presentation.
3. Ensure that the student can assess the role of the transportation organization in community emergency management, which is assessed in the Seminar Presentation.

Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

- LO1 Identify and evaluate the major principles of emergency management
- LO2 Use the terminology of emergency management correctly
- LO3 Manage intergovernmental relationships in emergency management
- LO 4 Develop and evaluate an emergency management program for a transportation organization.

Required Texts/Readings

Textbook

Edwards, F. L. and Goodrich, D.C. (2024). *Introduction to Transportation Security*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2nd edition. ISBN-9780367860257.

Other Assigned Readings

DOT/FTA, Critical Incident Management Guidelines, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center. **July, 1998.** – class resource- handout

Edwards and Goodrich. (2009) *The Role of Transportation in Campus Emergency Planning*. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/Role-Transportation-Campus-Emergency-Planning>

Edwards and Goodrich, (2010) *Handbook of Emergency Management for State-level Transportation Agencies*. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute.

<https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/Handbook-Emergency-Management-State-Level-Transportation-Agencies>

Edwards and Goodrich, (2014) *Exercise Handbook: What Transit Security Leaders Need to Know to Improve Emergency Preparedness*. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute.
<https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/Exercise-Handbook-What-Transportation-Security-and-Emergency-Preparedness-Leaders-Need-Know-Improve-Emergency-Preparedness>

National Response Framework, 4th edition, (2019) Department of Homeland Security – class resource, download or print
<https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/response>

Full Text for individual ESFs at <https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/response# esf>

Jenkins, B.M. (2001) *Protecting Public Surface Transportation Against Terrorism and Serious Crime: Continuing Research on Best Security Practices*. Report 01-07. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute.
<https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/01-07.pdf>

Jenkins, B.M. and Edwards-Winslow, F.L. (2003). *Saving City Lifelines: Lessons Learned in the 9-11 Terrorist Attacks*. Report 02-06. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute. <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/saving-city-lifelines-lessons-learned-9-11-terrorist-attacks>

State of California, Emergency Operations Plan – City Model – crosswalk – handout.

Edwards, F.L., Goodrich, D.C., et al. (2015). *Great East Japan Earthquake*, Report 12-37. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute. <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/Great-East-Japan-Earthquake-JR-East-Mitigation-Successes-and-Lessons-California-High-Speed-Rail-0>

Edwards, F.L., Liu, K., Hughes, A., Gao, Z., Goodrich, D.C., Barner, A. and Herrera, R. (2022). *Best Practices in Disaster Public Communications: Evacuation Alerting and Social Media*. MTI Project 2254. <https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/2254-Best-Practices-Disaster-Public-Communications>

OTHER TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS / EQUIPMENT / MATERIAL

All work is to be turned in as a Word document, attached to an e-mail to the class e-mail address: mtm226a@yahoo.com. DO NOT SUBMIT .pdf!

Library Liaison

The Library Liaison for the Lucas Graduate School of Business and MTI is Christa Bailey (christa.bailey@sjsu.edu).

Course Requirements and Assignments

PLAGIARISM TUTORIAL: SJSU Library, due January 14, 2026, 5% of grade.

Plagiarism tutorial (5 points). Students should take the three plagiarism tutorials at the library's website. Access them from this URL <https://library.sjsu.edu/az/tutorials>, select the three graduate level plagiarism tutorials and take the final quiz for a grade. Obtain a grade of 80% or above on the tutorial. Have the grade report delivered **to your email**. Forward the grade report to the professor electronically to the class e-mail.

PAPER 1: Volpe Center Resource Review, due January 21, 2026, 20% of grade.

Go to the Volpe Center's library/resource center website:

https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/gsearch?pid=dot%3A231&parentId=dot%3A231&sm_key_words=Security&start=0 Enter “emergency management” or “transportation security” in the search box. Select one document of at least 5 pages from among the documents for review that is directly related to this course, such as emergency management or security guides and studies. Analyze how and when you would use it in emergency management. Select something that you would benefit from in your agency. DO NOT select safety or cyber security items, as those are related to other MTM courses.

Write a 2 page (double spaced, Times New Roman 12 pt.) report using the public/council memo format (attached below) describing the document you selected.

Background: why this document was created/purpose.

Analysis: how well you think the document achieved its purpose, how you would use it in your agency. If you think the document is deficient, describe what is needed to improve it. Do not report on something that you decided is not useful at all.

Conclusion: statement of overall usefulness/application.

E-mail the 2 page report to the class e-mail address – MTM226a@yahoo.com - by 4:30 pm on the day it is due.

Prepare and deliver a 5 minute *oral* presentation on your document. PPT is not required.
Total value = 20%.

Criteria	Points
a) The professionalism with which the report is presented: clarity, appearance, grammar, spelling, appropriate word choice, “voice”, appropriate citations in APA format.	4
b) The comprehensiveness and care with which the document being analyzed is described.	4

c) The demonstration of understanding of relevant concepts that can be used to explain the topic and its context, impact and policy or program outcomes.	4
d) The quality of critical thinking demonstrated in the Analysis section.	4
e) Value of the presentation to audience – clarity of purpose, possible application	4
TOTAL	20

PAPER 2: Organization Emergency Plan review, due February 4, 2026, 20% of grade.

Get a copy of your organization's emergency operations plan, your child's school emergency plan or a community emergency plan. Review its table of contents, and read the plan. Write a **2 page (double spaced) report** using the public/council memo format (attached to this syllabus below) describing the emergency plan for the organization you selected.

Background: who was the plan written for – what kind and size of organization. What threats does it address, what organizational elements does it describe (management, operations, logistics, planning, finance)

Analysis: is it appropriate for its target audience? Is it clear? Is it complete? Is there anything that should be added or removed?

Conclusion: statement of overall usefulness and application

Prepare a 5 minute oral presentation of the information to deliver during class. PPT is not required. E-mail the report to the class e-mail by 4:30 pm on the due date. (20%)

Criteria for evaluating the report	Points
a) The professionalism with which the report is presented: clarity, format, grammar, spelling, appropriate word choice, "voice", appropriate citations in APA format.	4
b) The comprehensiveness and care with which the emergency plan being analyzed is described in the Background.	4
c) The demonstration of understanding of relevant concepts that can be used to evaluate the plan's appropriateness for the organization, usefulness, completeness.	4
d) The quality of critical thinking demonstrated in the Analysis section.	4
e) Value of the presentation to audience – description of the plan, possible uses	4
TOTAL	20

PAPER 3: Seminar Presentation, **due date depending on topic**, see class schedule

Submission: paper and PPT by e-mail to the professor (MTM226a@yahoo.com) by 4:30 pm on the day before the project is due.

Each member of the class will present a 30-minute paper for class discussion. The paper topic must be selected from the attached list. Students will choose the topics on the first night of class...first come/first served or draw lots if there are duplicate requests.

Write a **10 page (Times New Roman, 12 pt., double spaced) report** (essay portion) using standard academic research paper format, including **APA in-text citation** of all sources consulted, and a complete Sources Consulted list at the end (an additional 1-2 pages). Each paper will use **at least seven sources** taken from documents such as **newspapers, news magazines (Economist, Time, New Yorker, Atlantic Monthly or similar), government reports, peer reviewed journals, or scholarly books. NO WIKIPEDIA OR SIMILAR ENCYCLOPEDIA SOURCES!!!!** Each paper will cover the selected topic in the context of the class, e.g. Sendai Earthquake with transportation as a “victim.” It will integrate information from class readings and discussions with the research material in the analysis section, such as application of ICS/SEMS/NIMS, threat analysis, the four phases of emergency management and similar topics.

The paper will have the following topic headings:

Description of event (not to exceed 4 pages)

include accident/event description: who, what, when, where, why, how environmental impact – fire, dust, explosion, haz mat deposition, extent of damage, loss of life, loss of infrastructure

Analysis of the context/how this event reflects the context (transportation as the site, or cause, or victim, or resource) (2-3 pages)

include local resources used to respond to the event- police, fire, transportation, medical, other outside response – mutual aid, NGOs, federal agencies

Transportation impacts (2 pages)

include information on which systems, for how long

Lessons learned (1-2 pages)

include any **outcomes**, such as changes in laws or regulations, design changes

Conclusion (one paragraph). Draw together the themes – no new information.

On the date listed on the class schedule you will make a presentation of your paper supported by a PPT, and lead student discussion of your topic for 30 minutes. **ALL STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE TOPIC.** Your presentation is to be supported by **10 or more** PPT slides, which may include relevant photos, tables, or charts.

The paper will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Criteria	Point Value
a) The professionalism with which the report is presented: clarity, appearance, grammar, spelling, appropriate word choice, “voice”.	4
b) The comprehensiveness and care with which the event is described.	6
c) The demonstration of understanding of relevant concepts that can be used to explain the event and its context, impact and policy outcomes.	6
d) The quality of <i>analysis linking class discussion and readings to the analysis of the event</i> - you MUST CITE class materials (textbook, handouts, ICS/SEMS/NIMS, MTI documents)	8
e) The quality of critical thinking demonstrated in the Analysis section.	8
f) The <i>appropriateness of the references selected</i> and the analytical bridge to the paper topic; complete and proper citations, both in-text and Sources Consulted.	8
TOTAL	40

Grading Information

Plagiarism tutorial: E-mail the official quiz grade to the professor (5 points).

Paper 1: A 2 page review written in public report format (attached to this syllabus) describing one of the documents from the handout of the Volpe website, and oral presentation of the information (**5** minutes). (20%)

Paper 2: A 2 page review written in public report format (attached to this syllabus) describing the selected emergency plan, and oral presentation of the information (**5** minutes). (20%)

Project: A 10 page paper on a topic selected from the list below, and a **30 minute presentation** with PPT, including discussion in class of the paper. (40%)

Class participation (15%). This includes interacting with the professor and other students during lectures and student presentations. Participation in the discussion of student projects accounts for 10% of your overall grade, and question and answer during lectures accounts for 5%.

LATE WORK WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED except in cases of serious personal or dependent family illness. Incompletes are discouraged.

Grade distribution.

Task	% of Course Grade
Project 1	20%
Project 2	20%
3 Plagiarism Tutorials	5%
Final Project	40%
Participation in class discussions	15%
Total	100%

Determination of Grades

Grade	Percentage
A plus	98 and above
A	92 to 97
A minus	90 to 91
B plus	88 to 89
B	82 to 87
B minus	80 to 81
C	75 to 79
D	70 to 74
F	69 and below

Classroom Protocol for the Lucas College and Graduate School of Business

Students are expected to be in class on time and ready to learn. Please keep your video open so we can see each other's faces as we learn together. The class will be held by Zoom, and all sessions will be recorded.

University Policies

Per [University Policy S16-9](http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf) (<http://www.sjsu.edu/senate/docs/S16-9.pdf>), relevant university policy concerning all courses, such as student responsibilities, academic integrity, accommodations, dropping and adding, consent for recording of class, etc. and available student services (e.g. learning assistance, counseling, and other resources) are listed on the **Syllabus Information web page** (<https://www.sjsu.edu/curriculum/courses/syllabus-info.php>)

Lucas College and Graduate School of Business Mission

We are the institution of opportunity in Silicon Valley, educating future leaders through experiential learning and character development in a global business community and by conducting research that contributes to business theory, practice and education.

MTM 226A/ Emergency Management for Transportation Professionals, Spring 2026A, Course Schedule

The schedule is subject to change with fair notice to students via the class e-mail.

Week	Date	Topics, Readings, Assignments, Deadlines
1	1/7	<p>Self-introductions, personal goals, introduction to the course/syllabus review. Good writing, writing and citing Reading: review syllabus in advance</p> <p>Part 2: TRANSPORTATION SECURITY THEORY AND PRACTICE- Reading: Edwards and Goodrich, Chapt. 1</p>
2	1/14	<p><u>PLAGIARISM TUTORIAL- SCORES DUE</u> Reading: Edwards & Goodrich, Chapt. 3 & 4 Part 1: Research resources at SJSU</p> <p>Part 2: ICS/SEMS/NIMS Combined Course Student Guides will be e-mailed Take-home test if you want a certificate of completion (optional).</p>
3	1/21	<p><u>Part 1:</u> <u>STUDENT REPORTS ON VOLPE CENTER READING (PAPER 1)</u></p> <p>Part 2: RISK MANAGEMENT – Readings Provided by e-mail. HISTORY OF EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT Reading: Edwards and Goodrich, Chapt 2</p>

4	1/28	<p>EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING</p> <p>EMERGENCY OPERATIONS PLANNING</p> <p>Readings:</p> <p>DOT/FTA, Critical Incident Management Guidelines, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center. July, 1998. – handout.</p> <p>Read Sections 3,4 and 5</p> <p>IMPLEMENTATION OF EMERGENCY PLANS</p> <p>Reading: Edwards and Goodrich, <i>Handbook of Emergency Management for State-level Transportation Agencies</i>, https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/Handbook-Emergency-Management-State-Level-Transportation-Agencies</p> <p>Read research report and Annex K, skim other annexes</p> <p>EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PARTNERS</p> <p>ESF 1,3, 7 & 14.</p> <p>https://www.fema.gov/emergency-managers/national-preparedness/frameworks/response#esf</p> <p>Continuity of Operations/Continuity of Government for State Level Transportation Organizations, https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/2976-COOP-COG-DHS.pdf</p> <p>Scroll down, select the title under Publications (7.9 mg), download.</p> <p>Read pp. 9 – 64, and review Appendix B, Tab 3, Tab 4, Tab 6 and Tab 7</p>
5	2/4	<p><u>STUDENT REPORTS ON EMERGENCY PLANS (PAPER 2)</u></p> <p>EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER: ROLES AND GOALS</p> <p>Readings: <i>The Role Of Transportation In Campus Emergency Planning</i>, https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/Role-Transportation-Campus-Emergency-Planning</p> <p>Scroll to the bottom and select the title under “Publications”.</p> <p>Read the Introduction, Literature Review, Findings and Analysis as an example of how an EOC is organized, and transportation’s roles, then review the five annex section checklists for examples of what EOC checklists should look like.</p> <p>Recovery:</p> <p>National Recovery Framework, 3rd edition, 2024</p> <p>https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_national-disaster-recovery-framework-third-edition_2024.pdf</p> <p>Public Assistance Program – handout.</p>

6	2/11	<p>TRANSPORTATION AS THE SITE Readings Edwards and Goodrich, Chapt. 7, 8 Lecture: Long Island Railroad murders, 1993 – Professor</p> <p>TRANSPORTATION AS THE CAUSE Reading: ESF 10- https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/2020-07/fema_ESF_10_Oil-Hazardous_Materials.pdf</p> <p>Student Presentations Dunsmuir Train Derailment, 1991 Baltimore Tunnel Fire, 2001- Professor East Palestine Train Derailment, 2023</p>
7	2/18	<p>TRANSPORTATION AS THE CAUSE AND VICTIM</p> <p>Readings: Jenkins and Edwards-Winslow, <i>Saving City Lifelines</i>, Report 02-06 https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/Saving-City-Lifelines-Lessons-Learned-9-11-Terrorist-Attacks Scroll to the middle and select the title under Publications.</p> <p>Jenkins, B.M. (2001) <i>Protecting Public Surface Transportation Against Terrorism and Serious Crime: Continuing Research on Best Security Practices</i>. Report 01-07. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute. https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/01-07.pdf Scroll down and click on the title under Publications.</p> <p>World Trade Center, 1993 and 2001- Professor</p> <p>Student Presentations Topic: 9/11 Pentagon Attack, 2001 TRANSPORTATION AS THE VICTIM Topic: Madrid Train Bombing, 2004</p>
8	2/25	<p>STUDENT PRESENTATIONS</p> <p>TRANSPORTATION AS THE VICTIM</p> <p>Readings: Edwards and Goodrich, Chapt. 9 & 10 Edwards, F.L., Goodrich, D.C., Helweg, M., Strauss, J., Eskijian, M.L., Jaradat, O., (2015). <i>Great East Japan Earthquake, JR East Mitigation Successes and Lessons for California High Speed Rail</i>. Report 12-37. San Jose, CA: Mineta Transportation Institute. https://transweb.sjsu.edu/sites/default/files/1225-great-east-japan-earthquake-lessons-for-California-HSR.pdf</p> <p>Student Presentations Loma Prieta Earthquake, 1989 Northridge Earthquake, 1994 Great East Japan Earthquake, 2011</p>

9	3/4	<p>TRANSPORTATION AS A VICTIM AND RESOURCE</p> <p>Reading: Edwards and Goodrich, Chapt. 5 & 6</p> <p><i>Federal Evacuation Support Annex to the Response and Recovery Federal Interagency Operational Plans</i></p> <p>https://www.fema.gov/sites/default/files/documents/fema_rd_federal-evacuation-support-annex_042025.pdf</p> <p>Lecture: Hurricane Katrina Evacuations, 2005 –Professor</p> <p>Student Presentations</p> <p>Hurricane Sandy Evacuations, 2012 – New Jersey and New York City</p> <p>Hurricane Helene Transportation Impacts, 2024 North Carolina</p>
10	3/11	<p>TRANSPORTATION AS A VICTIM AND RESOURCE</p> <p>Reading: Edwards & Goodrich, Chapt. 11 & 12</p> <p>Edwards, Liu, Hughes, Gao, Goodrich, Barber and Herrera. (2022).</p> <p><i>Best Practices in Disaster Public Communications: Evacuation Alerting and Social Media. MTI Project 2254b</i></p> <p>https://transweb.sjsu.edu/research/2254-Best-Practices-Disaster-Public-Communications</p> <p>Read Section V: Findings.</p> <p>Student Presentations</p> <p>Camp Fire Evacuation, Paradise, 2018</p> <p>CZU and SCU Fires Evacuations, Bay Area, 2020</p> <p>Maui evacuations, 2023</p> <p><u>COURSE WRAP-UP</u></p> <p>Lecture: If The Solution To Pollution Is Dilution...Professor</p> <p>Simental, Arthur, Tina Bynum and John Holst. "Implementing Space Technology and Innovations into Homeland Security and Emergency Management Operations." Homeland Security Affairs: Pracademic Affairs 1, Article 7. (May 2021). www.hsaj.org/articles/17245.</p> <p>https://www.hsaj.org/articles/17245 (Handout).</p>

Date	Context	Topics	
2025	Transportation as the...	Project Title	Presenter
Feb 11	Site	Long Island Railroad Murders	Professor
	Cause	Dunsmuir Train Derailment	
		Baltimore Tunnel Fire	
		East Palestine Train Derailment	
Feb 18	Cause and Victim	9/11 World Trade Center Attack	Professor
		9/11 Pentagon Attack	
	Victim	Madrid Train Bombing	
Feb 25	Victim	Loma Prieta Earthquake	
		Northridge Earthquake	
		Great East Japan (Sendai) Earthquake	
March 5	Victim and resource	Hurricane Katrina Evacuation	Professor
		Hurricane Sandy Evacuation	
		Hurricane Helene Transportation Impacts	
March 12	Victim and resource	Camp Fire Evacuation, 2018	
		CZU & SCU Fires 2020 Evacuations	
		Maui Fire, 2023	
	Course Wrap-Up	If the solution to pollution is dilution...can space help?	Professor

Revised 11/25/25

TO: Dr. Frances L. Edwards
MTM226A

FROM: [Student Name]

DATE: January 21, 2026

SUBJECT: [Name of Volpe Document]

Background

Why this document was created/purpose.

Analysis

How well you think the document achieved its purpose, how you would use it in your agency? If you think the document is deficient, describe what is needed to improve it. [Note: do not review a document that you believe is outdated or not useful.]

Conclusion

Statement of overall usefulness/application.

TO: Dr. Frances L. Edwards
MTM226A

FROM: [Student Name]

DATE: February 4, 2026

SUBJECT: [Name of Agency] Plan

Background

When was the plan written? What was the impetus for the plan?

Analysis

Was the plan appropriate for the size and complexity of the organization? Comprehensive? Are there parts missing? Is the plan well written?

Conclusion

Is the plan adequate for the organization? What changes, if any, are needed?

Signature
Typed Name

Spelling and Grammar Guidance

Common Graduate Student Mistakes!!

1. Never use a long word when a short word will do. (George Orwell)
2. Never use “etc.” in a professional paper. It is meaningless. If you want to indicate that your list is only part of a larger potential list, say, “grapes, peaches and pears, *for example*,” or “*among other things*,” or a similar phrase.
3. Use your grammar checker, THEN proof read to be sure you selected the right usage in context.
 - a. Be careful of the “passive voice rule.” It is often inappropriate, and if it should be changed to active voice, the suggested wording almost never makes sense.
 - b. Never use “change all” for a grammar rule, as it will lead to odd usages.
Just read each suggestion and decide whether to change based on each sentence.
4. Use your spell checker, THEN proof read to be sure you selected the right word in context.
5. Check to be sure you are using the right homonym: Check especially for these four frequently misused sets:
 - a. Their, there, they’re
 - b. Right, write, rite, wright
 - c. Sight, site, cite
 - d. Its, it’s
6. Do not use contractions in formal writing unless it is a direct quote: Don’t, Can’t, It’s, Won’t, and all the others!
7. Check on capitalization. A sentence begins with a capital letter, as does a proper name of someone or someplace or an organization. Federal, state, city and local are only capitalized if they start a sentence or are part of a title or proper name. The federal government is not a proper name but the United States Government is, for example.
8. Capitalize at the start of most quotes, even when they are inside a sentence. Here is an example. I went to class and Professor Edwards said, “Do not ever use a contraction when writing for this class.” Titles are only capitalized when they come before a name (Professor Edwards, the professor).
9. If you want to use an abbreviation or acronym (e.g., FEMA), be sure to spell it out the first time you use it. For example, “When James Lee Witt was head of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), he came to San Jose. He wanted to show FEMA’s support for Mayor Susan Hammer.”
10. Be careful that you use “then” and “than” properly. “Then” is related to time sequences. For example, “I went to school, **then** I took a nap.” A mnemonic that will help you to remember the right order is that “Then” is related to “Time” and both have an “e”. “Than” is a comparison, such as, “I like cherries more **than** bananas.” Both have “a”.
11. Be careful in using the apostrophe for possessive and plural. For a plural word in English you just add the letter “s” or sometimes “es” or “ies.” **There is no punctuation for plural.** In general, to form a possessive you use “’s”. For example, “my **dog’s** bone.” The only exception is the word “its” which means “belonging to it” but does not take the punctuation. **It’s** means “**it is**,” a contraction, and you do not use contractions in formal writing.

12. In general you do not use commas after prepositional phrases. “In support of his position John gave two examples.” However, if you have several prepositional phrases before the main sentence you may set them off with commas to make it clear what relates to what. “In supporting his team for the finals, John wore a Shark’s shirt to school.”

13. Hyphens are used to join words that modify another word. For example, political-science professor, little-used car, pickled-herring merchant. Without the hyphens it might be hard to tell if the science professor was running for president, the used car was small, or the fish seller was drunk!

14. Abbreviations are only used for titles (Mr., Ms., Dr.) or standard suffixes (Jr., Sr., Ph.D.). States are abbreviated only when using a proper address, not in prose.

15. Numbers: spell out the word for numbers ten and under, and all numbers that begin a sentence (One hundred fifty boys went to school.) Use numerals for numbers of 11 and over. Always use the numerals for percentages, money, road routes or scientific calculations.

16. Italics within a sentence should be used for titles of works (books, movies, plays, poems, television programs), but not for Bible or Constitution. Italics are also used for foreign words, such as *vis a vis*. Avoid foreign words unless you are very sure you are using them correctly.

17. None and neither are always singular words. They were originally contractions that became their own words – none = no one, not one, and neither = not either one. So, singular verb forms are used with none and neither.

18. The verb agrees with the subject number. “There is one child here.” “There are no children here.” The verb does not agree with the complement. “**None** of the boys **is** going to the game.”

19. Gerunds are always singular. “**Encouraging** good writing **is** important.”

20. Pronouns generally must match the noun and verb. “The doctors finished their rounds.” However, when you do not know the gender, use they. “The doctor finished their rounds. “They” may also be used for non-binary persons at their request

21. Write in THIRD PERSON ONLY in formal papers.

22. Use past tense when describing the contents of the book, since it was written in the past.