Error #1: Writing a descriptive thesis that has no argument.
The Fix: Use an arguable thesis. If someone couldn’t disagree with you, keep working on it!

Error #2: Writing in the first person.
The Fix: Avoid the first person (“I”, “me”, “my”). First person is appropriate for personal essays, writing reflection, autobiography, short stories, narration, etc. but not for formal papers.

Error #3: Using second person in formal writing.
The Fix: Avoid the second person (“you”, “your”, and “you’re”).

Error #4: Putting in words you don’t need.
The Fix: Avoid wordiness, cut out extra words like “well”, “anyway”, “very”, and “you know.”

Error #5: Writing in the past tense.
The Fix: Write in the present tense (“Odysseus loves Penelope.” Not “Odysseus loved Penelope.”)

Error #6: Trying to prove your point with statements of opinion and no text.
The Fix: Do not speculate. PROVE your statements with evidence from the text. If I told you that the sky was fluorescent green last night at 3:35 am you might not believe me. However, if I showed you pictures of it and cited a science journal, I’d surely have a better chance of convincing you.

Error #7: Citing long quotations incorrectly.
The Fix: When a quotation is longer than three lines: single space it, indent it on both sides by one inch, and don’t use quotation marks.

Error #8: Failing to include author and page number with quotations.
The Fix: Cite author and page number in parenthesis following a quote. “Be sure to give credit where credit is due” (author, page number).

Error #9: Citing dialogue incorrectly.
The Fix: Cite dialogue like this. “‘Wake up reader, ’ he said. ‘I’m talking!’” (Author, page #). See the little apostrophes inside the quotation marks?

Error #10: Using abbreviations, slang, or contraction.
The Fix: Avoid abbreviations, slang, or contractions.