Learning from the first writing experience

Along with my remnders that writing has to be in past tense and that you can’t use “I’, “you”, “your” etc, here are 4 other small l writing corrections that will improve your writing for next time.

**1. Parentheses: Don’t use them to put in “extra” information.**

A lot of you wrote sentences like this: “ Nonetheless, Columbus did a poor job sailing from Spain to the Americas. (he believed it to be the Indies.)”

Why: Either the information is important enough to be mentioned in the regular way without parentheses or it isn’t worth mentioning at all.

**2. Banning awkward phrases:  “was when”, “was because”**

A lot of you wrote things like this: “Columbus deserves a B+ for his leadership skills. One example of Columbus’ leadership was when he created fake logbooks so the crew didn’t get overly concerned about the trip...”

This is called passive voice, and one of our jobs is to get you to write more efficiently; a sentence like this is way longer and more awkward than it could be. The simple change to make is to cut everything before “was when” and replace with a transition word such as “First”, “In addition” or something like that. The better sentence is:

“First, he created fake logbooks so the crew didn’t get overly concerned about the trip...”

**3. Dates: Use them and format them correctly.**

Some people wrote “When Columbus arrived, he met many native Americans who he claimed were friendly/” or “On Columbus’ second voyage, he arrived with 17 ships, many soldiers and even attack dogs.”

You should include dates. A better sentence would look like this: “When Columbus arrived on October 12, 1492, he met many native Americans who he claimed were friendly.

Notice that there is a comma between **date and month**, **month and year**, and usually after date and the rest of the sentence if the sentence continues on.

**4. Concluding sentences of a paragraph that just summarize: You don’t really need them, especially whren you are writing multi-paragraph “essays”**

“That is why Columbus deserves a B- for achieving the goals of his expedition.” **or**

“In conclusion, Columbus deserves a D+ in the Interactions with Native Americans category because of his cruel treatment of the natives.” (better written, but still not needed

If your last sentence is just summarizing and isn’t giving me any **new** information about why your grade was as good/bad as you listed, you don’t need it. In both these sentences, there is no new evidence, so it is not needed.. Save space for more arguments or reasons.