Halmos wrote to those who want to write a PhD thesis, and more generally a
book. Read it! But for your first piece of writing, you might want more precise
guidelines and documents.

1. **English!**

Try to write as correctly as possible in English. Keep it simple if you do not know
how to say something. Use an English dictionary. Ask an English-speaking person
to read what you wrote—at least the introduction—if you can. Some links on the
topic:

- Oxford dictionary online
- Advice from the London Mathematical Society
- Rules for comma usage

2. **Nothing is easy.**

Following Halmos, there is nothing wrong with the word “obvious”. It is extremely
risky though, especially when you are a debutant writer! When you start a sentence
by “It is easy/obvious/straightforward to see that” or something equivalent, there
are indeed three possibilities:

- The remainder of the sentence is false.
- The remainder of the sentence is correct and enjoys a very short justification
  that you should then write instead of saying “it is easy”.
- The remainder of the sentence is correct with a complex proof.

In any case “it is easy” should be avoided.

3. **Readership solution is not unique.**

Knowing who you write for is essential. Thinking about someone in particular
usually does the trick, or write the way you would have liked to read it, had it been
found by someone else than yourself. However, keep in mind that:

Whoever you send your article to (journal, conference) will parse through it to
see what it is about, and who could refer it.

*At least one* person will try to read thoroughly your article, the referee!

This explains the next points.

4. **Make the editor’s life easier.**

Make the abstract short and clear. Outline clearly your results. Make a short
“Acknowledgments” paragraph (anyway, it is always diplomatically advised to do
so) thanking those who listened to you talking, and/or discussed with you about
your article. Who knows? It might give the editor some idea concerning possible referees.

5. **ANGRY REFEREE, REJECTED ARTICLE.**

Do your bibliographical job. Recalling what has been done will help you show what novelty you bring on the table. Ask your elders if any sacred reference is missing, you do not want to anger anyone. Choose wisely your notations. Remember that referees are generally unpaid volunteers.

6. **HIDING YOUR INPUT IS NOT BEING MODEST.**

You are writing something new! Either a new result, or a new proof of a known result, or a new approach to a whole area, on so on and so forth. You will be judged on the novelty of your input. Honesty is your friend, and hiding your results out of modesty will quasi-automatically be mistaken for cowardice or sheer stupidity.

7. **THE GENERIC READER IS LAZY.**

Write a nice introduction that makes a short summary of your article, and highlights clearly your input. Choose a short and easy title, remember that a title is *not* an abstract, and that an abstract is *not* an introduction.

8. **NO FUTURE.**

Procrastination is bad. You can say “We will come back to this aspect in section 5”, but do not say “We will denote...”. One decides something and it becomes effective immediately, not at some point in the future. So say “We denote...”