

Grammar

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Academic Writing Guide Part 3 – Grammar: This section is a reference guide that will help you use correct grammar in your writing.

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Grammar

Use this guide as a reference when you are drafting and editing your writing. The index will take you to the right information.

1. Articles (the, a, an)

Articles – (the/a/an) – identify things. They introduce nouns and show what the noun is referring to:

- things that both writer and reader know – definite article (the)
or
- things that are not known – indefinite article (a/an).
- there are some nouns that don't need an article – the Zero article – depending on the type of noun. ([See 1. 1. 2 countable and uncountable nouns](#))

Articles are a form of determiner. Determiners establish identity and/or quantity. Other determiners include – this/some/either/every/several/many etc.

Using **a** or **an**

- **a** is used when a **consonant sound** comes after the article.
- **an** is used when a **vowel sound** comes after the article.
 - a book, an idea, a bird, an eagle.
- If an adjective or adverb precedes the noun, that word's sound is what determines the indefinite article.
 - a bad idea, an evil man, an extraordinary feat.
- The **sound** is what matters, not the letter itself.
 - a useful tool, a European city.

1. 1 Using *the/a/an* articles

- Two forms:
 - the
 - a/an
- To decide which article to use, ask yourself three questions:
 - 1) Is the noun **specific** or **non-specific** (does it refer to particular things, known things, or things in general)? ([See 1.1.1](#))
 - 2) Is the non-specific noun **countable** or **uncountable**? ([See 1.1.2](#))
 - 3) Is the non-specific, countable noun **singular** or **plural**? ([See 1.1.3](#))
- Usually only one determiner describes a noun. If a different determiner (my, your, his, that) is used then you don't need an article (a/an, the): e.g.;
 - A house / My house / That house

- But not the my house / the that house ☒

1. 1. 1 Is the noun specific or non-specific?

Specific Nouns	Non-specific Nouns
Use “The”	Use a/an or no article
A noun is specific when the reader knows exactly what is being discussed. If the reader was asked “which one?” they could nominate the exact thing.	A noun is non-specific when the reader doesn’t know exactly what is being discussed. If the reader was asked “which one?” they could not identify the exact thing.
When the reader already knows what the thing being discussed is. Often used when it is the second mention of a thing that has already been described in detail.	When the reader doesn’t know what is specifically being discussed. Or it is not important to know specifically.
It is clear from the noun’s context.	When the noun is being used to describe a group or category, or a non-specific member of a group or category.
Examples: Specific nouns & articles	Examples: Non-specific nouns & articles
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The doctor said that I should stay in bed. ○ The animal outside sounds like it’s hurt. ○ They called in the army to deal with the disaster. ○ I don’t believe in the monster of Loch Ness. ○ He’s the assistant to the director. ○ She lost the umbrella that I lent to her. ○ We used the plan we developed last year. ○ I have a car and a truck; the car is for everyday transportation, and the truck is for moving heavy things like furniture. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My wife is a doctor. ○ Tigers are very dangerous animals. ○ This party was a disaster. ○ He was acting like a monster to scare the kids. ○ As an assistant, you will be quite busy. ○ The poor guy doesn’t even have an umbrella. ○ A plan is essential for this project. ○ I have a car and a truck.

1. 1. 2 Is the noun countable or uncountable?

Countable	Uncountable
Countable nouns are the names of separate objects, people, ideas that can be numbered and counted, whether singular (one) or plural (two or more).	Uncountable nouns are the names of things that cannot be counted or numbered. These things are seen as a mass, without boundaries that cannot be divided into separate, individual parts.
Most common nouns are countable . They tend to describe: People or animals Places Objects Events Actions	Uncountable nouns tend to describe: Groups of similar items Abstract concepts Liquids and gases Materials Food Particles or grains Sports, games, activities Languages Fields of Study Natural events
Examples: articles with countable nouns	Examples: no articles with uncountable nouns
A squirrel is climbing the tree . She's rich enough to buy a castle in Scotland. Just leave your glass on the table . Are you watching the hockey game tonight? I went for a run last night.	There's a lot of sand on the floor. Today I bought a lot of clothes. The student doesn't speak much English. I had to choose between physics and chemistry. Storms can involve both lightning and rain.

- Many nouns can be either **countable or non-countable**, depending on their **context**.

Countable nouns	Uncountable nouns
Naming separate objects, people, ideas that can be counted, or naming a whole that can be broken into: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • types or varieties • individual parts or examples of whole. 	Naming the whole, or the mass of things, without boundaries, or separate existence. Often used for categories, broad concepts, materials, liquids, abstract qualities and collections of things.



Examples: Countable nouns	Examples: Uncountable nouns
<p><i>Into types or varieties:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The atmosphere is made up of <i>several gases</i>. ○ The <i>many</i> styles of research produced a wide range of results. <p><i>Into individual parts or examples of whole:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ My tutor gave me a lot of excellent advice. ○ I discovered some exciting new research in my field of study. ○ Designing a computer program is really an art. ○ This isn't the time or the place to ask that question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When boiled, water turns into vapour. ○ Research is essential in all disciplines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advice is available between 9am and 4pm in the library. ○ Information is available through the library, the Internet and your tutor. ○ I am going to study art. ○ Don't waste time. Life is short.

1. 1. 3 Is the countable noun singular or plural?

Countable nouns can name singular and plural things.

- Nouns that refer to individual things or one group of things are singular. **Singular nouns always take an article.**
 - dog, team, axe, chain.
- Nouns that refer to many things, many groups, or multiple members of a group, are plural.
 - dogs, teams, members, axes, chains, links.

1. 2 Nouns referring to things in general

- Usually there is no article if the noun refers to things in general. Speaking in general about things that are plural or uncountable refers to every single individual in a group.
 - **Tigers** are dangerous animals.
 - I am learning to play **guitar**.
- When referring to one thing as an example of a general group, it is possible to use a/an.
 - It is easy to learn to use **a computer**.
 - You should never break **a promise**.
- When speaking in general about the concept of a group, rather than every individual in the group, it is possible to use **the**:
 - **The** tiger is a very dangerous animal.
 - I am learning to play **the guitar**.
 - **The computer** was a very important invention.



1.3 Checklist on article usage.

- • Specific, singular nouns take **the**
- • Specific, plural nouns take **the**
- • Specific, uncountable nouns take **the**
- • Non-specific, singular nouns take **a**
- • Non-specific, plural nouns take **no article**
- • Non-specific, uncountable nouns take **no article**

Adapted from: Academic Writing Help Centre 2009, *Articles*, University of Ottawa, viewed 20 November 2012, <<http://www.sass.uottawa.ca/writing/kit/grammar-articles.pdf>>.

Swan, Michael, 1995, *Practical English Usage*, Oxford University Press

2. Linking Words (Transition Signals)

- Transition signals are words or phrases that build bridges between the parts of your essay. They link your sentences and paragraphs together, connecting the progression of ideas without abrupt jumps or breaks. They help you structure your writing
- Transition signals help the reader to follow your argument. They are like signposts signalling the order and flow of information.
- There are several types of transition signals. Some lead your reader through the stages of your argument; others encourage your reader compare ideas or draw conclusions from previous information.
- When you are drafting and editing your essay, refer to this list of linking words to help you structure your ideas and arguments in a way that lets your writing flow. (**See Academic writing 1 – 4.3 Structure**)

2. 1 To indicate a sequence or to order information

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| • First, second etc. | • Initially |
| • Followed by | • And then |
| • At this point | • Next, before, after |
| • Next, last, finally | • Concurrently |
| • Previously, subsequently | • Simultaneously |
| • After that | • Meanwhile |

2. 2 To introduce an example

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| • In this case | • To demonstrate |
| • For example | • This can be seen |
| • For instance | • When/where . . . |
| • On this occasion | • Take the case of |
| • To illustrate | |



2. 3 To indicate time

- Immediately
- Thereafter
- Formerly
- Finally
- Prior to
- Previously
- Then
- Soon
- During
- At that time
- Before, after
- At this point

2. 4 To logically divide an idea

- First, next, finally
- Firstly, secondly, thirdly
- Initially, subsequently, ultimately

2. 5 To compare

- Similarly
- By comparison
- Similar to
- Like, just like
- Whereas
- Balanced against

2. 6 To contrast

- In contrast
- On the other hand
- Balanced against
- However
- On the contrary
- Unlike
- Differing from
- A different view is
- Despite

2. 7 To introduce additional ideas/ information

- In addition
- Also
- Finally
- Moreover
- Furthermore
- One can also say
- And then
- Further
- Another

2. 8 To introduce an opposite idea or show exception

- However
- On the other hand
- Whereas
- Instead
- While
- Yet
- But
- Despite
- In spite of
- Nevertheless
- Even though
- In contrast
- It could also be said that

2. 9 To indicate a result/ cause of something

- Therefore
- Thus
- Consequently
- As a consequence
- As a result
- Hence



2. 10 To summarise or conclude

- In summary
- In conclusion
- In brief
- As a result
- On the whole
- Summing up
- As shown
- Therefore
- Consequently
- Thus
- In other words
- To conclude
- To summarise
- Finall

Sample text using transition signals

During **[1]** the early twentieth century, Australian society experienced a transformation of the domestic ideal. At this time **[1]** families were subject to an increasing array of government and 'professional' programs and advice aiming to manage and regulate family life. Some of these programs were designed to counter social changes, others were designed to engineer them; ultimately **[2]** each heralded a growing expert encroachment into the private sphere.

[1] Indicating a specific time.

[2] Indicating a conclusion.

Intervention and influence took three forms. Firstly **[3]**, techniques designed to maximise efficiency were introduced into the home and scientific principles were applied to its design. In addition **[4]**, housework and parenting methods were scrutinised and subject to unprecedented standards. Secondly **[3]**, all aspects of reproduction attracted increasing intervention from government and the medical profession. Thirdly **[3]**, state, professional and philanthropic groups began to usurp the parental role within the family through instruction and policy. Consequently **[5]**, the development of 'modern' social ideals brought regulation, intervention and ever-increasing unrealistic standards.

[3] To indicate sequence and logically divide an idea.

[4] Indicating extra information.

[5] Indicating a result.



3. Reporting verbs and their patterns

3.1 Reporting Verbs

Academic essays and reports contain the results of your research. Discussing and evaluating the works of other writers is essential and reporting verbs are the way you tell your readers *your* opinion of the texts you are referencing (i.e., correct, neutral, incorrect). By using reporting verbs you avoid plagiarism, strengthen your argument and guide your readers' understanding of the significance of the sources.

3.2 Patterns and examples of reporting verbs

Refer to this list when you are editing your essay. This list will help you to use the correct grammatical form. The chart following this list will give you a range of verbs to pick from according to their function. Your writing will be more interesting if you use a range of verbs.

- Verbs followed by a noun or –ing form:
analyses, applauds, appraises, assesses, attacks, considers, contradicts, critiques, debates, describes, discards, disclaims, discounts, discusses, dismisses, disregards, evaluates, examines, explores, expresses, extols, forbids, highlights, identifies, ignores, illustrates, investigates, justifies, lists, opposes, outlines, praises, presents, questions, refutes, rejects, restates, scrutinises, studies, supports, underscores, uses, validates, verifies.
- Verbs followed by “that”
accepts, acknowledges, adds, admits, advises, advocates, agrees, alerts, alleges, announces, argues, articulates, asserts, assures, believes, boasts, claims, clarifies, comments, complains, concedes, concludes, confirms, feels, finds, forgets, guarantees, guesses, hopes, hypothesises, imagines, implies, indicates, infers, informs, insists, justifies, knows, maintains, notes, observes, persuades, points out, posits, postulates, promises, proposes, proves, questions, realises, reasons, reasons, recognises, recommends, remarks, reminds, reports, reveals, shows, speculates, states, stresses, suggests, suspects, tells, theorises, thinks, understands, urges, warns.
- Verbs followed by a preposition:
defines x as y, alerts x to y, compares x to y, objects to x, subscribes to x, challenges x to do y, exhorts x to do y, forbids x to do y, warns x to do y, apologises for x, blames x for y, criticises x for y, confuses x with y, contrasts x with y, disagrees with x, concurs with x accuses x of y, warns x of y.

Reporting Verbs			
Function	Weaker Position	Neutral Position	Stronger Position
Addition		adds	
Advice		advises,	
Agreement	admits, concedes	accepts, acknowledges, agrees, concurs, confirms, recognises	applauds, congratulates, extols, praises, supports
Argument and persuasion	apologises	assures, encourages, interprets, justifies, reasons	alerts, argues, boasts, contends, convinces, emphasises, exhorts, forbids, insists, proves, promises, persuades, threatens, warns
Believing	guesses, hopes, imagines	believes, claims, declares, expresses, feels, holds, knows, maintains, professes, subscribes to, thinks	asserts, guarantees, insists, upholds
Conclusion		concludes, discovers, finds, infers, realises	
Disagreement and Questioning	doubts, questions	challenges, debates, disagrees, questions, requests, wonders	accuses, attacks, complains, contradicts, criticises, denies, discards, disclaims, discounts, dismisses, disputes, disregards, negates, objects to, opposes, refutes, rejects
Discussion	comments	discusses, explores	reasons
Emphasis			accentuates, emphasises, highlights, stresses, underscores, warns
Evaluation and examination		analyses, appraises, assesses, compares considers, contrasts, critiques, evaluates, examines, investigates, understands	blames, complains, ignores, scrutinises, warns
Explanation		articulates, clarifies, explains	
Presentation	Confuses	comments, defines, describes, estimates, forgets, identifies, illustrates, implies, informs, instructs, lists, mentions, notes, observes, outlines, points out, presents, remarks, reminds, reports, restates, reveals, shows, states, studies, tells, uses	announces, promises
Suggestion	alleges, intimates, speculates	advises, advocates, hypothesises, posits, postulates, proposes, suggests, theorises	asserts, recommends, urges



Example sentences

Remember that the tense you use for your reporting verb will depend on your style guide. Some styles prefer present tense while others prefer past tense. (See **Academic writing 1 – 3. 5. 3 Reporting verbs, 3. 5. 4 Tense**)

- Boynton (1982, p. 79) **warns** the reader **that** ordinary chocolate is ‘too frail to withstand heat, moisture and proximity to baked beans’.
- Smith (2005) **disagrees with** Fry (2003) when she **maintains that** many students have trouble with reporting verbs.
- Some people **subscribe to** the idea that chocolate is unhealthy, but Boynton’s (1982) book **refutes** this claim.

Table:

Writing Centre, University of Adelaide 2010, *Learning guide: reporting verbs*, viewed 4 February 2013,

<http://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/learning_guides/learningGuide_reportingVerbs.pdf>

4. Punctuation – the importance of clauses

Correct punctuation is vital if the meaning of your writing is to be clear. Make sure you understand the rules and know how to apply them. (Use this guide and check your sentences in **Grammarly**.)

- Academic writing requires complex sentences; these are sentences made up of clauses.
 - An **independent clause** is a group of words including a subject and a verb. It makes a complete sentence on its own. For example, “I stayed inside.” Or “Julie went running.”
 - Conjunctions (*and, but, so*) join independent clauses into one sentence. “I stayed inside, but Julie went running.”
 - A **dependent clause** is a group of words including a subject and a verb, but which cannot stand on its own as a complete sentence. The first word is usually what makes a clause dependent. For example, “I stayed inside **while it was raining**.” “Julie was running, **which was good exercise**.”
- Punctuation is the tool that allows you to build complex sentences.

4. 1 The comma ,

4. 1. 1 Use a comma in the following situations.

- Before a conjunction joining two independent clauses.
 - I was walking, **and she was talking**.



- You can run, **but you can't hide**.
- After introductory words, phrases or dependent clauses that modify the sentence or clause.
 - **After I returned from abroad**, my mailbox was overflowing.
 - **Unfortunately**, we are unable to refund your money.
- To add information to a sentence. A noun followed by words that describe but do not identify in the middle of a sentence.
 - My sister, **the aspiring musician**, has just finished writing a new song.
 - The store, **which is on the corner**, is having a sale on whole wheat bread, **which is delicious**.
- Between adjectives in a series, when they modify a noun.
 - The **big, red**, happy dog.
- Between other items in a series. The last item should be preceded by a conjunction. It does not require a comma.
 - I like **baseball, football, foosball and dodgeball**.
- To separate a direct quotation from the rest of the sentence.
 - She said to her friend, **"I can't wait for summer."**

4. 1. 2 Do NOT use a comma in the following situations

- Before dependent clauses.
 - You don't know who I am, **because I haven't told you yet.** ☒
 - You don't know who I am because I haven't told you yet. ☒
- Use a full stop or a semi-colon between independent clauses that are not joined by a conjunction.
 - I am hungry, I want to eat. ☒
 - I am hungry; I want to eat. ☒
- After a coordinating conjunction that joins two nouns or phrases.
 - My friend is **a singer, and a dancer.** ☒
 - My friend is **a singer and a dancer.** ☒
- Between a subject and its verb or a verb and its object.
 - **The chair** with three legs, **isn't** very safe to sit on. ☒
 - Since the sun was in my eyes, I barely **caught, the ball.** ☒
- After document titles or headings within them, on the front cover or at the head of a page.
- In lists that do not use complete sentences - bulleted lists, point form lists, etc.

4. 2 The full stop .

4. 2. 1 Use a full stop in the following situations

- At the end of declarative sentences. Declarative sentences make a statement.
- Indirect or reported questions. “He asked if I wanted fries with that.”
- *After* the closing bracket if the brackets contain information that is part of the sentence. “Sally bought a new car (with red paint).”
- *Inside* the bracket if the brackets contain a complete sentence. “Jim was tired of shopping. (Greg was just getting started.)”
- A full stop is followed by a single space.
- After most abbreviations. Mr. , Mrs. , St. , Mt. , Dr. , Fri. , Feb. , etc.

4. 3 The exclamation mark !

- Use an exclamation mark after an emphatic statement, interjection, or command.
 - I hate tacos!
 - Oh my goodness!
- Exclamations marks are not generally used in formal or academic writing unless it’s part of a quotation.

4. 4 The question mark ?

- Use a question mark after a direct question.
 - Do you want fries with that?
- Do not use a question mark after an indirect question.
 - He asked if I wanted fries with that.

4. 5 The colon :

- Use a colon only after a complete sentence. They have three functions:
 - (1) To introduce lists.
 - I went to three places this summer: England, Spain, and Germany.
 - (2) To introduce direct quotations by using a complete sentence.
 - Watson contemplates the case: “This one is a puzzler, Holmes.”
 - (3) To join another group of words that interprets, amplifies, summarizes or explains the noun or clause before the colon.
 - There was only one choice left for the Watson family: to sell the farm.
- A lower case letter usually follows colons unless it’s a quotation or proper noun.
- Colons are followed by a space, but are never preceded by a space.



- Colons can also be used between titles and subtitles, and after salutations in formal or business letters.
 - The American Century: International Politics since WWI
 - To whom it may concern:

4. 6 The semicolon ;

- You can use semicolons to link two closely related sentences instead of a conjunction or a full stop. The two sentences must have a clear relationship.
 - We have no tacos here; this is a vegan restaurant.
- You can use semicolons separate phrases and clauses in lists – particularly when the phrases include their own punctuation.
 - I have several pets: Fido, a dog; Bessie, my cow; and Jimmy, my boa constrictor.
- Do not use semicolons to link an independent clause with a dependent clause.
 - I want a taco; that is spicy and delicious. ☒
 - I want a taco that is spicy and delicious. ☑
 - I want a taco; they are spicy and delicious. ☑

4. 7 The ellipsis ...

- Sometimes, if a quote is lengthy, you might want to only use parts of it. An ellipsis indicates that words have been removed. You should make sure that the author's original intent remains even though some words have been left out.
 - Churchill said, "We will fight them ... we shall never surrender."
- Leave one space before and after an ellipsis.
- Make sure that the sentence with the ellipsis is still grammatically correct.
- When you are quoting you sometimes need to change words to keep the quote grammatically correct or to clarify something, use square brackets [] to replace or insert words.
 - Officer Helman said, "[the suspect] fled the scene through the back door."
- Do not use an ellipsis at the beginning of a quotation.

4. 8 The apostrophe ‘

Apostrophes have **three** main functions.

1. Missing letters.

- Apostrophes replace letters to form contractions like can't or it's. Academic writing is formal, so avoid using contractions.



2. To show possession

- Add 's to **singular** nouns.
 - The lecturer's notes
 - The principal's office

- Add an apostrophe with no S to show possession for **plural** nouns that end in S.
 - The cats' claws (The claws belong to more than one cat.)
 - The babies' beds (The beds belong to more than one baby.)

- Add 's to **plural** nouns that do not end in S.
 - The men's room
 - The people's choice

- For **names** that end in S, add 's unless they are biblical or classical.
 - Travis's shoes
 - Jesus' disciples
 - Zeus' lightning bolts
 - Ulysses' quest

- To show joint or **group** possession, make the last noun in the group possessive.
 - Brian and Wanda's tools are broken. (Brian and Wanda own the tools together)

- To show **individual** possession, make each noun in the group possessive.
 - Brian's and Wanda's tools are broken. (Each one owns tools that are broken)

- **Do not use apostrophes** with possessive pronouns, ie, theirs, ours, hers, its.

3. Special plurals

- You can use apostrophes to form plurals of letters, numerals or symbols being used as nouns. You can pluralize them using either 's or simply s
 - The 1970s OR the 1970's
 - It's a good plan, but there are still a lot of **if's**.
 - She writes **b's** instead of **d's**.
 - I saw two **MP's** in parliament. (or **MPs**)

4. 9 Quotation marks “ ”

- Single “ ” or “ ” double quotation marks?
 - use single quotation marks around article, chapter, essay, lecture or report titles; *Students should attend the lecture 'Politics in Australia'*
 - use single quotation marks around the first mention of a definition, a technical term, a coined word or phrase, for ironic emphasis or colloquial usages; *The*



centre runs literary seminars, writer 'in conversations' and short courses. It may be less confusing to use italics.

- The phrase “lawn chair” has a complicated history.
- The phrase *lawn chair* has a complicated history.
- use single quotation marks for quoted material (direct speech), with double quotation marks for quotes appearing within quotes: *‘Students should attend the lecture “Politics in Australia” on Tuesday’, said the course coordinator.* From the Governance and Support Unit, UTS, *Style Guide*, University of Technology, Sydney.
<http://www.gsu.uts.edu.au/publications/styleguide/punctuation.html>

4. 9. 1 Quotation marks and other punctuations

- Full stops and commas appear **inside** the quotation marks.
 - “I am a tap dancer,” he said. “Watch me tap dance.”
- Your quote is usually followed by an in text reference. If this reference is in parenthesis () then the full stop or comma goes **after** the reference.
 - “Quotation from text” (Lambert 142).
- Unless the punctuation is part of the quote, it goes **outside** the quotation marks.
 - Why did he say, “I am a tap dancer”?
- If they are part of the quote, put them **inside** the quotation marks.
 - He asked, “Why am I a tap dancer?”
- If you are quoting a long piece - more than 4 typed lines (in your text) – do not use quotation marks. Indent the text into a block quote. Check the referencing style for the correct amount of indentation.
- Do not use quotation marks to show something is a slang expression.
- Do not use quotation marks to convey sarcasm in formal writing.

5. Sentence Structures

5. 1 Building Sentences

Reading the same sentence structure is boring. The secret to good writing is VARIATION!

A well-written sentence must be grammatically and semantically correct. When you proofread and edit your work check your sentences fulfil these two criteria.

- (1) **Grammatically correct** – the way the language is put together communicates clearly
 (See 4 Punctuation – the importance of clauses)
- (2) **Semantically correct** - the words communicate the writer’s meaning clearly



For example: “A rock smelled the colour nine.” Is a grammatically correct sentence but semantically meaningless; “A cat smelled the blue fish.” This is both grammatically and semantically correct, as long as the fish is actually blue.

To build grammatically and semantically correct sentences you need to understand sentence structures.

There are **four** types of sentence formations:

- (1) Simple
- (2) Compound
- (3) Complex
- (4) Compound-complex sentences

- A **simple** sentence is one independent clause in a **subject-verb** pattern:
 - **The Australian government** *introduced* an official carbon tax on 1 July 2012.
- A **compound** sentence is two independent clauses connected by a **coordinating conjunction**:
 - The Australian government introduced an official carbon tax on 1 July 2012 **but** this was met with opposition from the general public.
- A **complex** sentence consists of an independent clause and a **dependent clause**:
 - As the Australian government recognised the necessity to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions; **it introduced an official carbon tax on 1 July 2012.**
- A **compound-complex** sentence consists of **more than one** independent clause and **one or more** dependent clauses:
 - As the Australian government recognised the necessity to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions, it introduced an official carbon tax on 1 July 2012, **but** this was met with opposition from the general public.

Your writing will have variation if you **use a combination** of the above sentence structures in your writing.

5. 2 Common Errors - Incomplete Sentences

When you write complex sentences it's easy to sometimes leave things out. There are three main reasons why a sentence may be incomplete. When you are editing your work use these checklists.

5. 2. 1 Missing subject

- Becoming extinct because of rising sea temperatures. ☒
- Phytoplankton could become extinct because of rising sea temperatures. ☑



5. 2. 2 Missing verb

- Significantly, one particular form of Western Australian finch. ☒
- Significantly, one particular form of Western Australian finch has decreased in numbers. ☑

5. 2. 3 Incomplete thought

- In a recent article about loss of habitat due to climate change. ☒
 - In a recent article about loss of habitat due to climate change, Australian animals were shown to be particularly vulnerable. ☑
- Sentences beginning with words like **so, as, because, who, which, that**, are often incomplete.

Sentence fragments:

Climate change is threatening flora and fauna around the world. As at-risk species become less populous and eventually disappear from the planet (1). The food chains in which they existed may become unsustainable (1). For example, organisms such as phytoplankton are affected by rising sea temperatures these are essential food sources (2). According to Parry (2010), make up 50 percent of carbon-based matter on the planet have been decreasing in numbers (3). The consequences of phytoplankton becoming extinct are of major concern.

(1= Incomplete thought / 2 = Run-on / 3 = No subject)

Improved example:

Climate change is threatening flora and fauna around the world. As at-risk species become less populous and eventually disappear from the planet, the food chains in which they existed may become unsustainable (1). For example, organisms such as phytoplankton are affected by rising sea temperatures. These are essential food sources (2). According to Parry (2010), phytoplankton make up 50 percent of carbon-based matter on the planet and have been decreasing in numbers (3). The consequences of phytoplankton becoming extinct are of major concern.

(1 = Joined the fragment / 2 = Two sentences / 3 = Added subject)

5. 3 Common Errors - Run-on sentences

A run-on sentence occurs when two simple sentences are incorrectly joined:

- Poverty, famine and major public health problems around the developing world are important indicators of a changing climate these issues are not being addressed globally.

5. 3. 1 How to fix a run-on sentence:

- Use a joining or linking word such as **and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet**.



- Poverty, famine and major public health problems around the developing world are an important indicator of a changing climate, **but** these issues are not being addressed globally.
- Make **two** separate sentences.
 - Poverty, famine and major public health problems around the developing world are an important indicator of a changing climate. **These** issues are not being addressed globally.

5. 3. 2 Sentence length

- The length of sentences in your paragraphs is important. They should vary in length. This variety adds interest to your writing, makes it more readable and shows relationships between ideas.
- In the following example all the sentences are similar in length and structure. The ideas are not linked, the writing feels disjointed.

Poor example:

- Recent changes in the sea, land and atmosphere have made it more difficult for animals and plants to sustain themselves. Derocher (2008), for example, claims that the ice cap in the Arctic is shrinking. This change constitutes a loss of feeding and breeding areas for polar bears. Polar bears are not alone in their loss of habitat. According to Walsh (2008) warming of the atmosphere in Costa Rica may have caused some species to become extinct. As the atmosphere gradually warms, they have nowhere to go and may eventually die out (Walsh 2008). These particular instances of an adversely affected environment may seem isolated and inconsequential. They may have profound effects on the subtle natural balances that all life exists within.

Improved Example:

Recent changes in the sea, land and atmosphere have made it more difficult for animals and plants to sustain themselves. Derocher (2008), for example, claims that the ice cap in the Arctic is shrinking and that this change constitutes a loss of feeding and breeding areas for polar bears. Polar bears are not alone in their loss of habitat. According to Walsh (2008) warming of the atmosphere in Costa Rica may have caused some species to become extinct. As the atmosphere gradually warms, they have nowhere to go and may eventually die out (Walsh 2008). While these particular instances of an adversely affected environment may seem isolated and inconsequential, they may have profound effects on the subtle natural balances that all exists within.

Notice how the shorter sentences provide a contrast and make the reading easier.

Notice the way two sentences are combined to emphasise the cause/effect relationship.

Source:

RMIT University Learning Lab 2012, *Sentence construction*, viewed 19 September 2012, <http://emedia.rmit.edu.au/learninglab/content/sentence-construction-0>

5. 4 Common Errors - Subject verb agreement

Verbs have different forms depending on whether they are telling you what a **singular** or **plural** noun is doing. The subject of your sentence always determines the verb form. When the verb and the noun forms match, they are said to agree. For example:

The dog runs: singular noun + singular verb form = subject verb agree

The dogs run: plural noun + plural verb form = subject verb agree

The dogs runs: plural noun + singular verb form ≠ subject verb do not agree

- Subjects with two or more parts joined by 'and' usually require a **plural** verb:
 - **Salt and pepper are** always on the table.
 - **Krypton and neon are** noble gasses.
- It doesn't matter how many words come between the subject and the verb, they must still agree
 - **This university**, which is made up of many students, teachers, and others, **is** large.
 - **The effects** caused by these reactions in the last three weeks **are** insignificant.
- Sometimes two subjects are thought of as a single thing. You can use a singular verb:
 - **Fish and chips is** my favourite dish.
- When the subject has two or more parts joined by **or, nor, neither, either, not only, but** the verb must agree with the **final** noun:
 - Salt or **pepper is** always on the table.
 - Real estate or **securities are** a suitable investment at this time. (Last verb plural)
 - Neither stocks nor **real estate is** a good investment at the moment. (Last verb singular)
- Some words look plural, but are singular. E.g.; Nouns for subjects, disciplines, illnesses:
 - **Physics** is the science of matter and energy.
 - **Diabetes** is a terrible disease.
 - Other words in these categories include **economics, electronics, mathematics, and measles, mumps, and shingles.**
- Sentences that begin with **here or there** have the **subject after the verb**. It still determines the verb:
 - There **are four students** in my presentation group.
 - Here **is the single main idea** in Smith's work.
- When writing about **measurements**, the singular verb is usually used:
 - Four **kilograms** of kryptonite **was** deadly to Superman.



- The indefinite pronouns **everybody, everyone, everything** take singular verbs:
 - **Everything** in chemistry **is** explainable in atomic terms.
- Plural determiners like **few, many, several, both, all, some** take plural verbs:
 - **Many** of my fellow students **are** ready for their presentations today.
 - **Few** things at university **are** more valuable than making good friends.
- **Collective nouns** can take singular or plural verbs.
 - **My family is** very supportive of my studies here.
 - **My family are** very supportive of my studies here.
 - Which is correct? It depends on the meaning you want to communicate: My family as a *single* unit, or My family as *several* individuals. Other collective nouns like this include **team, class, cohort, government, crowd, and orchestra**.
- **All of, any of, enough of, more of, most of, none of, some of, a quantity of,** and similar subjects can take a singular or plural noun. To know which to use, look at the *object* of the **preposition**:
 - **None of this material is** suitable for industrial applications.
 - **Some of these materials are** suitable for industrial applications.
- Titles take singular verbs. This is for books, movies, songs, stories, etc.:
 - **The Regulations of the Senate is** a very important document.
 - **The Annals of the Australian Historical Society is** edited by Dr Proctor.

Source:

Collins Cobuild English Grammar 1990, William Collins & Sons, London.

Style manual: for authors, editors and printers 2002, 6th edn, John Wiley & Sons Australia, Milton, Queensland.

Your Dictionary 2012, *20 rules of subject verb agreement*, LoveToKnow Corp, viewed 19 September 2012, <<http://grammar.yourdictionary.com/sentences/20-Rules-of-subject-verb-agreement.html>>.

6. Tenses in Paraphrasing: Present vs. Past Tenses

When you paraphrase the work of other writers you take ideas, theories and concepts and put them into your own words. The tense you choose gives the reader important information about the material you are referencing. (See [Academic Writing 1 - 3. 7. 3 Paraphrasing](#))

- **Present simple tense**
Using this tense indicates that the information is constant and ongoing. For example, if you are paraphrasing a theory that is generally accepted by the relevant academic



community and has been able to stand up against critical review, then the choice of the present simple communicates that concept.

- Turner (2010) maintains that the modern state wields power in new ways.
- According to Solomon (2009), religious belief does not have to be consistent with cultural assumptions.
- Hoffman (1996) suggests that small firms respond more rapidly to change.

- **Past tense**

If the research you are paraphrasing was done in the past, then past tense tells the reader this. To make it even clearer try and state the past time in the sentence.

- The habits of great white sharks were surveyed over a 10-year period and it was found that every year, they returned to the same mating areas (Fergusson 1999).
- The groups, observed during the research, showed a range of leadership types (Kang 2006).
- Lim (2002) identified three different skills used by his participants.
- Investigative studies were conducted in Australia and New Zealand two years ago (Walsh 2011).
- In 2007, crime rates in New South Wales were at an all-time high (Zhao 2008).
- In these examples, the writer is referring to the results of past research or surveys.

These are guidelines. The only strict rule in this matter is BE CONSISTENT.

7. Parts of Speech

7.1 Parts of Speech

Parts of speech is the term used to talk about the function – the job – of a word in a sentence. If you break a sentence into parts, you can see what job each word does. Words can function as nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns, prepositions or interjections. A lot of grammar mistakes are the result of confusing the parts of speech – the noun, adjective, adverb and verb forms of words.

- Many English words can have several forms.
 - Research can be either a verb or a noun but has no adjectival or adverbial forms.
 - “I handed in my *research* last night.” Noun
 - “I *research* mainly in the library.” Verb
 - Simple is an adjective. It has an adverbial form, simply, a noun form, simplicity, and a verb form, simplify.
 - “It’s a simple story.” Adjective
 - “Simply tell the story.” Adverb



- “Simplicity would have made the story easier to understand.” Noun form
- “Simplify the story for a younger audience.” Verb form
- Success is a noun, but it also has adjectival, adverbial and verb forms: successful (adj), successfully (adv) and succeed (v).
 - “Her success is due to hard work.” Noun
 - “Most successful businesses have good staff.” Adjective
 - “Smart phones have successfully integrated the latest technology.” Adverb
 - “They succeeded in establishing a new market.” Verb form
- Regularly is an adverb, but it also has noun, verb and adjectival forms: regulation (n), regulate (v) and regular (adj).
 - “I regularly see you at the coffee cart.” Adverb
 - “I hope you know all the regulations for food service.” Noun
 - “The council regulates the service of food.” Verb form
 - “You are a regular customer at the coffee cart.” Adjective
- Make sure you know the function of words in a sentence. It will mean you are using the word correctly (semantically correct) and using the correct form of the word (grammatically correct).
- Make use of a good quality dictionary that shows the various forms of a word and gives examples. The [Complete Oxford English Dictionary](#) is online from UTS Library.

7. 2 Common usage errors

7. 2. 1 Noun/verb usage

Nouns define or name things. Verbs tell us about actions, something that happens or a state of being. Some nouns and verbs share the same form (e.g. research, project, record), but usually they are different.

Many nouns end in 'tion' or 'cion', 'ment' or 'ing'.

Verb forms vary according mainly to person, number and tense; they can also be active or passive.

- Examples of noun/verb confusion:
 - We were able to identify the most serious academic problem **X**
(Incorrect use of noun: should be the verb form, identify);
 - At present, there is a lot of compete for good jobs. **X**
(Incorrect use of verb: should be the noun form, competition).



7. 2. 2 Noun/adjective usage

Nouns define or name things. Adjectives tell us more about a noun or pronoun. In a sentence, the qualifying adjective usually comes directly before the noun or noun phrase.

- Examples of noun/adjective confusion:
 - As the members were aged from 15 to 55, it was a difficulty task to design a game to suit everyone. ☒
(Incorrect use of noun: should be the adjectival form, difficult);
 - The company demonstrated a great deal of successful in developing client relationships. ☒
(Incorrect use of adjective: should be the noun form, success);
 - The important of the case was emphasised. ☒
(Incorrect use of adjective: should be the noun form, importance).

7. 2. 3 Adjective/adverb usage

- Adjectives qualify or tell more about a noun or pronoun. Adverbs qualify or tell more about a verb (he studies diligently), or sometimes an adjective (an extremely expensive suit) or another adverb (she walked very slowly). Many adverbs end in 'ly'.
- Examples of adjective/adverb confusion:
 - A good business person should be proactively. ☒
(Incorrect use of adverb: should be the adjectival form, proactive.)
 - She ready agreed to give her presentation. ☒
(Incorrect use of adjective: should be the adverbial form, readily.)

7. 2. 4 Gerunds and other noun forms

Nouns that are based on verbs can end in either 'ing' (the gerund) or 'tion' or 'ment'.

- If there is an *object* in the sentence, the gerund form is usually correct.
 - Development a high quality product is of paramount importance. ☒
 - Developing a *high quality product* is of paramount importance. ✓
 - Manufacture clothing in China is very cost effective. ☒
 - Manufacturing *clothing* in China is very cost effective. ✓

If there is no object in the sentence, the alternative to the gerund is usually used.

- Developing is of paramount importance. ☒
- Development is of paramount importance. ✓

7. 2. 5 Different forms of same root noun

Some nouns may have different forms, each with slightly different meanings.



- Example:
 - She decided to move into a new flat to start a new living. ☒
 - She decided to move into a new flat to start a new life. ☒

In the first sentence *living* is a gerund with the sense of 'earning of wage' or 'way of life' whereas *life* means 'existence'.

7. 2. 6 Personal and possessive pronouns

Using a pronoun instead of a noun simplifies your writing. Instead of repeating a name or title you can identify a known person by pronoun, e.g.; I, you, he/she/it, we, you (plural), and they.

- Possessive pronouns do the same job as personal pronouns but also indicate ownership, e.g.; my, your, his, her, its, our, their.
- Make sure that the pronoun and the noun it is referring to keep have the same singular/plural form.
- Examples of incorrect pronoun forms:
 - All employees have been notified that **their are** to be made redundant. ☒
Possessive pronoun used instead of personal pronoun.
 - All employees have been notified that **they are** to be made redundant. ☒
 - The MD has seen the contracts and he wants **it** substantially altered. ☒
Singular personal pronoun used instead of a plural form. (the contracts)
 - The MD has seen the contracts and he wants **them** substantially altered. ☒

7. 2. 7 Adjective form

Some adjectives look like verbs. They have -ing and -ed endings.

- **-ed** adjectives are used to describe **feelings** and **emotions**. They tell us how you or other people feel about something. 'I felt very **bored**.'
- **-ing** adjectives are used to describe **the thing** that causes the emotion – a boring lesson makes you feel bored. It can be a process or state that continues over a period of time. 'My father is so **embarrassing**.'
- Examples of Adjectives ending in **-ed** and **-ing**:
 - I am **confused** about the new fire drill arrangements. ☒
 - A number of **confusing** messages were left by the I.T. Department. ☒
 - My parents were **disappointed** by my poor achievement. ☒
 - The rainy weather was **disappointing**. ☒
 - That was a very **satisfying** meal. ☒
 - The review panel were very **satisfied** with the new online course. ☒
 - The Committee are all **excited** about the new project. ☒
 - The new project is very **exciting**. ☒
 - I am never **bored** in my free time. ☒

- My free time is never boring. ✓
- Omission of 'd' in adjectives ending in 'ed'. Examples:
 - Our Company uses the most advance technology. ✗
 - Our Company uses the most advanced technology. ✓
 - Detail information is required from candidates. ✗
 - Detailed information is required from candidates. ✓

This is a fun site where you can practise your grammar:

<http://www.funbrain.com/grammar/>

These two sites have academic word lists; these words are commonly used at university and it is important to familiarize yourself with them:

<http://www.uefap.com/vocab/select/awl.htm>

<http://www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/acvocabulary2.pdf>

Adapted from:

English Language Centre n.d., *Parts of speech confusion*, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, accessed 20 September 2012, <<http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/fyp/html/speech.htm>>.

