

Introducing Academic Writing Tips

Writing in a second language is not an easy task, especially when an academic audience will evaluate the product (paper). A good paper does not happen the first time anyone sits down to compose. The paper only becomes a valuable product after the writer plans, organizes, drafts, revises and edits it. Therefore, the process of writing truly demands time, practice, and tools. Tools that guide or instruct the writer in expressing his or her ideas overcome some of the hurdles in writing. One such tool is a writing reference or, better yet, tips on how to “put it all together” creating a fine-tuned product (paper).

In response to this need for a writing tool, Ron Russell and Beth Summe, English as a Second Language (ESL) Instructors, have put together “Academic Writing Tips” covering common academic writing areas in organizing, paragraphing and creating sentence-level structures. The topics are broken down into writing and grammar themes that benefit the non-native writer of English.

Two writing tips will be sent out via email every week to all international students. Each tip addresses a specific topic that generally includes examples of usage. This layout allows a quick and easy reference to rules

A series of topics will be recycled throughout the quarters allowing students who have missed previous writing tips to obtain the whole series. For students approaching the thesis paper, the writing tips allow a quick “brush up” before composing and a writing tool for revising and editing in the final stages of the thesis writing process. New tips can be added if the students request specific help.

Take advantage of this tool by simply printing out the tips and placing them by the computer for easy reference. Everyone, even native speakers can benefit from this type of tool. If you have any specific requests for a tip on writing, contact Beth or Ron.

Note: All writing information is based on general standards for academic papers. This information is not meant to override the curriculum departments’ procedures. We suggest checking with your professors or department for any specific writing policies Thanks!



Writing Process: Revising and Editing

Professional writers often say that, “hard writing is easy reading.” In other words writing well is not easy. Revising requires a great deal of time, so writers must develop the skills to find mistakes and to correct them.

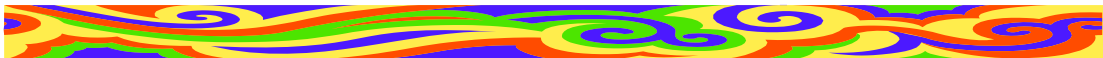
The most common mistake that poor writers make is that they do not revise or edit their work. **Revising** means that writers take the time to read their own work in order to improve and clarify their ideas. **Editing** entails fine-tuning the paper by checking grammar, vocabulary and the mechanics. Revising is more time-consuming since it requires the student to think critically, while analyzing the quality of work objectively.

To write well, writers must think like readers. They must ask themselves, “How can I make this clearer, more concise, and more interesting?”

Writing instructors try to foster this critical thinking by reminding students that a composition is a “process.” They mean that writing may begin with a quickly written draft full of mistakes, but this first draft must be followed with multiple drafts of revising and editing.

If these two steps of the writing process are addressed in additional drafts of the thesis, a student will produce a more professional, well-developed paper for all readers. This allows a professor to focus on the content while an editor corrects the grammatical, syntactical and mechanical mistakes, such as formatting and punctuation.

Suggestion: Find a good writing reference book containing the steps of the writing process: planning, organizing, revising, editing and finalizing.



Academic Writing Tips
by Ron and Beth

Forms of Address

When writing formal correspondence, appropriately addressing a person's title and position establishes a respectful tone in the written communication. Although Americans are less formal in spoken communication, written English should follow a protocol for the person being addressed.

As military officers and civilian officials with a variety of responsibilities, students may be required to correspond with the United States or other countries using English as the language of communication. The attached list of addressees, addresses and salutations provides the protocol for some of more commonly used titles in academics and government. This information is from the footnoted Internet address listed below.

Here are three examples (the names are fictitious) of formal addresses from the attached list:

EX: United Nations Representative, foreign

Address: **His Excellency Jean Paul Satre, Representative of France to the United Nations**
Salutation: **Excellency:**
or **My dear Mr. Satre:**

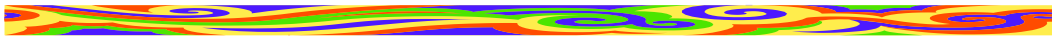
EX: Ambassador, US

Address: **The Honorable Robert James Adams, The Ambassador of the United States**
Salutation: **Dear Sir:**
or **Dear Mr. Ambassador:**

EX: Representative, state

Address: **The Honorable Michele Stevens, California House of Representative**
Salutation: **Dear Ms. Stevens:**

Whenever writing to any official, you should verify the appropriate address and salutation. Contacting the addressee's office or searching on the Internet is a good place to start.



Forms of Address

Addressee	Address	Salutation
Academics, college or university		
Dean	Dean <i>Full name</i>	Dear Dean <i>Last name</i>
President/Superintendent	President/Superintendent <i>Full name</i>	Dear President/Superintendent <i>Last name</i>
Professor	Professor <i>Full name</i>	Dear Professor <i>Last name</i>
Government		
Ambassador, US	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , The Ambassador of the United States	Sir/Madam <i>or</i> Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador
Ambassador to the U.S.	His/Her Excellency <i>Full name</i> , The Ambassador of <i>Place name</i>	Excellency <i>or</i> Dear Mr./Madam Ambassador
Secretary General, United Nations	His/Her Excellency <i>Full name</i> , Secretary General of the United Nations	Dear Mr./Madam/Madame Secretary General
United Nations Representative, U.S.	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , United States Representative to the United Nations	Sir/Madam <i>or</i> Dear Mr./Ms. <i>Last name</i>
United Nations Representative, foreign	His/Her Excellency <i>Full name</i> , Representative of <i>Place name</i> to the United Nations	Excellency <i>or</i> My dear Mr./Madam <i>Last name</i>
President, U.S.	The President	Dear Mr./Madam President
President, U.S., former	The Honorable <i>Full name</i>	Dear Mr./Madam <i>Last name</i>
Representative, state	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , <i>State name</i> House of Representative	Dear Mr./Ms. <i>Last name</i>
Representative, U.S.	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , United States	Dear Mr./Ms. <i>Last name</i>
Government Officials		
Assemblyman/woman	The Honorable <i>Full name</i>	Dear Mr./Ms. <i>Last name</i>
Associate Justice, U.S. Supreme Court	The Honorable Justice <i>Full name</i>	Dear Sir/Madam <i>or</i> Justice <i>Last name</i>
Cabinet member	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , Secretary of <i>Department name</i>	Sir/Madam <i>or</i> Dear Mr./Madam Secretary
Chief Justice, U.S. Supreme Court	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , Chief Justice of the United States	Dear Mr./Madame Chief Justice
Governor	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , Governor of <i>State name</i>	Dear Governor <i>Last name</i>
Judge, federal	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , Judge, United States District Court	Dear Judge <i>Last name</i>
Judge, state or local	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , Judge of the Court of <i>Place name</i>	Dear Judge <i>Last name</i>
Mayor	The Honorable <i>Full name</i> , Mayor of <i>Place name</i>	Dear Mayor <i>Last name</i>

"Forms of Address." *Writing and Language-A Concise Guide to Style*. 22 January 2003.
 <<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0001618.html>

Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Verb Suppression

English is a verbal language. The verb is the most important word in a sentence. English readers absorb information better when the writer uses strong, active verbs. Whenever possible use strong verbs and replace nouns with verbs. Also use gerunds instead of nouns and prepositions.

Poor technical writers often turn verbs into nouns trying to sound formal and scholarly, but they just obscure their writing. This is called “verb suppression.” Some writers even *coin* new nouns by transforming verbs into nouns while other writers attempt to turn adjectives into nouns. Look at these three examples. The second and third examples are from NPS theses:

EX:

The **suppression** of verbs in oral **communication** and written **expression** leads to the **distortion** of and **uglification** of language, as well as to the **confusion** of readers and the **irritation** of English teachers and editors.

Revised:

Suppressing verbs in oral and written communication **distorts** language. It also **confuses** readers and **irritates** English teachers and editors.

EX:

The **amplification** of the sonar signal will lead to the **enhancement creation** of the **reception** by the researchers.

Revised:

Amplifying the sonar signal **enhances** reception.

EX:

The **authorization, improvement** and **production** of this new military weaponry raises combat **effectiveness** and also provides for the **preparation** of real-war **readiness**.

In this last example, the first sentence would be better if the author wrote the following:

“Authorizing, improving, and producing this new”

Here is another benefit of using verbs instead of nouns. Notice how many nouns in the above examples are paired with prepositions? When eliminating nouns, needless prepositions are also often eliminated. Prepositions, which are generally another source of agony for international students, will be covered in a later tip.



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Variety in Syntax

Repeating the same type of sentence pattern is monotonous and unnatural. Readers find such repetition immature. Many students overuse the same patterns. For example, finding five or six sentences beginning with *although* on a single page is not uncommon. Other commonly overused patterns are *however*, *so* and *if* sentences. Vary sentence patterns and transitional devices when editing. Pay attention to overusing “favorite” sentence patterns.

Additionally be careful not to overuse primer sentences, which are short sentences repeating a subject-verb pattern. Here is an example of too many subject + verb combinations. Read it aloud to hear how stilted it sounds:

EX:

Many countries emerge without a concept of democracy. These nations undergo profound changes. These countries need new political systems. They must find solutions. These countries now have new opportunities. They can create new economies and legal structures.

The above paragraph could be improved by combining some of the sentences with modifying clauses using *that* and *which*.

Revised:

Many countries emerge without a concept of democracy. They go through profound changes that require new political systems. In response, the countries search for solutions through new opportunities, which in turn create new economies and legal structures.

Be careful not to create run-on sentence when combining sentences. The following is a good example:

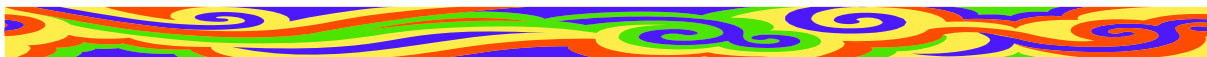
EX:

Jonas Salk perfected the Salk vaccine against polio, and he was a University of Pittsburgh researcher at the time, and the vaccine was tested and found satisfactory at the University of Michigan , and then it was released for general use, and nowadays polio is almost an unknown disease.

Revised:

Jonas Salk perfected the Salk vaccine against polio when he was a researcher at the University of Pittsburgh. The vaccine was tested and found satisfactory at the University of Michigan, so it was released for general use. Nowadays, polio is almost an unknown disease.

See the Writing Tip on Variety of Sentence Structures for models of sentence types.



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Gerunds Replacing Nouns

Since English is a verbal language, readers comprehend and retain more information when writers use strong active verbs. Unfortunately, technical writers and many international students rely too heavily on noun structures. A writer can often use a gerund instead of a noun and a preposition that follows it. Gerunds are –ing verbs used as nouns and are one of the most basic and natural elements of English. For example, “Smoking is unhealthy.”

Using gerunds eliminates noun-preposition combinations making any prose read more smoothly and naturally. Notice the examples with revisions:

EX:

The **analysis of** these military issues is important.

Revised:

Analyzing these military issues is important.

EX:

The complete **annihilation of** this threat is likely impossible.

Revised:

Completely **annihilating** this threat is likely impossible.

EX:

The **development of** the country is of utmost concern.

Revised:

Developing the country is of utmost concern.

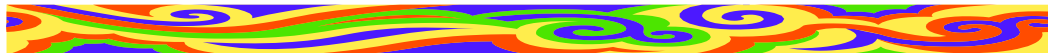
EX:

As a **reaction to** the Chancellor’s statement, the people demonstrated.

Revised:

Reacting to the Chancellor’s statement, the people demonstrated (the preposition is needed here)

Look for any overuse of the noun structure and use the gerund form.



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Unnecessary Repetition

Good writers use *repetition* for emphasis, clarity and parallelism; however, when repetition is used without reason, it is awkward and wordy. Notice the repetition in the following sentence

EX:

The **last chapter of the novel** revealed what **finally** happened **at last** to all the characters **mentioned in the novel**.

Revised:

The novel's final chapter revealed what happened to all the characters.

In addition, repeating words with more than one meaning leads to confusion. Look at these examples:

EX:

In case there has been an error by the lower court in a trial, **the case** goes to a superior court, **in that case**, for a retrial by the higher court.

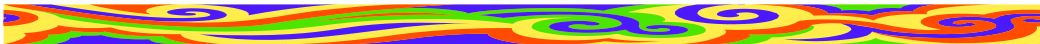
Revised:

If the lower court errors in a trial, the case moves up to the superior court for a retrial.

EX:

The **fire inspector fired** two **firefighters** after **inspecting** their records.

In this last example, **fire inspector** and **firefighters** may be necessary for understanding, but both verbs should be changed to appropriate synonyms. Checking for repetition should be done at the editing stage of the writing process.



Topic Sentences

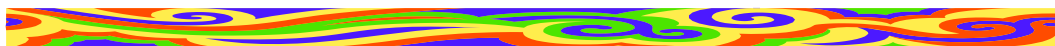
Most English writers rely greatly on topic sentences to introduce their main ideas. A topic sentence is a concise, general, and often intriguing sentence that introduces the main point of a paragraph. Generally, topic sentences begin a paragraph. Next are the supporting sentences, which further develop and expand on the topic sentence. Finally a concluding sentence finishes up the idea. These three components create a full paragraph.

Some students dismiss topic sentences because they see that professional writers do not always explicitly use them. Beware of imitating professionals since their skills are highly advanced. For international students, topic sentences are usually essential and strongly advisable. Here is a short paragraph with the topic sentence underlined:

No other inventor has had more impact on modern life than Thomas Edison. Most people know that he invented the light bulb, but few realize he also invented the light switch, the light socket, and the three-way wiring system. He also invented ore-crushing machines, underground electric mains, storage batteries and electric pens. The electric railway car, the railroad signal, the phonograph, and the motion picture camera are other Edison inventions. In fact, he even invented wax paper. Seeing how this genius influenced modern life is easy; without him our lives today would be greatly different.

A topic sentence is the most important sentence in a paragraph. It should briefly sum up the main idea and be interesting enough to draw the reader into the paragraph. At the same time, this sentence keeps the writer on track by focusing on only the main idea of the paragraph.

A useful strategy for starting a thesis and developing topic sentences is to use the *Table of Contents*, and write a complete topic sentence for every section and subsection. These topic sentences help the students crystallize their ideas on the various sections. Topic sentences also serve as a “road map” for writers (and later the readers) to know where they are headed. In other words, without topic sentences, the writer often does not know what points will end each section and what points will begin the next section. This wastes a great deal of time.



Academic Writing Tips

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The Pronoun *One*

When used as a pronoun, *one* has some distinct usages. In American English, some of these usages are substituted for personal pronouns because the pronoun *one* reads a bit stuffy or pretentious. However, at times, using *one* is appropriate as an impersonal, reflexive or possessive pronoun. Using *one* is preferable to using the pronoun *you*. In formal writing, especially, one should not address the reader as *you*. As illustrated in the last example, *one* can be used in the plural when it represents a group of things or people.

1. Numerical expression

EX: **One** of the operations was cancelled due to budgeting.

2. Impersonal Form

This usage can represent the writer, a collective group like the writer or a class of people.

EX: If **one** fails to assess the data correctly, the input is compromised.

3. Reflexive and Possessive Forms

In American usage, these forms of *one*, *one's* and *oneself*, can often be replaced by other pronoun forms, such as *his* or *her*.

EX: **One** must learn from **one's** (his) mistakes.

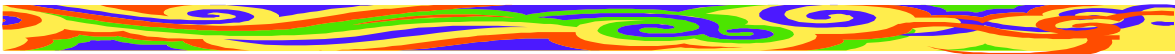
EX: If **one** misjudged the next cliff down, **one** could hurt **oneself** (herself).

Note: Both examples of personal pronoun usage are restricted to spoken English since gender bias occurs with himself or herself.

4. Plural Usage

EX: The **ones** speaking out for anti-war policies represented a minority of *those* at the rally.

Note: **Ones** represents a common group of people while *those* refers to everyone attending the rally.



Academic Writing Tips

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The Dash

A dash looks like a short straight line used to emphasize parenthetical material. English writers rarely use dashes—which are intrusive—in formal writing. As an example, two dashes were just used around the above *which* clause. In that clause, a comma before *which* would have been enough. Save the **dashes for strong, emphatic points**.

Here are a few rules about dashes:

- Use dashes to set off parenthetical material that require emphasis. Leave **no** space between the dash and the first and last words being set off. In other words, the dash **must touch** the words that precede and follow it.

EX:

Japan's economy was strong—even booming—during the 1980's.

Note: Dashes are much more emphatic than commas or parentheses. Because dashes are abrupt, halting a reader for a moment, they should not be used too often.

- Use dashes occasionally to set off an expression that summarizes or illustrates the preceding statement. Such expressions are often appositives that the writer wants to emphasize:

EX:

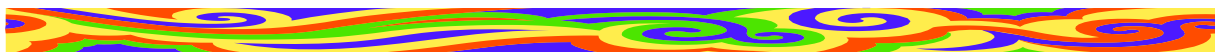
Fearing confrontation, many teachers are not honest with students—meaning they will not tell them when their work is inadequate.

- Use a dash before a credit line, as at the end of a quoted passage that begins a chapter of a thesis.

EX:

Kind words can be short and easy to speak, but their echoes are truly endless.

—Mother Teresa



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Tense Consistency

International students frequently shift tenses improperly when creating complex sentences. Complex sentences are created with subordinators like *when*, *where*, *while*, *as soon as*, *since*, etc. Here are examples (notice that there are subjects and verbs on *both* sides of the subordinators.):

Ron works like a horse while his wife eats chocolate.

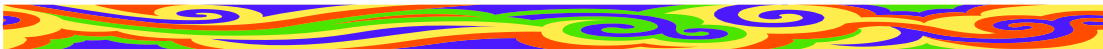
She found \$10 when she stepped out the door.

NATO planned to expand when the conditions were suitable.

Generally speaking, the main clause dictates the tense of the dependent (also called subordinate) clause. The general rules are as follows:

- If the main verb is **present** tense, the subordinating clause is generally **present** tense, but can be **past** or **future** tense.
- If the main clause is **past** tense, the subordinating clause is **simple past** tense or **past continuous** tense.
- If the main clause is **future** tense, the subordinating clause is simple **present** tense.
- If the main clause is **present perfect** tense, the subordinating clause is **present perfect** tense or **simple past** tense.
- If the main clause is **past perfect** tense, the subordinating clause is **past** tense.

The problem of tense consistency is generally not a lack of knowing the tenses, but a lack of monitoring and editing verb usage. Use these simple rules when editing academic papers.



Variety of Sentence Structures: Part 1

Using a variety of sentence structures allows the writer to create coherent and fluent papers. Students can improve their written work by modeling some basic varied sentences

The following examples are categorized into simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences. NOTE: Pay close attention to the punctuation in each example.

Simple sentences are independent clauses.

EX:
The explanation was carefully done.

Compound sentences contain one or more independent clauses connected with one or more coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, so, yet), or a semi-colon with a transitional expression.

EX:
The analysis was carefully performed, **but** the committee still showed resistance.

EX:
The explanation was carefully done; **nevertheless**, the committee still showed resistance.

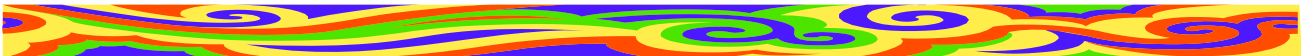
Complex sentences contain one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses.

EX:
When the committee read the analysis, they voted to reject the information.
Or
The committee voted to reject the analysis **after** they read it.

Compound-complex sentences contain at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause.

EX:
When the meeting started, the coordinator introduced the members of the committee, and the non-members presented their analysis of the documents, **which** they had carefully assessed.

This last example has **two independent clauses** and **two dependent clauses**.



Rules about Numbers

Here are some general rules about using numbers in writing:

1. **Never start a sentence with a number.** Spell it out or recast the sentence so that the number does not begin the sentence. A sentence can begin with a date, but it is generally suggested to recast the sentence.

EX: Nine days had passed before receiving the news.

2. **Do not use 1st, 2nd, 3rd, etc. with dates unless the year is omitted.**

EX: Ron was born January 16, 1978, but he was not due until February 1st.

The military inverts the conventional format for dates.

EX: January 16, 1978” into “16 January 1978

Be consistent with the format of dates throughout a written assignment or thesis.

3. **Use commas to separate thousands, millions, billions, etc.** English readers are accustomed to this visual aid in deciphering numbers. Don't use periods in place of the commas (as in some countries). The period mark (actually called a “point”) is used for decimals.

EX: 25,000 units

4. **Write numbers in the millions as numerals or as a number plus the word million.** The word million is not plural when used after a number. When writing about money, use a numeral followed by the word *million* or *billion*. Don't forget to use the dollar sign (\$) before the number, not after it.

EX: 2.5 million people or 2,500,000 people

EX: \$2.5 million/billion

Note: Usage of *cent/s* is carried after the amount.

5. **Spell out the numbers from one to nine.** Then use figures (digits) for all numbers 10 and above.

Exception: In a paragraph with many numbers, some under and over ten, use figures for all of the numbers. Be consistent in usage.

6. **Write the percent mark (%) after the numbers.** Some writers prefer the percent symbol and others prefer to spell out the word *percent*.

EX: 52% of the nation or 52 percent

Optional usage: Spell out the expression of money or percentage if it is fewer than four words: seventy-five percent, twenty-four dollars.

7. **Pluralize figures with either 's or s.** It is becoming more common to drop the apostrophe mark, but it sometimes aids readers, depending on the font used, to maintain the use of an apostrophe.

EX: In the 1980's or 1980s

8. **Place a hyphen between a number and a unit of measurement when they modify a noun.**

EX: 25,000-volt charge 15-inch steel rod
10-ton tank 60-foot boat

9. **Use a singular verb and unit of measurement for any number under one.**

EX: It is 0.7 of a pound. Or **EX:** It is 0.7 pound

10. **Center and number equations on a separate line** in the document unless they are very short and simple:

EX: The general first-order linear equation is

$$dy/dx = p(x)y + q(x) \quad (1)$$

and the general second-order equation is

$$d^2y/dx^2 + p(x)dy/dx + q(x)y + r(x). \quad (2)$$



Redundancies

Redundancy means you are repeating yourself. Writers must be careful to eliminate words or expressions that have the same meanings. At times, redundancies occur because a writer uses an adjective or an adverb that has the same meaning as the noun or verb it modifies. For example, one cannot logically say that something is **very perfect** or **very unique** because if something is **perfect** or **unique**, it cannot be made more or less perfect or unique.

Another example is **twelve o'clock noon**. This is redundant because the word *noon* only means *twelve o'clock p.m.* Thus the proper usage is **at noon** or **at twelve o'clock p.m.**

In speech, redundancy is forgiven.

EX: "Boy, it's really raining *outside*." (Where does it rain *inside*?) Or, "Gee, look how beautiful the stars *in the sky* are." Are stars found *on the ground*? "The plane crashed into the earth." Have planes crashed into the clouds? This type of redundancy is okay in casual conversation, but it would be unacceptable in formal writing.

The following list of common phrases are redundant in nature, but can be reduced to a more appropriate form:

adding together.....	adding
cancel out.....	cancel
combine into one.....	combine
cubic meters in volume.....	cubic meters
different varieties.....	varieties
final outcome.....	outcome, conclusion
first and foremost.....	first
goals and objectives.....	goals
initial introduction.....	introduction
joined together.....	joined
mixed together.....	mixed
past history.....	past
personal opinion.....	opinion
physical size.....	size
point in time.....	time, period
reason why.....	reason
refer back to.....	refer to
repeat again.....	repeat
small in size.....	small
this particular instance.....	this case, this instance
triangular in shape.....	triangular
true facts.....	facts, the truth



Reduced Adjective Clauses

Reducing an adjective clause, a clause modifying a noun, makes writing more fluent and eliminates the overuse of “that,” “which” and “who.” To eliminate these words in adjective clauses follow these two basic rules below:

Note: Check whether reducing the clause changes the meaning.

1. If the verb *is*, *are*, *was* or *were* is used, the “that,” “which” and “who” along with these verbs can be eliminated:

EX: The rules **that** are giving telemarketers access to public records should be revised.

Reduced: The rules **giving** telemarketers access to public records should be revised.

EX: The research, **which is limited to** two controlled groups, requires more testing to validate its results.

Reduced: The research, **limited to** two controlled groups, requires more testing to validate its results.

EX: The officials **who are trying to oust** the ruling party have no confidence in the party’s governing abilities.

Reduced: The officials **trying to oust** the ruling party have no confidence in the party’s governing abilities.

2. If the verb is not *is*, *are*, *was* or *were*, the clause can be reduced by omitting “that,” “which” or “who” and by changing the verb to the *-ing* form.

EX: Education provides personal advantages **that allow** consistent growth and privileges.

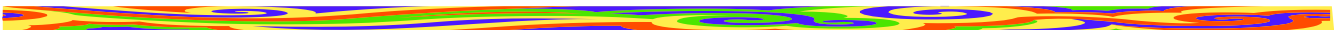
Reduced: Education provides personal advantages **allowing** consistent growth and privileges.

EX: Studies **that validate** new research are ongoing projects in all facets of the arts and sciences.

Reduced: Studies **validating** new research are ongoing projects in all facets of the arts and sciences.

EX: Doctors **who** specialize in emergency medicine confront daily challenges.

Reduced: Doctors **specializing** in emergency medicine confront daily challenges.



Academic Writing Tips
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Quotation Marks

The following rules cover most of the usage for quotation marks.

1. Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotations, whether the quotations were originally spoken or written:

EX: The police officer asked, "Who is responsible for this accident?" Both drivers responded, "He is!"

2. Use a block quote for a quotation of 30 or more words (around three or four lines of print). Set off the quote by indenting ten spaces from the left and indent the first line five spaces. This is called a "block quote." Do not use quotation marks around a blocked quote. Use a colon, not a comma, after the sentence introducing a blocked quote.

EX: Human Rights Article 18 states the following:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, worship and observance.

Note: Some departments may require that the blocked quote be doubled-space. Ask your professors. The thesis processing office *requires* quotations of more than 30 words to be blocked and single-spaced.

3. Use quotation marks around the titles of newspapers and magazine articles, television and radio programs, and chapters or subdivisions of books. Do not use quotation marks around the titles of books or the names of newspapers. Use italics for book titles and other large publications.

EX: The article in the *New York Times* entitled "Earning Power in 50 Industries" identifies the computer industry as the industry of choice for earning potential.

4. Use quotation marks to emphasize words representing themselves:

EX: She always mispronounces "walk" and "work."

5. Place periods and commas *inside* the quotation marks. This rule applies to *all* uses of quotation marks, for quoted material, for titles of publications, etc.

EX: I asked him, "Did you write the article, „Time and Again, ’ ” and he said he had.

Note: Single quotation marks are used for a quotation inside a quotation.

6. Put colons and semicolons outside quotation marks:

EX: She said two months ago, "Without Mel Gibson, I have no life"; today she loves Ricky Martin.

7. Put question marks and exclamation points inside quotation marks, unless they apply to the sentence as a whole and not to the quoted material:

EX: Who wrote the song, “Where have all the Flowers Gone?”?

Notice that the first example has two question marks, one asking who wrote the song, and the second asking about the flowers.

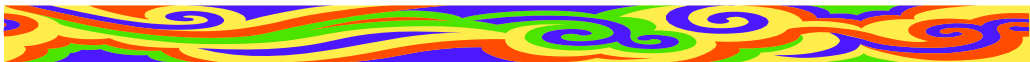
EX: I read the article, “Guess Who Murdered the English Teacher?” and I got some ideas.

The above example has the question mark inside the quotation marks because the question mark is part of the title of the article.

The last example has the question mark outside the quotation mark because the question mark refers not to the quoted material, but rather to the “did” question.

EX: Did he say, “Ron’s not so funny”?

8. Don’t use quotation marks around the titles or the headings of your own reports, essays, papers, or thesis. The headings and titles stand-alone. In addition, don’t follow a title or a heading with a period. These headings and titles are not sentences, so they don’t end with a period.



Academic Writing Tip
-by Ron and Beth
Pronoun's Antecedent

A pronoun's antecedent is one that refers back to a specific noun or noun phrase previously mentioned. Reference to a noun by a pronoun is appropriately placed in the same sentence or the following sentence. If there are other nouns or noun phrase separating a noun from its pronoun, the noun should be restated to prevent confusion. Some basic rules to follow are

- . Avoid using a pronoun without an obvious antecedent.

EX:
After the demonstrators refused to leave, **they** surrounded **them**.

Revised:
After the demonstrators refused to leave, the police surrounded them.
Or
The police surrounded the demonstrators after they refused to leave.

- Do not use a pronoun antecedent to refer back to an object of a prepositional phrase or a possessive noun.

EX:
In the analysis presented by the researcher, **it** points out that the experiment contains numerous flaws.

Revised:
The researcher's analysis points out numerous flaws in the experiment.

EX:
In John Kennedy's biography, **it** offers various possibilities for his assassination.

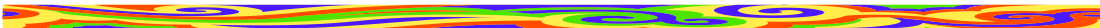
Revised:
John Kennedy's biography offers various possibilities for his assassination.

- Make a pronoun agree in number with its antecedent. NOTE: If the pronoun can be singular or plural, be consistent in usage.

EX:
The voters admire his integrity and directness. **This** secures his likelihood of winning the election. (this = admiration)

EX:
The voters admire his integrity and directness. **These** secure his likelihood of winning the election. (these = integrity and directness)

EX:
The orchestra warmed up for **their** concert
Or
The orchestra warmed up for **its** concert



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Uses of Prepositions

Prepositions can be confusing for learners of English since, at times, the usage does not seem logical. However, there are some standards for prepositions, which help writers in choosing the appropriate preposition. The following chart of prepositions provides some guidance:

1. Time: *about, after, around, at, before, by, during, for, from...to, in, on, since, until*

Fred arrived in Germany **in** August 1990.
He started school **on** September 6th.
His school day began **at** 8 o'clock **in** the morning.
He works **from** sunup **to** sundown.
By March, the weather will be warmer.
The discount is available **until** this Saturday.

2. Place: *above, against, along, among, around, at, behind, below, beside, between, by close to, down, far from, from...to, in, in back of, in front of, inside, into, near, next to, off, on, out, out of, outside, over, under, up, upon, within*

Linda has lived **in** New York for 40 years.
She lives **on** West 63rd Street.
She lives **at** 598 West 63rd Street.
Linda takes the subway **to** work at 6 o'clock every morning.
Her friends often see her running **to (for)** the subway train.

3. Reason: *because of, due to, for*

Because of rain, the office cancelled the tour
Parents often wish **for** peace and quiet.
Due to the storm, the officials canceled the marathon.
For obvious reasons, the company did not raise salaries.

4. Manner: *by, in (e.g. in a new way), through, with, without*

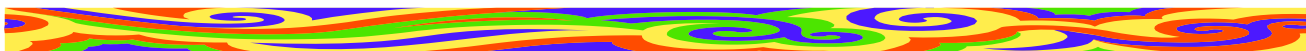
Students reap the benefit of their degree **by** working in a related field.
Some people live **without** ever owning a car.
The paper was filled **with** redundancies.
Through friends, people often learn of new job opportunities.

5. Quantity: *of*

Tons **of** lava poured from the volcano.
Many (**of** the) states support gun control.

6. Possession (belonging to): *of*

Members **of** the Senate serve a six-year term while members **of** the House of Representative serve a two-year term.



Linking Paragraphs

Linking multiple paragraphs helps the reader to recognize when a new paragraph is continuing the previous subtopic while also acting as a paragraph break. If multiple paragraphs are not linked, the reader has to determine the relationship between paragraphs. Using the following techniques when writing creates the connection for readers.

1. Use a pronoun that refers to a person, idea or thing just mentioned in the preceding paragraph.

EX: In addition, **these** devices facilitated a more expeditious completion of the mission...

EX: Since **that** was a necessary condition to the success of the mission,...

2. Repeat a key word used in the preceding paragraph.

EX: Third, the Board agreed to **offer** Mr. Gray the presidency of the organization.

When the **offer** was made, Mr. Gray did not immediately accept it due to a conflict of interest that ...

3. Repeat a phrase referring directly to the preceding idea.

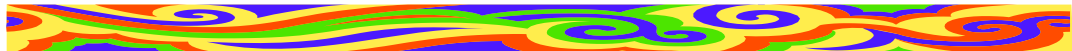
EX: The military operation left **the small, impoverished country** without much hope of rebuilding its industry.

This **small, impoverished nation**, known as ...

4. Use transitions that appropriately link the last sentence in a previous paragraph. Many transitions serve to bridge paragraphs.

EX: Due to the results, we evaluated the data and implemented some necessary system updates to remove the errors.

Nevertheless, the improvements failed to correct all the problems that ...



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Length of Sentences and Paragraphs

Long Sentences and Paragraphs

Reading fifty to sixty-word sentences or full-page paragraphs is painful. A good length for a sentence is between 10 to 15 words. This length allows readers to absorb the writer's ideas more easily. Do not make the mistake of thinking that long, convoluted sentences make writing more scholarly or impressive. The focus is clarity.

No reader enjoys a difficult or taxing prose. The German philosopher, Nietzsche once said, "They muddy their waters to make them appear deep." What he meant is that writers often try to make simple ideas seem profound by writing long, dense sentences.

Note: Students whose native language is one of the romance languages often have problems in this area.

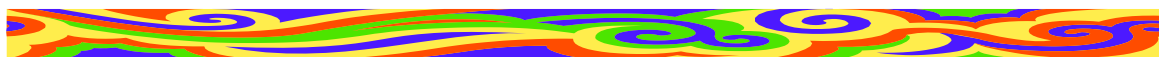
Suggestion: Pay attention to textbooks (the ones that are clear and easy to read) and imitate the sentence length and structure in these.

Although a paragraph should contain one primary idea, it should not go on for the whole page. This is overwhelming to the reader. If the paragraph requires a great deal of length in order to cover one idea, find an appropriate place to divide the paragraph into at least two paragraphs.

Short Sentences and Paragraphs

Equally bad are continuous short and choppy sentences. These sentences, however, can be easily joined with connectors when editing. In contrast, long sentences are harder to divide. There are, of course, times when short sentences are appropriate, especially in the case of emphasis.

Finally, do not use one or two-sentence paragraphs in formal writing. Students often see this done in newspapers and magazines and try to use the technique in a thesis. These two types of writing differ greatly in purpose and audience.



Italics or Underlining

Writers emphasize certain words and phrases by printing them in a slanted font called *italics* or by underlining the word or phrase. Italics and underlining are interchangeable. With today's different fonts, underlining a word is more evident to the reader. Here are some rules for using italics or underlining.

1. Use italics or underlining for the names of book titles, newspapers and magazines, and the names of movies, plays, television shows, radio programs, software, musical compositions, and works of art.

EX:

Microsoft 2000 or Microsoft 2000 is the favorite processing software.

2. Consider using italics to highlight the names of commercial products, if the highlighting aids reading or eliminates confusion.

EX:

Henry Ford introduced his first *Thunderbird* about the same time as Chevrolet introduced the *Corvette*.

3. Use italics for words and phrases used as examples or for words in other languages.

EX:

Did you know that the word *napkin* means *diaper* in England?

Shukran means "thanks" in Arabic

4. Use italics or underlining for the names of spacecraft, aircraft, ships and trains.

EX:

The Titanic or The Titanic was thought to be unsinkable.

5. Do not use italics or underlining for the titles of legal documents, like the Constitution, or the Bible or the books of the Bible.
6. Do not italicize or underline the title of your own papers or thesis.
7. Do not use italics or underlining to highlight quotations or footnotes or notes under figures or tables. Using italics excessively is distracting and difficult to read.
8. Do not use italics for Latin abbreviations, such as e.g., et al., etc., i.e., or vs. *Note:* The usage of italics is generally reserved for formal references.
9. Do not use italics or underlining for the titles of articles, essays or short published works



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Gender Bias in Pronouns

Have you heard the term, "gender equity?" This expression arose from the movement to eliminate sexual inequality in behavior and in speech. Today, in all facets of daily life, a person should not display gender bias in speaking or writing. Pronouns of gender are *he*, *she*, *his*, *her* and *him*. Consider this biased example followed by methods of revising the sentence.

EX:

When a politician campaigns for office, **he** must spend considerable money to compete with **his** opponents.

Try revising such sentences about people and roles by using one of the following methods:

1. Use a plural instead of a singular noun: *they* and *their*.

EX: When politicians campaign for office, **they** must spend considerable funds to compete with **their** opponents.

2. Rewrite the sentence removing pronoun usage.

EX: A politician **who** campaigns for an office must spend considerable funds to compete with opponents.

3. Use both singular pronouns: he and she.

EX: When a politician campaigns for office, **he or she** must spend considerable funds to compete with **his or her** opponents.

This last example can be clumsy especially if there are many sentences with this type of usage. Use this option only when the sentence is somewhat short without repeating pronouns. (Incidentally, do not use slash marks (/), such as *s/he* or *he/she* in academic writing. Slash marks can create confusion for the readers and they are a rather lazy method of constructing a thought.)

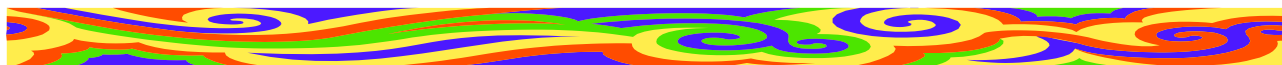
Indefinite Pronouns

For the indefinite pronouns, such as *one*, *each*, *either*, *neither*, *everyone*, *everybody*, *someone*, *somebody*, *anyone*, *anybody*, and *no one*, the corresponding pronoun is singular not plural. The singular pronouns, **his** and **her** can be replaced by using a plural subject.

EX: Everyone voting in the election was asked to make **his or her** choice via a ballot.

Revised: Voters in an election were asked to make **their** choice via a ballot.

This revised sentence also removes the vague reference of "everyone."



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Excessive Footnotes

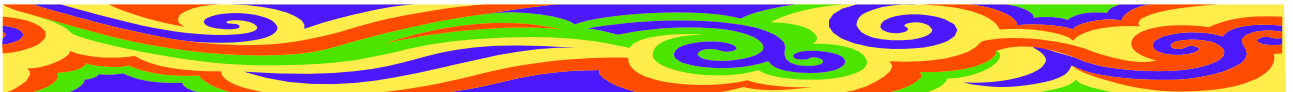
Footnotes are used for two main reasons: to identify sources and to provide explanatory information. Footnotes that amplify information in the text are called *content footnotes*, which should never be intrusive or superfluous or lengthy. Long content footnotes are distracting to readers, painful for typists, and expensive if you should get lucky enough to have your work published.

Content footnotes should convey just *one* idea. When footnotes are complicated, lengthy or superfluous, more than likely the writer has not drafted the text properly. If the information in a footnote is lengthy it should be woven into the text or it should be eliminated.

Learning to write well involves the critical skills of including relevant information while excluding irrelevant information. Some students belabor a point by including far more detail than the readers need or want to know. At times, the students recognize that some information does not fit into their text logically, yet instead of excluding information, they decide to stuff it illogically into a footnote.

When some explanatory information is necessary, try to include the information in the text. If there is a great amount of explanatory information, consider writing an additional section or even an additional chapter to the thesis.

Finally, if half of every page in the thesis is consumed by a footnote, just be brave and press that delete key. Everyone involved in the process of getting the thesis done will be thankful.



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

The Ellipsis Mark

The ellipsis mark consists of three spaced periods. Use these to indicate that material has been deleted from a word-for-word quotation. Ellipsis is important in alerting the reader that some information from the original quote is being omitted.

EX: According to the study, “Fewer than 60% of the population ... votes in national elections.”

Here are some additional rules for the ellipsis mark:

- Use a period before the three ellipsis dots if you delete a full sentence or more from a quoted passage. In this case, use **four dots**.

EX: The researcher claimed, “The results of this latest experiment are comparable to any great discovery These results are being accepted without any scrutiny.”

- Use ellipsis to indicate that an enumeration or listing continues beyond the items named. (**This applies to informal writing only**)

EX: The new drug would help in the fight against all types of cancers: lung, colon, prostate ...

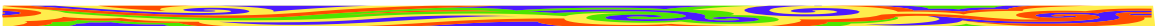
- Use the ellipsis mark at the end of a quotation only when the omission in the quote coincides with the end of the original sentence.

EX: The researcher reported that the results were “competitive with other results from renowned researchers”

- Leave one blank space before and after the ellipsis mark.
- Do not use the ellipsis mark at the beginning of a quotation.
- Do not use an ellipsis if it changes the original meaning of a quoted passage.

EX: Original “The film was an extraordinary piece of trash, totally beyond belief.”

EX: Ellipsis “The film was... extraordinary ... totally beyond belief.”



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Directness

Poor writers waste words. They often use ten words where five would be enough. Such extra words are called “deadwood.”

When revising a draft, a good place to begin is eliminating unnecessary words. Why is this important? First, the simpler the sentence the easier it is to read. Second, the fewer words used, the fewer words required to type, edit, and revise. Third, since time is a valuable commodity, using concise thoughts benefits both the reader and writer.

Look at the following examples of deadwood and the revisions:

EX:

After **the end of** the Korean War, the **Korean** government **began the process of rebuilding** the nation.

Revised:

After the Korean War, the **government rebuilt** the nation.

EX:

There will be as many combined sets of force data as force structure data.

Revised:

The sets of force data **will equal** the force-structure data.

EX:

Just by a lucky chance, the **naval** sailors had an adequate supply of pure **drinking** water **untainted by any impurities**.

Revised:

Fortunately, the sailors had an adequate supply of pure water.

EX:

It is evident that information systems alter organizations **in various ways**.

Revised:

Information systems **clearly** alter organizations **variously**.



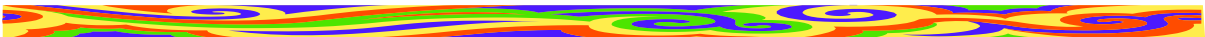
Clarity vs. Pedantry

Good writers are not pedantic, meaning they “impress” their readers when they should just focus on “expressing” their ideas simply and clearly. Pedantic writers do this by trying to sound scholarly or highly educated. For example, they use elevated unfamiliar vocabulary; they interject foreign phrases into their writing without good reason; they overuse passive voice; they write long, convoluted sentences. Basically, these writers focus on the *tone* of their writing more than on the **clarity** of their writing. All of these pedantic elements only create prose that is painful and boring to read.

Here are a few tips on avoiding pedantry:

1. Don't use words like *utilize*, *utilization*, or *utilizing* when you can just say *use* or *using*.
2. Do not use Latinate words or phrases like *ameliorate*, *commence*, *peruse*, *finalize* when *improve*, *begin*, *read*, or *finish* are appropriate.
3. Do not use foreign phrases if an English alternative exists. The French expression *vis-à-vis* as a preposition can mean either *compared with* or *in relation to*. As an adverb it means *face to face*. It can also mean *opposite of* or *corresponding to another* or a *counterpart*. Owing to these multiple meanings, few people can use the expression correctly, so just rely on English prepositions or adverbs to convey meaning. Likewise, why use expressions like *de facto*, *post facto*, etc. when an English alternative is suitable?
4. Avoid euphemisms. Be direct and do not try to couch the real meaning in a “pretty” phrase. For example, write *poor* instead of *economically deprived*, write *defeat* or *retreat* instead of *strategic withdrawal*, write *bomb* instead of *incendiary device*.

In summary, in academic writing, tone should be semi-formal, but it should not sound contrived or stilted. For international students knowing what sounds contrived or stilted is very difficult, so here is a great general rule: **Keep it clear; keep it simple.**



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Capitalization

Using capital letters in English has some general rules; nonetheless, exceptions are always applicable to most rules. Be consistent with any usage. The following are guidelines in capitalization:

1. **Capitalize proper nouns and adjectives. Use capitals with the names of specific people, places and things.**

- | | |
|---|---|
| • Names of people | -George W. Bush, Abraham Lincoln |
| • Names of places | -the United States, the Far East |
| • Names of public places and regions | -Yosemite Park, the Sierras, the Midwest |
| • Names of buildings and monuments | -the Sears Building, the London Bridge |
| • Days of the week, months | -Tuesday, October |
| • Holidays | -Thanksgiving Day, Easter |
| • Organizations and companies | -the Red Cross, General Motors |
| • Institutions: universities, departments, government offices | -Pace University, the English Department, the Foreign Service |
| • Historical events, periods and documents | -the Gulf War, the Renaissance, the Constitution |
| • Religions, deities, revered people and texts | -Buddhism, Islam, Baptist, Jehovah, the Torah |
| • Races, tribes, nations nationalities and language | -Caucasian, Navajo, Spain, Spaniards, Spanish |
| • Registered trademark names | -Nike, Xerox |
| • Names of ships, planes | -the USS <i>Eisenhower</i> , the <i>Delta Queen</i> , the <i>Challenger</i> |

2. **Capitalize a title before a person's name.**

EX: The committee questioned Senator Kennedy

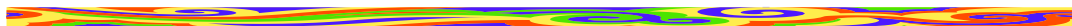
Generally, a capital is not use when a title is not associated with a proper name; however, a capital can be used when a title substitutes for a known person.

EX: The committee questioned the Senator. (in this case Kennedy)

3. **Capitalize major words in titles.** For titles of published books, journals, magazines, essays, articles, and films use a capital letter for all words except articles (*an, a, the*), coordinating conjunctions (*but, and, or, nor, so, for, yet*), "to" in a infinitive (*to create*) and prepositions unless they begin or end a title or subtitle.

EX: *A Key for Writers* or *Fifteen Days and Nights in Europe*

Resource: Raimes, Ann. Keys for Writers



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Brackets

Writers use brackets to enclose any words or phrases that they have inserted into a word-for-word quotation. This is commonly done to correct or explain something in the quote

EX:

Russell said, "Life is hard. Then you die. Then you rot [decompose, decay]."

In this case, the word "rot" is defined and shows the readers that this was not in the original.

Brackets are also used to insert words or phrases into information that is already in parentheses. This usage is discouraged since it is awkward and interrupts the reading process. The following sentence demonstrates how awkward such structures can be:

EX:

Russell, a remarkable man, has been chosen by Stanford University (located in central California [an area also known for its wine production] near San Jose) to head the research department.

A mistake, such as an error in spelling, usage or fact, in a quoted original passage can be corrected and inserted in brackets. This may be necessary to clarify the information.

EX:

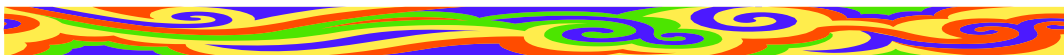
During the news conference the general stated, "Given the circumstances, we have [had] no choice but to attack."

Another method of correcting is adding the Latin word *sic* (meaning *thus or so*) in brackets to highlight the error without correcting it.

EX:

Shaw wrote, "the nation of Culombia [*sic*] will overcome its present problems and amaze the world."

Most professional writers now find the insertion of *sic* to mark errors a bit snobbish. It is easier to just correct the obvious error or to paraphrase the sentence so that the error is avoided completely.



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Parallelism

One of the most basic and important writing techniques is *parallelism*. Basically, parallelism is using a series of words, phrases, clauses, or even sentences that are grammatically equal. When Abraham Lincoln (who was a fantastic writer) used the expression “of the people, by the people, and for the people” he was using parallelism. In this case, he repeated three prepositional phrases.

Commonly used connectives requiring parallel structures are **and, or, but, either...or, neither...nor, both...and, not only...but also**. Here are some examples of faulty parallelism

EX:

The movie star was **charming, intelligent** and a **beauty**.

Charming and **intelligent** are adjectives, but **beauty** is a noun. To make this sentence parallel, the writer merely needs to change the noun **beauty** to the adjective **beautiful**.

EX:

Her goals were not only **to study** and **travel**, but also **having** a family.

Parallelism is faulty here because a writer cannot connect two infinitive verb phrases with a gerund. The writer could correct the error in either of the following two ways:

Revised:

Her goals were not only **to study** and **travel**, but also **to have** a family.

Her goals were not only **studying** and **traveling**, but also **having** a family.

When writers use a series of words, all the words in the series must be grammatically alike. That is, they must be all nouns, all infinitive verbs, all gerunds, all adjectives, all adverbs, or whatever, but not mixed. (Notice the usage of “all” to create parallelism)

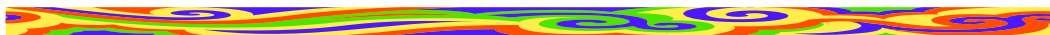
Parallelism applies to all elements of our language. Here is an example of faulty parallelism in a series of clauses:

EX:

He wanted to know **why he went**, **the time he went**, and **where he went**.

In this case, the two clauses that begin with the subordinators why and where are joined to the noun clause beginning with the word time. To correct this, we only have to use the word **when** instead of **the time**.

Note: Parallelism is also required in itemizing, such as in bullets, charts and graphs.



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

The Apostrophe

Here are a few brief tips on using the apostrophe. These following rules are the ones that commonly cause errors in theses.

- To make a noun possessive use an apostrophe with an "s"

EX:

Ron's car is parked illegally.

- To make a noun ending in "s" possessive, use the apostrophe.

EX:

Jesus' mother was Mary.

- To show joint possession (two or more people or groups), use an apostrophe and the s' or ,s:

EX:

Bob and **Ted's** apartment is small.

Bob and **Charles'** apartment is small.

- To pluralize numbers or letters of the alphabet or abbreviations, use the apostrophe with an "s". Some newspapers and magazines (following the recommendations of The Modern Language Association [MLA]) drop the apostrophe in these cases. Decide on a format for the apostrophe and be consistent in its use.

EX:

Write clearly! Your **3's** look like **8's**.

You typed three **p's** in the word *pepper*.

He owns three **VCR's**.

or

Write clearly! Your **3s** look like **8s**.

You typed three **ps** in the word *pepper*.

He owns three **VCRs**.

- To make a abbreviation or acronym possessive use to *of the* form or if appropriate, the *by the* form instead of ,s

EX:

The tax forms **of the** IRS are complicated and time-consuming.

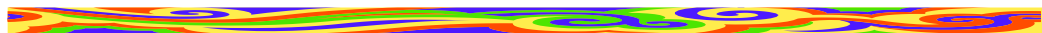
The investigative paper issued **by the FBI** contained discrepancies.

- To use the possessive pronoun *its* no apostrophe is used in the possessive pronoun. Don't confuse the contracted form of *it is* with the possessive form.

EX:

Each nation has **its** own constitution.

It's (it is) really hot today.



Academic Writing Tips

-by Ron and Beth

Overuse of It Structures (Anticipatory It)

Sometimes the pronoun "it" substitutes for the subject of a sentence. One style, called the "impersonal it," refers to the weather, to time or to temperature. For example, "It is 7:25." Or "It is cold today." Using this form is acceptable in both conversation and informal writing.

Another use of "it" is called the "anticipatory it," which should be avoided in formal writing. This is also called a "dummy subject" because the "it" appears to be the subject of the sentence, but actually the subject is embedded in the sentence. Here are some examples:

It was important for NATO to intervene.
It is essential that the software be revised.
It will be necessary to rebuild the economy.

Notice that an infinitive or a gerund phrase, or a noun clause ("that" followed by a subject and verb) is the true subject of these sentences. The anticipatory "it" in each of these sentences is acting only as a filler or dummy subject. Since the anticipatory "it" in these cases is really meaningless, good writers recast the sentence.

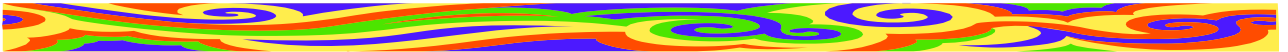
Students often overuse these structures in their writing, but eliminating them is easy. Just use an **infinitive verb** or a **gerund** as the subject of the sentence and drop the needless "it." Following are the revised sentences:

To intervene was important for NATO.
Revising the software is essential.
Rebuilding the economy is necessary.

These sentences allow the true subject to be placed in its clearest and succinct position while creating more of an action mood.

Avoid the use of these wordy phrases beginning with "it."

It is known that ...
It is considered that ...
It demonstrates that ...
It could be said that ...
It follows that ...



Academic Writing Tips
-by Ron and Beth

Adverb Suppression

Generally, most international students can use **adverbs of frequency** quite clearly. These adverbs of frequency include some of the following: *sometimes, often, never, seldom, rarely, occasionally, always*, etc. Some International students, however, rarely use **adverbs of manner** in their writing.

Adverbs of manner describe how an action is performed. The placement of the adverb of manner varies; however, the following two rules are good directives to follow.

1. Position the adverb in front of the verb or behind the object of the verb.

EX:

The governor **reluctantly** signed the bill that would allow fewer restrictions on gun owners.

2. Don't put the adverb in front of the verb if the object phrase is short.

EX:

The Minister of Education responded to the crisis **rapidly**.

Or

Most of the representatives signed the Partnership for Peace
Accord **enthusiastically**.

Instead of using these adverbs of manner, students often create unnecessary wordy prepositional phrases.

Here are some examples with revisions:

EX:

The dentist performed the procedure **in a thorough manner**.

Revised:

The dentist performed the procedure **thoroughly**.

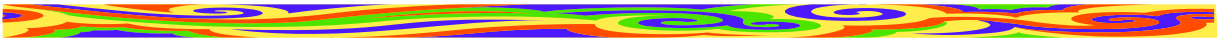
EX:

Parents who believe in home-schooling often teach their kids **in an inadequate way**.

Revised:

Parents who believe in home-schooling often teach their kids **inadequately**.

Few international students can master prepositional usage (because it is so illogical at times), so anything that can eliminate preposition problems is good advice to follow. Ron has edited many NPS theses that did not have even one adverb of manner in them. Adverbs of manner are a writer's friend. Students should treat them a little more **respectfully** (and not **with a little more respect**.)



Abbreviations and Acronyms

The rule for using abbreviations and acronyms is simply to spell out the word the first time it is used, followed by the shortened version in parentheses. After this, the abbreviated form can be used in the remainder of the document.

EX:

“**The Department of Transportation (DOT)** announced irregularities in their budgeting. Now **the DOT** is denying these previous statements.”

“**The gross national product (GNP)** has declined for the second year in a row. If **the GNP** continues to decline in this fashion, all sectors of Wall Street will feel the impact.”

Notice that the article “the” is used in front of the abbreviated form since the spelled out form carries the article.

Note: When starting a sentence or paragraph with an acronym or abbreviation, a word, such as an article, should precede the acronym or abbreviation.

In the case of a thesis paper containing many chapters, restating the meaning of the abbreviated form as it is mentioned in each preceding chapter is wise. This is especially true for abbreviations and acronyms that are not commonly known. If the thesis requires quite a few abbreviated forms, an appendix explaining the forms is also a suggestion.

Overuse

Technical writers must often use abbreviations or acronyms (abbreviations pronounced as words, such as NATO, SETO, UNESCO.) Military or political science writers often use so many abbreviations and acronyms that their writing can become incomprehensible, even for knowledgeable readers.

Look at the following example, which was taken from a NPS thesis:

The Resource Sponsors present their **SPPs** to the **IR3B** for review. Since the **SPPs** are consistent with planning guidance, they are compiled by **N80** into a **POM** proposal. The **ESC** reviews the proposal for policy issues. Then the **CNO** approves the Tentative **POM (T-POM)**. The **T-POM** is presented by **N80** and the Marine Corps **DCS** for Programs and Resources to the **DPSB**. After finishing the review by the **DPSB** and signing by the **SECDEF**, the **DoN POM** is submitted to the **OSD** for review.

In this example some of the abbreviations and acronyms need to be spelled out since they look more like code than English. Another option is a process chart.

Naturally if the abbreviations or acronyms are very common, such as FBI or DNA, they can be use repeatedly. However, if abbreviations or acronyms are not particularly common to the readers, use as few as possible.

