Writing in English at University

A Guide for Second Language Writers

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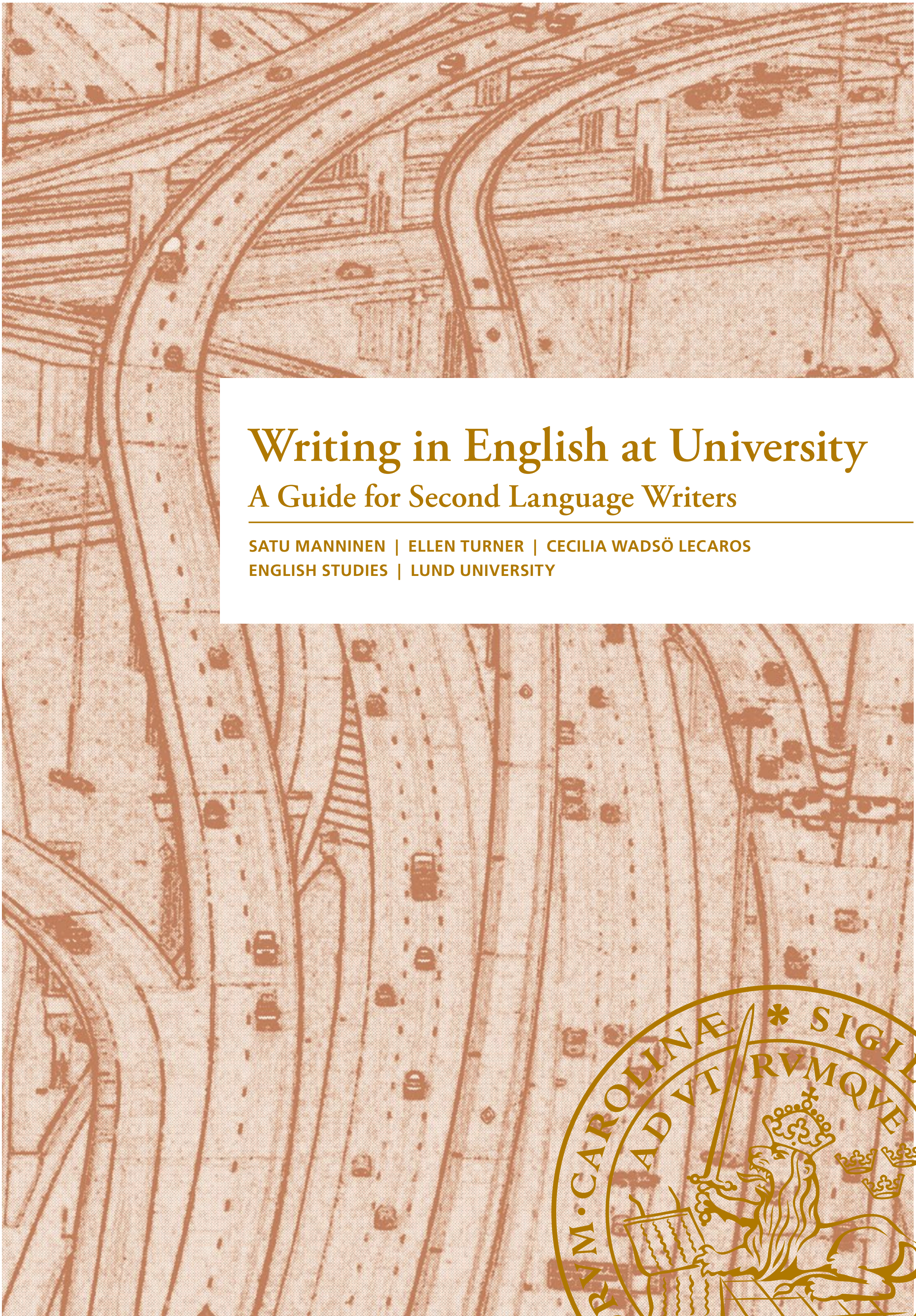

Writing in English at University

A Guide for Second Language Writers

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ENGLISH STUDIES | LUND UNIVERSITY

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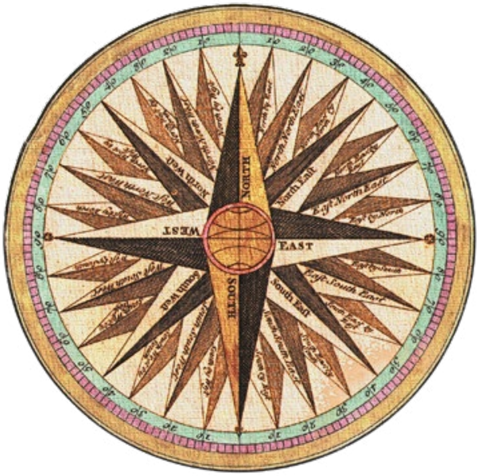

Writing is a central activity at university. *Writing in English at University: A Guide for Second Language Writers* is a textbook designed to accompany the MOOC *Writing in English at University*. It can also be used as a stand-alone handbook, with links to online resources, such as instructional videos on key aspects of academic writing provided throughout.

Just like the MOOC, this textbook targets university students currently involved in writing assignments or degree projects, as well as anyone wishing to learn more about academic writing in English. Although aimed at providing guidance and useful tips and tricks to all students and writers, it has been developed specifically with learners in mind who are writing essays and research papers in second-language environments and whose native language is not English.

Writing in English at University: A Guide for Second Language Writers covers central aspects of academic writing in English with a specific focus on:

- common terms and concepts that all writers need to be aware of
- ways of organising and structuring a text
- how to read and make use of sources and previous research
- practical advice on issues that second-language writers often encounter when working on their texts

The MOOC *Writing in English at University* and this textbook were developed at the English Unit, Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University.

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Writing in English at University

A Guide for Second Language Writers

Satu Manninen, Ellen Turner
and Cecilia Wadsö Lecaros

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Table of contents

Preface ... 7
  A note on the text and the links ... 8
  A note on copyright ... 8
  Acknowledgements ... 9
  The Writing in English at University team ... 9
Module 1 Writing in English at University: An introduction ... 11
  Introduction ... 13
  Lesson 1: How well do you know yourself as a writer? ... 13
  Lesson 2: What is academic writing? ... 14
    Writing at university… and beyond ... 16
  Lesson 3: Interpreting the task ... 18
  Lesson 4: The writing process ... 20
    Using invention techniques to develop a topic and plan a project ... 23
  Lesson 5: Feedback and peer review ... 25
    A step-by-step guide to giving peer review feedback ... 27
    Some guidelines for receiving feedback ... 29
  Lesson 6: Resources for writers ... 30
    Dictionaries ... 30
    Which monolingual dictionaries and other resources should you use? ... 33
  Lesson 7: A guide to study planning ... 35
    What skills are needed at university? ... 36
    Setting goals and planning your time in order to meet deadlines ... 37
    Know yourself to find out what works for you ... 40
Module 2: Structuring your text and conveying your argument ... 43
  Introduction ... 45
  Lesson 1: What is an argument? ... 45
  Lesson 2: Research questions and thesis statements ... 48
    Research questions ... 48
    Thesis statements ... 50
  Lesson 3: Structuring a text around the three-part essay ... 52

Lesson 4: Structuring information 54
General to specific 55
Problem - solution 56
Sequence or chronology 57
Cause and effect 58
Comparison/contrast 58
Use of headings and subheadings 59
Lesson 5: Structuring paragraphs 60
Lesson 6: IMRaD structure of essays and research papers 63
The introduction section 64
The method section 64
The results section 65
The discussion section 65
Lesson 7: CARS: Creating a research space 68
Lesson 8: Abstracts 70

Module 3: Using sources in academic writing 73
Introduction 75
“Standing on the shoulders of giants” 75
“Facts not opinions” 75
Lesson 1: Reading strategies 76
Reading in the information age 76
Lesson 2: Integrating sources: Positioning and stance 77
Selecting sources: Reliability and relevance 80
Integrating sources 81
Using reporting verbs 82
The citational present 84
More on integrating sources: Direct quotations 84
The sandwich metaphor 86
Lesson 3: Referencing and academic integrity 89
The nuts and bolts of referencing 90
Academic integrity 91
Plagiarism 93
Private versus public 94
Someone else’s work and ideas 94
Passing it off as your own 96
Common knowledge? 98
Joint work versus collusion 99
Plagiarism versus copyright violation 100

Module 4: A writer's toolbox 101
  Introduction 103
  Lesson 1: The need to revise and edit one's text 104
    Editing your writing globally 105
    Flaws in reasoning 109
    Knowing when to stop 113
  Lesson 2: Editing a text for register, tone and style 115
    Register 116
    Tone 120
    Style 123
  Lesson 3: The writer's toolbox: Proofreading 128
    Use of first-person pronouns and choosing between the active and passive voice 128
    Punctuation and sentence structure 132
    Spelling and typos 146
    Using a stylesheet 147
A checklist for writers 149
Works consulted 151

Preface

This textbook is designed to accompany the materials developed for the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) *Writing in English at University*, at the English Unit, Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University in 2016. The full MOOC is available on the Coursera platform. The video lectures that are part of the MOOC can also be accessed via YouTube. The various chapters and sections of the online version of this textbook contain links that will take you directly to the individual video lectures on YouTube. Signing up for the full course on Coursera will allow you access to more materials than just the video lectures: the MOOC and all of its contents are open to everyone and they are available free of charge. This textbook also contains some new materials which have been designed to complement and to expand the MOOC in various ways. Some of these materials have been created on the basis of the feedback we have received from students in our own courses as well as from the enrolled learners on Coursera.

This textbook and the MOOC have been designed as resources for university students who are currently involved in writing assignments or degree projects, as well as for those who wish to learn more about academic writing in English. Unless you have already taken courses in academic writing in English, there will probably be terms and concepts that are new to you. One goal of this textbook and the MOOC is to help you reflect on what these terms and concepts mean and how you can best apply them in your own writing. Although we hope that the resources provide guidance and useful tips and tricks to all students and writers, they have been designed specifically with learners in mind who are writing essays and research papers in second-language environments and whose native language is not English.

Both the textbook and our MOOC *Writing in English at University* consist of four modules:

Module 1 introduces you to some important concepts of academic writing.

Module 2 looks at the various choices and preferences in terms of organising and structuring a text.

Module 3 focusses on how to read and make use of sources and previous research.

Module 4 provides practical advice and tips on how to deal with a number of issues that especially second-language writers encounter, when they are working on their texts.

Compared to the online MOOC, we have adjusted the structure of Module 1 in this book slightly, to make it function better as a textbook. In the other modules, there is a one-to-one correspondence between the textbook and the structure of our MOOC.

Writing is a central activity at university, both for learning and for assessment, and many universities have set up their own online writing resources. We will occasionally make references to such materials in this textbook and include links that take you directly to such resources. For the most part, we will refer you to AWELU (*Academic Writing at Lund University*), a resource which was also developed at the English Unit at Lund University and which covers various aspects of academic writing in English in more detail than we are able to do in a standard-length textbook.

A note on the text and the links

The e-version of this textbook has links inserted that take you directly to the places where further information is to be located. The video lectures will start to play when you click on the title of each video lecture.

For those of you reading this book in hard copy format, the e-version with links can be found here: https://www.ht.lu.se/en/serie/lse

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In Module 3 of our MOOC *Writing in English at University* as well as in Module 3 of this textbook, the video lectures on referencing have been produced by Nicolette Karst and Fredrik Vanek at Lund University Libraries.

Module 1

Writing in English at University: An introduction

Introduction

The goal of Module 1 is to introduce academic writing as a concept and make you more aware of the skills and abilities that are needed when embarking on an academic writing project. The module is divided into several lessons: in Lessons 1 and 2, we discuss different kinds of writing at university and explain why it is important to master different writing techniques. We also introduce central concepts that we will use throughout the book. Lesson 3 focuses on the use of stylesheets and instructions in academic writing, and Lesson 4 deals with a writing technique known as process writing. In Lesson 5, we talk about how strategies concerning giving and receiving feedback can help you develop as a writer, and in Lesson 6, we go through some resources that writers need, such as dictionaries. Finally, Lesson 7 contains material on study planning and time management skills. The purpose of this lesson is to highlight some central aspects of study planning at university and to point out links between process writing and the writer's overall planning.

Lesson 1:
How well do you know yourself as a writer?

Acquiring good academic research and writing skills early on is essential for your success both at university and in your professional life. This course aims to give you an understanding of the conventions of academic writing in English and teach you the components and benefits of a method often referred to as process writing. As well as helping you put together your own toolbox of academic writing skills, this course will give you a chance to test out these tools, and to reflect on your own development as a writer.

We have ordered the course material in a way that is likely to reflect your actual writing process, so that you get the information you need in a logical order. However, in order to get as much as possible out of this textbook and of the MOOC, it is important that you identify your own individual needs. Depending on your educational background and other similar factors, you may want to access the material in an alternative order.

In Video lecture 1, we introduce you to some features of our online course which you will find on the Coursera platform.

Video lecture 1: Introduction to academic writing

Most students who embark on writing projects at university have experience of writing from previous education. Although you may find the demands at university different and indeed higher, reviewing your previous writing assignments and the kind of feedback you have received in the past may help you identify ways of adjusting to new demands. There are certain key issues that writers need to bear in mind, in order to succeed with their writing assignments at university. Knowing how you, as a writer, have responded to such issues in the past can help you develop your writing skills as well as your writing practices.

Reviewing previous feedback will also help you identify aspects that you need to keep in mind while you write. This is why we often ask our students to create their own personal checklists, based on the feedback they have received in the past, and to use these checklists as they work with new writing assignments. Some writers tend to make the same kind of language mistakes over and over again: subject verb agreement, capitalisation, as well as how to form the genitive are common mistakes in English among non-native writers, for instance. Being more aware of what grammatical mistakes one has a tendency to make, one can more easily learn to avoid them while writing. Sometimes feedback focuses on formal issues. If a writer has not followed the instructions or if the submission has not been properly proofread, for instance, this will be reflected in the final assessment of the text. Another type of feedback that many writers identify when looking at the comments they have received on previous assignments concerns the argument and structure of the text.

Lesson 2:
What is academic writing?

In this lesson, we discuss what is meant by the term *academic writing*. This is a question that many novice writers have when they start working on their first essays or other writing tasks. They may also be unsure of how academic writing differs from various other types of writing. How do we talk about and identify the differences found if we compare texts from different genres? And what separates, for example, an article in a popular scientific journal from an article in an academic journal? How are their goals different? How do the sources used as background material differ?

Video lecture 2 will introduce you to some key concepts, such as the communicative aspects of academic writing, and issues like objectivity, style and levels of formality. It is essential to reflect on who you write for and how you will need to write so that you reach your specific target audience.

Video lecture 2: What is academic writing?

In the video lecture, we bring up a number of important terms. To make sure that you have a good understanding of these terms, you may want to pause for a moment and reflect on the contents of the lecture, before proceeding to the next lessons.

Below, you will find the first of several self-reflection tasks in this book. If you write down your answers and come back to them every now and then as you work with your writing skills, you will be able to track your own progress in a very concrete way.

REFLECTION TASK: WHAT IS ACADEMIC WRITING?

Question 1: In the video, we say that all writing is *communicative*. What does that mean and what demands are thereby posed on you as a writer? If you are writing for a course at university, do you always know who is the intended audience, that is, who is your target reader?

Question 2: In the video, we talk about academic writing being *objective*. What does that mean in your discipline? If you talk to students in other disciplines, can you distinguish any differences in how the concept of objectivity is addressed in different academic fields?

As we mentioned in Video lecture 2, there are both general and more discipline-specific aspects of academic writing. Many of the general aspects will be covered in this textbook. It is, of course, important for writers to also familiarize themselves with the conventions in their own field. Students transitioning from one academic field to another may find that what they have learned previously is not what is expected in their new field. This is an example of the heterogeneity of academic writing; conventions vary depending on tradition and the nature of research disciplines.

A good way to learn about discipline-specific features is to read articles published in reputable journals in the field and observe what experienced writers do in their texts, to be able to achieve their goals. What makes some of the articles easier to read and decipher than others? How do the authors present their goals? How do they argue for their specific points of view? How do they manage to convince the reader that what they have to say is interesting and significant? It is a good idea to pay attention even to the smallest details, such as the authors' use of pronouns (that is, small words like *I, we, you*) and whether the texts are written in the active or the passive voice – these are all issues that we will discuss in some detail in Module 4 of this textbook.

The following texts on the AWELU platform contain more information about the generic features of academic writing as well as the various aspects that may vary between different disciplines:

AWELU: What characterizes academic writing?

AWELU: The heterogeneity of academic writing

Writing at university… and beyond

One goal of our MOOC *Writing in English at University* and this textbook is to make you more aware of the different academic writing competencies that you will need to master, so that you can successfully embark on the various writing tasks that are part of university studies, as well as professional life. As writing conventions vary between disciplines, between different levels of study, and even between different types of assignments, we have chosen to focus mainly on the generic skills that can be applied across the curriculum. However, although the main focus will be on generic writing skills, many of the tasks in this textbook are designed to encourage reflection on discipline-specific conventions as well. Such reflections will hopefully also help you apply the generic skills, so that you can meet the specific needs of your courses as well as your own discipline.

Together with other communicative skills, and in conjunction with various organizational and time management skills, the ability to write clear and well-structured texts is a valuable and sought-after competency on the job market. Writing is often described as a *transferable skill*, which means that it is a skill that can be applied in situations other than the one in which it was originally acquired. In the current context, writing being a transferable skill means that the kind of writing that you learn at university will provide you with knowledge about writing as well as equip you with various practical skills that can be made of use in your later professional life. Transferable skills of this kind are sometimes also referred to as *graduate attributes,* because they refer to qualities that students are expected to possess and be able to demonstrate, after having graduated from university.

What kinds of writing do students come across at university, then, and why are writing skills so important in the academic world? University students are often required to write during the learning process as well as after it, when they need to demonstrate the acquired knowledge and skills in, for example, an exam or other examination situation. One example of writing that takes place during the learning process is note-taking during a lecture or seminar. Even when there is a handout, students are usually expected to take notes based on what is said in class. As it is not possible to write down everything, it is important to identify what note-taking strategies work best for you. One strategy is to focus on what is new and how that is connected to what you already know or what has been presented in previous lectures. As you will not have time to formulate complete sentences, it may be useful to develop a system of writing down key words regarding concepts, processes, causes, and so on, to help you remember afterwards what the professor or lecturer said. Depending on your own learning style and on the visual aids or handouts provided in class, you may also try taking notes in a more graphic way, such as in bullet lists or mind maps.

Whatever strategy you choose while taking notes in class, it is important to make sure that the notes make sense to you, so that you can use them later. In order to be useful for long-term learning, the information shared in a lecture and jotted down in the form of notes needs to be processed after you have left the classroom. This means that the note-taking activities in the lecture should always be followed by a note-*making* session where you turn your lecture notes into more elaborate comments, filling out the possible gaps and adding information as you go through the materials covered in the lecture. Such revision of lecture notes therefore need to be carried out before you have had time to forget what the teacher said and what questions came up in the lecture.

You may find it helpful to also add references to the course literature and to other sources and to comment on how the topic of the lecture and the materials covered are connected to what you already know or what has been brought up in earlier lectures, as well as add references to other materials that may seem relevant to the topic. By producing such annotations – in other words, by making notes that create links and explain something – you are processing information and developing your own thinking through the writing that you do.

Another common writing activity at university concerns examination. In an examination situation, students are not only assessed on *what* they write but also on *how* they write it. This means that understanding the question and knowing how to present the information or the reflections that the examiner is asking for is an important matter, irrespective of whether you sit a written exam or write a lengthier essay. Interpreting instructions so that you know what you are meant to do is the topic of Lesson 3.

Lesson 3:
Interpreting the task

As we have seen above, there are generic features of academic writing that are shared by most disciplines. In addition, many disciplines have their own conventions and their own ways of writing. In order to succeed as a writer at university, you need to know what applies for your field, as well as what applies for each particular writing task at hand. If you are new to the discipline or to university studies, it is important to understand the writing conventions of your discipline and that different departments within the same field may also have their own ways of doing things. This means that the conventions that are appropriate in one situation may not be appropriate in another situation. If you are writing a text that will be assessed and graded, such as a final course paper, it is likely that the assessment will be at least partially based on how successfully you have managed to follow the instructions that were issued. Before embarking on a writing task, it is therefore important to make sure that you have understood what you are expected to do and in what way.

Instructions for a writing assignment often consist of guidelines regarding not only *what* you are expected to do but also *how* you are expected to carry out the task. These guidelines are presented in what is known as a *stylesheet*. A stylesheet is a list of specific points or instructions that will need to be observed in the text. These points include text structure, formatting, and language matters of various kinds; we will provide more information about stylesheets in Module 4. In the present module, we turn to issues that writers will need to be aware of, when deciphering an assignment. These are introduced in Video lecture 3 below. If you have not received any instructions for your writing assignment, you may want to contact your teacher or supervisor and ask if such guidelines are available and if not, what *generic* guidelines or stylesheets they could recommend that you use. Many journals, for example, publish a stylesheet that is intended for authors who wish to publish in the journal; these stylesheets often list issues that can be useful even in other writing situations and can sometimes be made use of, if no other instructions have been issued by your teacher.

Video lecture 3: Interpreting the task

To be able to reflect on the contents of Video lecture 3, we suggest you also read the following texts from the AWELU platform that provide more information about how to interpret writing assignments and how to break down typical assignment and/or examination questions into smaller sub-parts. After you have consulted these materials, have a look at the self-reflection task below.

AWELU: What kind of text?

AWELU: Essay questions

REFLECTION TASK: INTERPRETING THE TASK

Go back to previous assignments you may have written and reflect on the way in which you followed guidelines and instructions that you received. If your grade on assignments have reflected a lack of adherence to instructions, try to identify what you might have missed and reflect on how to improve your skills in following instructions. Identifying what may have gone wrong in previous writing assignments will help you perform better in the future. Some writers choose to create their own check lists regarding typical style guide features, such as formatting, text structure and style issues, to make sure they have followed any instructions issued.

As assignments and examination questions often contain so-called *instruction words*, it is important to understand what such words mean, before you start working on a task. You may not be able to get the highest grade for your work, if you have misinterpreted such instruction words and merely described something, when the instructions told you to analyse. As most dictionary definitions of *describe* and *analyse* will show, these words do not mean the same thing; the definitions provided below are taken from the *Merriam-Webster dictionary*:

describe	to represent or give an account of in words to represent by a figure, model, or picture: delineate obsolete: distribute to trace or traverse the outline of archaic: observe, perceive
analyse	to study or determine the nature and relationship of the parts of (something) by analysis to subject to scientific or grammatical analysis psychoanalyse

Below is a list of some instruction words that are often used in writing and other assignments. It is a sensible to look them up in a good monolingual (that is, English-English) dictionary, to make sure that you understand what they entail. It is worth observing that even instruction words may have different interpretations in different disciplines. If you are uncertain how to interpret a specific instruction word in your own field, you should always ask for clarification from the teacher who set the assignment.

analyse
discuss
prove
argue
define
review
compare
evaluate
summarize
describe
illustrate
support

Lesson 4:
The writing process

In this lesson, we focus on writing as a process. In our MOOC *Writing in English at University* and throughout this textbook, you are encouraged to view your writing as an ongoing process and to reflect on how working with your texts can help you develop and become a better writer. What do we mean when we say that writing is a process? One definition of the word *process* is that it is a continuous action or a series of events. Therefore, when we talk about writing as a process, we stress the fact that writing is an ongoing activity that requires time to develop and to mature. That is one reason why academic writing courses often run over several months – a two-week crash course will seldom do the trick. In this sense, improving one's writing skills resembles learning to play a musical instrument: both writers and musicians need to practise on a regular basis, to be able to learn and refine their skills, and feedback is essential for improvement. In a way, many of these skills need also to be "overlearned" so that they become automatized: experienced writers do not need to think very actively of how a paragraph is structured, as they have structured paragraphs so many times that it comes naturally to them. In the same way, an experienced pianist need not think very actively of where their fingers go, when they play a piece of music that they have played hundreds of times before.

The idea of writing as a process and the concept of process writing goes back to the 1970s, when scholars interested in student writing shifted their focus from the end-product – the finished essay – to the actual *writing* of student essays. By investigating what happens as a text develops from the initial ideas to the finished product, as well as how students learn and grow as writers during this process, it became clear that a structured approach to writing was beneficial not only to the outcome (in the form of better essays) but also to students' learning of the topic at hand. Process writing can then be understood as a writing method where writers allow their texts – as well as their understanding of the topic they write about – to develop gradually, through a series of stages.

Although the terminology may differ between textbooks, the writing process is often outlined as consisting of three main stages: prewriting, writing and rewriting. As the label suggests, the prewriting stage is concerned with activities that take place before one is ready to start writing the actual text. These activities include formulating a topic and a research question; choosing an approach; locating and reading previous research and other work that may be of relevance; pinpointing own arguments or claim/s; locating and collecting suitable data and other evidence that can help support the arguments or claims made; drafting a structure for the essay; and so on. Although one may write various bits and pieces, and sometimes even entire paragraphs, during the prewriting stage, these are usually still very preliminary and read more like notes to oneself.

The writing stage is concerned with composing the bulk of essay text, on the basis of the plan or outline set up during the prewriting stage. In many cases, the notes and short pieces of text written during the prewriting stage can also be fitted in, in more or less modified format. As most writers find during the writing process that they will need to adjust and revise their initial plans – sometimes even the main arguments may need revision – the rewriting stage refers to the time when all the necessary revisions, additions and clarifications are introduced in the text. One way to separate between the writing and rewriting stages is to think of what the end-result is intended to be. The writing stage will usually result in what is still viewed as a draft and which may receive comments and feedback from a supervisor, a tutor or from peer reviewers, while the rewriting stage will result in the finished product, such as the finished essay that is submitted to the examiners for grading, or an article that is submitted for publication.

It is quite common for authors to go back and forth between the different stages during the writing process. Different parts of the same text also need not be equally finished all at the same time. It is quite normal for an essay text to be otherwise almost ready for submission, apart from one or two sections that need more work and that might even force the author to go back to the drawing board (that is, to the prewriting stage) and redo the work that is required to fix the problems in these sub-parts. As writers need to go back and revise their ideas and how they are presented on a regular basis, it is important to realize that the rewriting stage is often extremely time-consuming. This means that you will need to leave enough time to be able to do all this work carefully: revision of a text is not something that can be done on the day before the deadline. In fact, many experienced writers tend to spend as much time on rewriting their text as they do on drafting the text during the prewriting and the writing stages. The various stages in the writing process are discussed further in Video lecture 4:

Video lecture 4: The writing process and process writing

On the basis of this video lecture, now try to answer the following self-reflection questions.

REFLECTION TASK: THE WRITING PROCESS

Question 1: What are the three main stages of the writing process? If you are not used this writing method before, think back at a previous essay assignment and reflect on what parts of your work for that essay could be seen as belonging to the different stages. If you would have approached that project using process writing, would your essay writing have looked different in any way, do you think?

Question 2: Why is it a good idea to step away from your text for a day or two and then resume work?

If you feel that you still need further information about the different stages of the writing process, you can go to the AWELU platform:

AWELU: Pre-writing stage

AWELU: Writing stage

AWELU: Rewriting stage

As we have seen above, there is much planning and preparatory work that needs to be done, before the actual writing can start – and unless all this work is done carefully, it will be difficult for you to present a full argument and present evidence to back up that argument in the rest of the essay. For essay projects and writing assignments where you are expected to formulate a topic yourself and to come up with your own arguments or claims, you might find the information and advice presented below helpful.

Using invention techniques to develop a topic and plan a project

The first step in establishing a good essay topic involves jotting down ideas in order to find your focus. There are various so-called invention techniques that can help you start thinking about a possible topic and the ways in which you could approach and write about this topic. Not all invention techniques work for all writers, so it is important to try them out and learn what works for you.

A method known as *freewriting* can be useful for exploring what you already know about a topic and what questions you may be able to pose. It can also help you overcome what is known as *a writer's block*, that is, a feeling of inability to come up with any ideas or text at all. Freewriting can be carried out in different ways; one approach is to first make sure that you will not be interrupted – by switching off the telephone, for example – and then setting a stopwatch for 10 minutes. While the clock is ticking, you just write down anything and everything that comes to your mind – even if what you produce sounds extremely silly and trivial to you. You should not worry about how the text looks or sounds like, and whether all the words, the style of writing and the grammar are correct. This technique is all about not waiting until you know what to write, but to try to force yourself to write whatever comes to mind, in order to just get started. When the time is up, you read what you have written and underline any passages that you find fruitful and that you think you might be able to develop further. After that, you try to expand on those passages either through more freewriting based on what you have produced, or by turning the passages into headings under which you add new ideas in, for example, bullet points or proper text. You can also try asking questions about these passages. Playing around with ideas in this way and trying to see where they lead and how they might be related can help you narrow down your initial ideas to something that is more focussed. Those more focussed ideas can then be discussed further with a peer group or with your supervisor or tutor.

Another invention technique that is commonly used by writers is called *clustering,* or *mind mapping*. This is especially useful when you are trying to identify key concepts and notions that you may need to bring up in the essay, and when trying to see how things are related and/or how the various details are connected to the bigger whole. Clustering is a technique that allows you to see your ideas and how they might be related visually; this can in turn help you understand what different directions you might be able to take your essay, and which of these paths would seem to be the most fruitful ones, given the time and the resources you have available. Clustering can also be useful when you need to arrange your ideas hierarchically, for example when you need to decide what are the main reasons for something that will need to be investigated and discussed in detail, and what are just additional reasons that can be mentioned in the text, but need not be given too much time and attention.

Yet another useful idea generation technique that you may want to experiment with is called *journalists' questions.* When writing a news report, a journalist will usually need to provide answers to the following six questions: *who, what, where, when, why*, and *how*. A news report could state, for example, that a man was robbed (the *who* and the *what*) at gunpoint (the *how*) of his wallet and mobile phone (the *why*) early Monday morning (the *when*) on his way to the airport (the *where*). Essays and research papers will often need to provide answers to very similar questions: who argues what, within what research tradition and/or field, and how was the research carried out?

The last invention technique that we bring up here is called *brainstorming*. As in the other invention techniques, there is no need to assess the quality of the ideas that you generate in a brainstorming session. The main purpose is to generate as many ideas as you possibly can, so that you get something to work with. As in freewriting, all the ideas that come up are written down without any consideration as to their quality or usefulness, and after an initial idea generation session, the most viable ideas can be selected and developed further. Unlike the other invention techniques, brainstorming can be done as a group activity. In order to produce useful ideas, it is important to stress that brainstorming is not a competitive activity but rather one of creativity. One way of setting up a brainstorming session is to present the problem or topic to the group members and ask them to write down their ideas on paper at the same time – for 10 minutes, for example – and then review what everyone came up with. At this stage, all ideas are seen as good ideas, as you are looking for quantity rather than quality. You may find that many of the group members had similar ideas, or that some of the members brought in completely different aspects of the same topic. By comparing and combining the ideas presented, you may be able to come up with a list of points that are worth exploring in more detail. In this way, what initially seemed like a long list of unrelated ideas may result in a fruitful and original approach to the topic at hand.

REFLECTION TASK: DEVELOPING A TOPIC AND PLANNING A PROJECT: DECIDING WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Have you established writing routines that work for you? Consider the following points and whether they can be turned into a personal checklist for your future writing assignments.

Question 1: If you have tried out any of the invention techniques above (or other ones), have you found them useful, and how can you develop your use of such ideas? If you have not used any invention techniques, consider trying one or two of them to see how they help you find your focus.

Questions 2: How do you plan writing assignments? Have you identified differences between different kinds of assignments or between assignments in different subjects?

Question 3: When and where are you an efficient writer? If you have identified a pattern, is this something that you can use in order to structure your studies in an efficient way?

Question 4: What kinds of feedback do you usually get on your writing assignments and how do you use that feedback in your writing?

Lesson 5:
Feedback and peer review

In this lesson, we will focus on different aspects of peer review work and see how peer reviewing can benefit our own writing. Before you watch Video lecture 5 below, it might be helpful to have a look at the following self-reflection questions.

REFLECTION TASK: FEEDBACK AND PEER REVIEW

Question 1. What do you understand by the term peer review?

Question 2. Have you ever participated in any peer review activities? If you answered yes to this question, very briefly describe the nature of these activities: what did you do when you peer reviewed someone else's work? What did you focus on? How much time did you spend on the activity? Did you reflect on how useful your feedback was to the original author?

Question 3. List what you think are the biggest benefits of peer review. There are no right or wrong answers here! Once you have done this, reflect on your answer and think about whether there might be any possible negative aspects of peer review.

Video lecture 5: Feedback and peer review

As we point out in Video lecture 5, peer reviewing can be beneficial both for the person providing the feedback and for the person receiving it. At first, it can be difficult to know where to begin, but the more you engage in such activities, the more natural peer reviewing will feel and the more you will be able to get out of it.

While it is important to provide your feedback in a respectful way, you should also try to be honest. Feedback that is constructive and focuses on specific points, whether positive or negative, will be valuable to the author, whereas comments along the line of *There are various problems* or *Everything is great* will not help them identify what or where the potential problems are. It is also unlikely that *everything* in a text is great – even here, one should be able to pinpoint what aspects in particular were great, so that the author can use that information and apply it in their future work. Our experience of conducting peer review activities in class is that students often feel uncomfortable about criticizing each other's texts, and that this can result in them pointing out only positive aspects of a text. Whilst it is important to be specific and state what is good, as well as to deliver the feedback in a way that is respectful and recognizes all the hard work that has gone into the assignment, feedback will be helpful to the author only if it helps them *develop* their text and highlights areas that *could* be improved and/or re-considered. In the same way, as a reviewer, you will cultivate your own capacity for critical thinking much more effectively, if you aim to provide feedback that has such aims.

Peer review tasks are usually carried out during the writing or the rewriting stages, as that is when the authors can make the most use of them and take the comments into consideration, to be able to produce better texts. Peer review comments have a similar function to what is known as *formative feedback*. On writing courses, supervisors or tutors often give students feedback during the writing process; they may, for example, ask their students to hand in intermediate pieces of work, each of which is then commented on. Such feedback is formative, as it is intended to help the students form their texts and address the issues that were identified in the comments, before they hand in the final version for assessment. Formative feedback can be effective, provided writers really engage with the comments and with the advice they have received and implement the necessary revisions and edits into the next version of their text. The term *summative feedback*, in turn, is used for feedback that is usually provided at the end of an essay process, when the assignment is being graded. Such feedback can provide valuable input for the future, as it can point out specific areas in need of development in future assignments. For the work that is being graded, summative feedback will usually only provide the motivations for the grade, and there is no opportunity for the writer to improve that particular text anymore, to be able to receive a better grade.

A step-by-step guide to giving peer review feedback

Below, we give some guidelines that can help you develop your own step-by-step approach to peer reviewing activities. These guidelines should be seen as general instructions on how a peer review can proceed and what aspects a (student) peer reviewer can focus on. If your own teacher or course instructor has set a peer review task and given you different instructions, you should of course always follow your own teacher's instructions.

Step 1

Before you begin reading the text that you have been asked to peer review, make sure that you understand the purpose and the intended audience of the text. When peer reviewing is part of a writing assignment, it often functions as a reciprocal arrangement. This means that both you and the person whose text you are reviewing are working on similar assignments and that both of you need to observe the same instructions: just like you as an author have had to follow certain instructions, your task as a peer reviewer is to try to decide if, and how successfully, the other person has managed to follow the same instructions.

Step 2
Read through the essay draft at least once, so that you get a general sense of what the text is about and what kind of feedback would seem to be most useful to the author at this stage. Once you have an idea of what kind of comments the author is in need of, read though the draft a few more times and write notes concerning areas that in your view need improvement or clarification. We will discuss effective reading strategies in Module 3 of this textbook.

Step 3
Once you have read the text carefully, you can start putting together your peer review comments. Usually, an essay draft will require both global and more local comments. Global comments focus on the overall structure and how the arguments or claims are presented; global issues will be discussed in more detail in Module 4, where we deal with revising and editing texts. It may also be relevant to comment on more local issues, such as the language and style of the text that you are reviewing; these will also be discussed in more detail in Module 4. A word of warning is in order here: a peer reviewer is not a proofreader. This means that, unless you have received other instructions, you should only point out areas where the author could improve their text, not correct their text for them. Introducing the necessary corrections is always the author's own responsibility.

Step 4
When you compose your peer review comments, it is wise to start with something positive. For instance, where do you think the text is particularly strong? Next, you should comment on the text as a whole. For example, how well does the text meet the requirements set for the task: does it answer the question set by the supervisor or instructor, and does it follow the stated guidelines (for example, the stylesheet)? Think also about whether the text is coherent so that everything seems to hang together or if there are parts that you do not understand or where you just lose the thread. Are there any logical inconsistencies in the text? When you give your feedback on these types of issues, do your best to be specific and suggest what changes the author could make, in your view, to improve their text.

Step 5
Once you have commented on the text from a global perspective, it is time to move on to address more local issues, such as those concerning formatting, language and the style of writing. As mentioned above, it is not your job to proofread, but it can be helpful to point out recurring issues, so that the author can see these and address them. Again, try to be as specific as possible. If the draft has any tables, figures or illustrations, you could also comment on these: is

it always clear to you what their function is? Are they informative and easy to decipher? Is there unnecessary overlap between them and the running text (for example, does the author repeat in the text what the visuals already show)?

Some guidelines for receiving feedback

As we mentioned above, peer reviewing usually takes place during the writing or the rewriting stages. Feedback is most valuable to you as an author, if you have the opportunity to engage with it and to utilise it, so it can help you revise your text and produce a better end product. At the same time, it is important to realize that, ultimately, your text is your own responsibility. You may find that you disagree with some of the comments and the recommendations, and you may even receive conflicting comments and information from different peer reviewers. It is up to you to decide whether the comments on your text are valid and should result in changes, as well as how you should go about fixing the problem issues that the peer reviewers have identified. When you do not agree with your peer reviewers' comments – and there will be situations when you do not – it is important to not just dismiss the criticism levelled against your text without further thought. Instead, you should try to reflect on *why* the peer reviewers have said what they have said and why *you* consider it not to be relevant. If a peer reviewer states that they cannot follow your line of reasoning in a particular passage of text, for instance, what reasons could there be for this comment? Is there anything in your text that is unclear or that could have been misunderstood by the reader? Could you change the wording so the intended connections become clearer? Would adding an example help? Bear in mind that peer reviewers are often members of your target audience. This means that if they have problems following your line of thought or they find that information that they were expecting to get is missing from your essay, these same points are likely to come up when your work is being assessed and graded. By considering the peer reviewers' comments carefully, you can try to ensure that (at least some of) the issues brought up no longer arise, when a grade is being set.

The purpose of all feedback – from both your peers and from your supervisor or tutor – is to help you identify areas that may need to be improved in your writing. It may therefore be wise to produce an action plan for yourself based on the feedback that you have been given. Apart from any immediate action that you may decide to take to improve the text that has been reviewed, you may want to also consider a more general checklist of how you can make use of feedback in your future writing assignments; this is something that we bring up in various places of this book. One useful exercise is also to write down what you thought was the most valuable piece of feedback you received for each writing assignment, and what action you took as a result of that feedback. Such reflections on your own work will eventually help you write your texts in such a way that these issues are all taken care of, before you even submit your work for peer reviewing.

Lesson 6:
Resources for writers

Writers are often instructed to use dictionaries and other resources that can help them during the writing process. It is not always easy to decide what resources to use, and in what ways; there is also a difference between resources that native speakers find most helpful and resources that are useful for those who write in second-language contexts. In this lesson, we will provide a brief introduction to the types of resources that are useful for (especially) second-language writers of English. Many of these resources provide free, online access. Your university librarians will be able to advise you further on the types of (commercial and other) resources that your university has access to.

Dictionaries

One key aspect of writing is finding the right words, both on a stylistic level and in a specific context. Dictionaries are therefore essential for all writers, not just for those who write in second-language contexts. You should note that there is a distinction between dictionaries and encyclopedias. A dictionary is a publication (a book or an online resource) that lists words and their meanings and gives examples of their usage. An encyclopedia, in turn, is a work that consists of entries or articles on different subjects. Although the specifics of each entry may vary depending on what encyclopedia is consulted, generally speaking, an encyclopedia entry for a word is much more detailed than a dictionary entry, and it provides information that is usually not necessary to give in a dictionary. An encyclopedia entry for the word *bread*, for example, could contain information about how bread is made; the different varieties of bread; the history of bread-making; and its significance in different cultural contexts.

A dictionary entry, on the other hand, will most likely provide a definition (that is, the lexical meaning of the word *bread*) as well as some information on how to use the word (for example, that *bread* is a noun). Some dictionaries also provide information about the word's origins; these dictionaries are known as etymological dictionaries. If we look at the dictionary entry for the word *bread* in the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, for example, we see that *bread* is a noun and that its meaning is 'a usually baked and leavened food made of a mixture whose basic constituent is flour or meal'. The entry also gives information about the pronunciation of the word, about its most typical figurative uses (such as to earn one's bread in the sense of 'livelihood'), and about its possible synonyms, that is, possible other words that have a similar meaning to bread. If you look up the word bread in other dictionaries, such as *Collins COBUILD Advanced English Dictionary* or *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online,* you will find very similar definitions, although you will discover that different dictionaries also present slightly different information and that the interface varies between online versions of dictionaries.

In a nutshell, encyclopedias are resources that will, in many cases, define the word but whose main purpose is to provide information about the actual object or event that the word identifies. A dictionary will, in turn, provide information about the word itself and how it can be used in phrases and sentences. Besides the word class (for example, that bread is a noun) and meaning (or meanings, in case the word has multiple meanings) we are often given information about the pronunciation, the possible different spellings, hyphenation, and whether the word is dialectal, informal in style, or old-fashioned.

It is important to realize that even small words such as *therefore, nevertheless, accordingly* and *consequently* have meaning and that their meanings are also important to look up in dictionaries. Many of these small words initiate what are called *subordinate clauses* and their function is to link clauses and information together. However, as the following examples show, different small words may link the exact same clauses and information in very different ways:

I had dinner in the new restaurant. Therefore, I am now ill.

I had dinner in the new restaurant. Nevertheless, I am now ill.

In the first set of sentences, the dinner in the new restaurant is presented as the (implied) cause of the illness. In the second set of sentences, the implication is that the dinner in the new restaurant should somehow have prevented the illness. In other words, one expected to be feeling fine, perhaps even better than before, after having eaten in the restaurant. As we can see, the interpretations are very different although the only thing that has changed is the linking word: *therefore* has changed to *nevertheless*. As small words can affect how a text is interpreted, it is important – even for native speakers – to look them up in a dictionary, to ensure that one does not accidentally end up implying things that one does not want to imply in the text. We will return to subordinate clauses and small words like *therefore* and *nevertheless* in Lesson 1: The need to revise and edit one's text and Lesson 3: The writer's toolbox in Module 4 of this textbook.

What type of dictionary should one use, then? It is advisable to always use a monolingual dictionary, if possible. In the case of English, this means a dictionary that lists words in English and provides their definitions in English. The reason why monolingual dictionaries should be preferred is that they tend to provide more information than bilingual dictionaries do about a word's usage and meaning/s.

A non-native writer of English will of course occasionally need to consult a bilingual dictionary as well, for example when one does not know what a specific word is called in English. A bilingual dictionary will usually list the possible translation equivalents for the word, and some bilingual dictionaries might even list phrases, sayings and other fixed expressions where the word is used. However, they do not usually have room to comment on the differences between the various alternatives. Furthermore, since words often do not translate exactly between different languages, all words that come from a bilingual dictionary should be checked in a monolingual dictionary as well, to make sure that they are the right words to use in the context where you want to use them, and that they are also at the right level in terms of style and register. Style and register are issues that we will return to in Module 4. In many cases, you also need to make sure that the words you have selected do not sound too old-fashioned, and that they do not have any unwanted associations. Even competent non-native writers of English may be insensitive to stylistic differences, and they may not be aware of all the meanings or associations that a word can have to native speakers, so a dictionary will be of valuable help in filtering out possible problem items.

A specific type of monolingual dictionary is the thesaurus, which provides a word list of synonyms (that is, words that have similar meanings as the original word) and possible antonyms (words that have opposite meanings). Not only do thesauruses (or thesauri – there are two alternative plural forms of this word) help writers avoid unnecessary repetition by suggesting a range of alternatives for a given word, but they also help writers locate the most suitable word for a specific context of usage. Again, to make sure that you have indeed located the most suitable word for the current context of usage, it is important to look up the synonyms and antonyms suggested in the thesaurus in a good monolingual dictionary as well. Although the words might have the meanings that you want, they may be stylistically inappropriate – for example, too informal – for the context in which you are writing or they may, again, have associations that you do not want in your text. Using a thesaurus together with a monolingual dictionary is therefore essential. A little word of advice is in order here as well: one should never use a thesaurus just to be able to locate words that sound more academic or grandiose than the original words. This kind of usage can make the writing sound very pompous and pretentious. Again, we will return to these matters in Module 4.

Depending on your field of study, there may also be subject-specific dictionaries – for example medical dictionaries – that can help you with terminology that is used within your area or field of study. Your supervisors, tutors and university librarians will usually be able to recommend good specialized dictionaries and wordlists for your specific area. It is important to understand that subject-specific terminology will always need to be looked up in a subject-specific dictionary; a general-purpose dictionary will usually only list the *generic* meaning/s of a word, and these meanings might be completely different from how the word is defined and used in a specific field.

The AWELU website will give you more detailed information about different types of dictionaries and how to use them:

AWELU: General information on dictionary use

Which monolingual dictionaries and other resources should you use?

It is always advisable to consult more than one dictionary, to check the usage and meaning/s of words, and to have a preference for dictionaries published by reputable publishing houses. In most cases, a relatively extensive general-purpose dictionary will be enough (except for those cases when you need to look up terminology that is specific to your field). This means that the dictionaries should be linguistic rather than encyclopedic; that they should be aimed at adults rather than schoolchildren; and that they should not have words such as *mini, pocket* or *learner* in their titles, as mini, pocket and learner's dictionaries are usually too compressed or simplified to serve a purpose in academic writing contexts. In some situations, a visual dictionary – that is, a dictionary that has illustrations – might also be a good option, but even here the words you have located should be checked in another dictionary as well. Whether you use hard copies or online versions will naturally depend on what you have access to; online versions are in many cases easier and much faster to use. The monolingual dictionaries that are listed below all provide free, user-friendly online access:

Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online

Oxford Dictionaries: English Dictionary, Thesaurus, & Grammar Help

Cambridge Dictionary: English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus

Depending on your location, your supervisor or tutor may have instructed you to adhere to British, American, or some other English-language spelling and usage conventions, and this will of course also determine what dictionary you should use. The dictionaries listed above are all based on standard British English usage. Although they provide some information about American English spellings, pronunciation, and usage, you may prefer to consult for example the *Merriam-Webster,* if you have been instructed to follow American English conventions:

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary

One further resource that both native and non-native writers of English may find useful is a phrasebank. Phrasebanks list phrases and other expressions that can be useful in different writing situations. The Academic Phrasebank from Manchester University, for instance, is a useful resource that provides, as they themselves put it on their homepage, "examples of some of the phraseological 'nuts and bolts' of writing organised according to the main sections of a research paper or dissertation". This resource also lists transitional (linking) words and other expressions, that is, the types of small words that we have already looked at above.

Academic Phrasebank (Manchester University)

A word of warning is again in order: consulting phrasebanks too often and taking full sentences, rather than just words and phrases, from such resources may increase the risk of what is known as *plagiarism*. We will return to this, and provide some advice on how to avoid plagiarism in your work, in Lesson 3: Referencing and academic integrity in Module 3 of this textbook.

Finally, in order to become a confident writer when you are working in a second-language context, it is important to try to develop your own vocabulary skills, that is, your knowledge of words. This includes developing your knowledge of both the discipline-specific vocabulary that is of relevance as well as your knowledge of what is means to write in formal, stylistically appropriate academic English. You will find some practical information and advice on this on the AWELU platform; we will return to aspects of formal, stylistically appropriate academic English in Module 4 of this textbook:

AWELU: Vocabulary awareness

AWELU: Useful words and phrases

Lesson 7:
A guide to study planning

In order to succeed with writing assignments – as well as with university studies in general – authors must be able to plan. We have included some general information about study planning in this textbook, because we have seen how students sometimes struggle with these issues. Students may also be failing their writing and other assignments not due to lack of ability to do the required work, but rather because they do not know how to plan for their studies and for their time – what to do when and how to prioritise, when there are problems. For some students, procrastination is also an issue that needs to be addressed.

In this lesson, we will first look at some general study planning concerns and try to show you how developing good study skills can make it easier – and less stressful – to reach your goals. After that, we will take you through some of the practicalities of constructing a personalized study and time management plan. The goal is to help you recognize what kind of a learner you are; what kinds of studying and time management techniques and routines work best for you; and what possible challenges you may need to be aware of in your life. Many universities offer study planning guidance on a central or departmental level; if you feel that you need more guidance and information about these matters than we can provide here, you should check what your own university can offer.

University students are expected to learn independently and take responsibility for their own studies and learning. Many teachers therefore (somewhat incorrectly) assume that their students come to university already fully equipped with a number of generic skills that help them study and learn effectively. Many students do, of course, and many are also able to modify the studying and time management skills they have acquired earlier in other contexts, to suit the type of independent study that is required at university. But there are also students who struggle with this, and who may be even unaware that they need to modify and adjust the techniques that they have acquired earlier, so they become better suited to the new situations they are in.

What skills are needed at university?

The skills and abilities that are essential for university study include the following:

- Effective note-*taking* in lectures
- Active reading and note-*making*
- Research and evaluation
- Critical and analytical thinking
- Time management and organization
- Ability to concentrate
- Ability to motivate oneself
- Appropriate referencing skills
- Group work and oral presentation skills
- Exam preparation and writing skills

Paying attention to how one studies and being aware of what one's own preferred learning styles are – in other words when, where and how one learns best – can make learning (and writing tasks) much easier. A properly worked out and realistic study plan where all the points are ranked according to their importance can also help in situations where something unexpected happens and you need to think of a plan B. If you fall ill and miss two weeks of classes, for example, knowing what to do, what you need to prioritise, and what can be saved for later, is vital in helping you catch up.

What are the challenges, then? When we have done surveys among our own students on what they find difficult in terms of planning for their essay tasks and for their studies in general, the top five responses have usually included the following:

- How to organise my life
- How to motivate myself to complete tasks that I do not find particularly interesting
- How to set goals / priorities for myself

- How to manage deadlines
- How to express my views clearly and concisely in my writing and in peer group work

As you can see, the bullet points reflect variables that affect students' ability to carry out their writing projects, even though they are not in themselves directly linked to writing or to essay projects. If one feels that one has problems with setting goals or with managing deadlines on a more general level, one may find working on essay tasks difficult as well, as these require ability to divide the work into smaller sub-parts and to set deadlines for each of the sub-parts.

Setting goals and planning your time in order to meet deadlines

In the following, we discuss some ways of setting goals and managing deadlines. Both are issues that for many people require not only a great deal of practice but also a fair amount of trial and error. It is very easy to keep postponing a task and think that one will start working on it "later" – until the "later" has turned into "the deadline is tomorrow". This habit of postponing a task although we know that we ought to get started is known as *procrastination*. Linked to procrastination is another common habit that has its own term: *the planning fallacy*. According to Kahneman and Tversky (1979) who proposed the term, the planning fallacy concerns the unrealistically optimistic expectation of how long it will take to complete a given task. Even when one has worked on similar tasks in the past and encountered problems with meeting deadlines, one may continue to start working on the assignment too late and just fool oneself into thinking that this time it will somehow, magically, be different. For example, if you have written exams for a specific course in the past and you know that a week is not enough to prepare for these exams, you may still put off starting to prepare until you have one week, or even less, to prepare. You know that you should do things differently, but fail to act on this knowledge.

One way to overcome the problem of procrastination is to set up a time plan, with small intermediate goals for yourself. Small tasks are easier to initiate and to complete than big tasks. For example, if you have been given two weeks to produce a five-page course paper, you may divide the work into small chunks and set a deadline for each of these as follows:

- By the end of Monday, I will have collected all the necessary materials for the paper
- By the end of Thursday, I will have read through the materials and taken notes on the reading. I will also have written down all the publication details.
- I will spend Friday on planning for the contents and structure of the essay and arrange my notes according to this plan.
- I will have Saturday and Sunday off.
- On Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday next week, I will produce the first draft of my course paper. The length is 5 pages, so I will divide it as follows:
    - Introduction - 1 page: Monday
    - Body – 3.5 pages: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday
    - Conclusion – 0.5 pages: Wednesday
    - References – check these against last week's notes
- I will spend Thursday and Friday on editing and revising my text.
- I will have Saturday and Sunday off.
- The deadline is on Monday 12 noon. In the morning, I will proofread my text one last time for typos and submit it to the teacher.

A useful analogy is to think of studying as using a satellite navigator when you are biking or driving a car: first, you decide where you want to end up, and then you decide which route you want to take there. The satellite navigator will suggest possible routes to you and tell you how long each of them will take. When you have decided on a route and start the journey towards your destination, the satellite navigator will show you where you are, each step of the way; and if something unexpected happens, for example if there are roadworks, it will suggest an alternative route that you could take, as well as recalculate the time it will take you to reach your destination.

Studying – including writing essays – is, in fact, very similar to this: there is a final destination, whether it be a finished degree, a finished course, or a finished essay task, and you need to plot your route towards this final destination. If you have planned your route carefully beforehand and considered various different options that could take you there, you will be able to track your own progress and see in a very concrete way how each small step is taking you closer to the final destination. If any problems occur, you will also be better able to see what alternative routes there could be to the same destination and how much time they will take.

Let us leave the satellite navigator analogy for now and return to study and time management at university: a study plan is most likely to be successful, if one is able to see both the big picture and the more immediate short-term picture at the same time, and is able to switch between these macro and micro levels when necessary. When making plans for an entire university term, for example, one will need to have a clear idea of what courses are running at what times, and when they have their final examination. In this long-term plan one can also include other important events, such as possible holidays and trips away, as well as clarify to oneself how they will affect one's ability to focus on the studies.

After the long-term goals are set, it is useful to divide the semester into smaller chunks, such as a half-semester or even a monthly plan. In this more short-term plan you can make a note of what weekdays and times you have classes. How many hours a day will they take? What other recurring events, such as exercise classes, singing lessons, and perhaps commuting, do you need to schedule in this plan? How much time does that leave, on average, for each day that you can use for studying? And what exactly will you be doing during those hours? Once you have come down to this level, it may be helpful to produce a weekly or even daily plan that specifies exactly what you need to be doing – this is for many people a good way of ensuring that they do what they are meant to do, as it brings structure to the days and connects the small daily or weekly study sessions to a bigger whole. Furthermore, this is a good way to help you get back on track, if something unexpected happens: if you fall ill and cannot do anything for an entire week, the plan will help you see what you have missed and what you will now need to do, in order to catch up. It will also help you assess what you need to prioritise – for example, what tasks will need to be completed right now, and what things can be postponed until the following week.

We might think of the concept of time management as something linked to modern society, but it is, in fact, far from new. The 19th century, for instance, saw a large production of texts in which time management was tied to individual as well as monetary success. One of the best-selling books in 19th century Britain was Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help* (1859). In this book, he proclaims that "Lost wealth may be replaced by industry, lost knowledge by study, lost health by temperance or medicine, but lost time is gone for ever" (p. 200). Smiles wrote these words some 160 years ago, but the message is the same as today: lost time cannot be replaced. The idea of not wasting time was prominent in 19th century texts about individual self-improvement and education, and the reciprocal quality of punctuality was stressed, as lack of time management of course does not only affect the unpunctual individuals themselves, but also everyone else that they interact with.

REFLECTION TASK: SETTING GOALS AND PLANNING YOUR TIME IN ORDER TO MEET DEADLINES

At this stage, it may be useful to reflect on the following questions:

Question 1: Does the way in which you manage your time affect your results in a negative way, do you think? If so, is there any way in which you could improve your results by a more efficient use of time?

Question 2: To what extent does the way in which you manage your time affect other people's work? If you hand in a text late, for instance, how might that have an effect on your peers' work in student collaborations, or on your teacher's work situation?

Know yourself to find out what works for you

Studying at university is about more than attending classes and reading the relevant literature; it often involves group work with other students, library work, independent reading, as well as different kinds of writing tasks and other preparatory work. Many university students also find themselves in a new life situation. They may have recently moved away from home, which means that they will now need to find time to cook for themselves, to do their own grocery shopping and their own laundry. They may also want to participate in the social activities that many universities offer, and spend time with their new friends. Many students also have families of their own and some students will need to work at the same time as their study.

Whatever your life situation looks like, it is essential to identify what activities your ordinary week will consist of and how you can realistically make room for them in an efficient, yet productive way. Below, we list a couple of aspects that often affect students' abilities to plan for their studies. As you can see, these aspects are not just related to subject-related study skills or abilities, but also concern life outside the classroom:

- Are you an early bird or a night owl? Establish when is the best time to study and set up a study plan around that, provided that your classes and other obligations allow for this.
- If you are commuting several hours per day, can you use that time for studying? If not, can you turn this period into relaxation time, so that you can make the most of your studies when you arrive at your destination?
- If you have a time-consuming hobby or if you exercise on a regular basis, can you plan for those activities in a way that will boost the energy that you will need for your studies, instead of taking time and energy away from your studies?

Simply put, one key to success is the ability to plan for everything you need to and want to do, and another one is to work ahead, whenever possible. Yet another key point is to allow for some flexibility, so that you are able to revise your study plan to cater for unexpected issues, such as falling ill. The more control you have over the situation – in other words, the more you know what you need to do and how long it will take you to do it – the easier it will be for you to put a plan B into practice, if needed.

Finding a system that works for you, that is, that allows you to plot your final destination and then select the route that takes you to that destination as well as shows you where you are at every step of the way, is essential. You may want to experiment with the various time management programs and applications that have become available during recent years or try out different analogue formats, such as traditional calendars or so-called bullet journals.

Module 2:
Structuring your text and conveying your argument

Introduction

In Module 1, we looked at some of the aspects that you will need to consider before embarking on an academic writing project. In this module, we will build on this knowledge when we explore issues of constructing and shaping an academic text. You will learn about argument, types of essay structure, and how to structure information within paragraphs and sections. Structuring a text so that it is coherent and makes sense to your target audience requires a great deal of thought, and you will be guided through the decisions that you will have to make in composing a text. Though the information in this module will be of interest to anyone looking to improve their academic writing competencies, you will find the material here especially helpful if you have a particular writing project of your own in mind to reflect on, and to which you can apply the ideas presented here.

The module is divided into eight lessons. In Lesson 1, we will look at what an argument is in an academic context as well as how to structure good arguments in essays. Lesson 2 explores two crucial elements of argumentative essays: research questions and thesis statements. Lesson 3 provides an introduction to the basic three-part essay. In Lesson 4, how to structure information for various different purposes in different parts of your text will be discussed and Lesson 5 will look more specifically at paragraph structure. The IMRaD – which is an acronym for *introduction, methods, results and discussion* – structure will be covered in Lesson 6, and then in Lesson 7 we focus on how a particular model known as CARS – another acronym that stands for *creating a research space* – can be used to effectively structure introductions. Finally, Lesson 8 will discuss the genre of abstracts.

Lesson 1:
What is an argument?

In this lesson, we will explore what it means to write argumentatively. The term *argument* in an academic writing context has different meanings than in everyday life. In academic writing, an argument means that we are in a process of reasoning or discussing something; this does not involve any quarrelling or disagreement, which is often the everyday definition of this word. In Video lecture 6, we will discuss strategies for presenting an argument and persuading an academic audience:

Video lecture 6: Structuring an argument

In the video lecture, we asked what it means to write an argumentative essay rather than, say, a descriptive one. In descriptive writing, the author attempts to describe what happened in a situation or line of events or to present background information. The goal of descriptive writing is thus not to persuade the audience of the validity of the facts or change their minds. This kind of writing might be useful for setting the scene for the argument that you will present in an argumentative essay, but it is important to remember that descriptive writing is not in itself argumentative.

Argumentative writing, on the other hand, *is* about persuasion. Creating a convincing argument is about making claims and providing convincing evidence for these claims. At the centre of an argumentative essay is one main claim. This main claim is often called the *thesis statement*. We will return to ways of presenting thesis statements in Lesson 2 below, but we will briefly touch on the matter here in order to discuss what an argument is in academic writing and how it can be construed. If an argument is defined as a claim with reasons that are backed up with evidence, then the author's first move is to present that claim in the form of a thesis statement, usually in the introductory paragraph or introduction section of the essay. Once the author's position is clear, it is time to explain why this is a good position to hold and what evidence there is to support this position. When presenting the evidence, the author therefore needs to explain why and how the evidence supports the argument being made. Finally, the author must anticipate and address possible objections and counter-claims. The author may either reject the counter-claims altogether and explain why they are inadequate or even mistaken. Alternatively, the author may concede to them and admit that the opponent may have a point and then show how their own claim is still the most valid one. Yet another way to respond to objections, counter-claims and alternative views is to qualify the claim; this means adding expressions such as *in many cases*, *often*, *usually*, *likely*, and so on, which limit the scope of the claim and make it less vulnerable to criticism. The author's main claim may then be supported by a series of sub-claims. Each sub-claim will need to be backed up with reasons and evidence which, in turn, need to be presented in an order that makes logical sense in relation to the overall argument.

In constructing an argument, you might also need to consider possible counter-claims. What objections might your specific target audience have to your main claim and/or to the various sub-claims? And what objections might they have to the underlying assumptions that are not explicitly stated in your text, but are still assumed to be connected to your claims? These issues can be illustrated with an example: if you argue that smoking is dangerous, because it causes lung cancer, the clause *because it causes lung cancer* is a reason that you give for why smoking is dangerous. What is not stated explicitly but is still assumed to be connected to your claim is that having lung cancer is not a good thing. If your target audience rejects your argument, it might then be because they do not agree with your reason – that smoking indeed causes lung cancer – or with the unstated assumption – that having lung cancer is not a good thing. By addressing some of the possible objections to claims made in an essay, to their reasons or to their unstated assumptions, a writer can show that they know their topic and have done their homework. As an author, you are much more likely to be taken seriously by your target audience, if you demonstrate thorough knowledge of your topic and can think of more than one possible solution to the problems that you are trying to solve.

Unfortunately, there is no one-size-fits-all formula to creating a successful argument, but it can be useful to consider the following questions as a starting point:

- What does argument mean in your area of study?
- What do you need to do to convince your target audience?
- What counts as convincing evidence in your field of study, and what kinds of evidence do you need? Note that in many fields, evidence means facts, examples, statistics, and references to authority that help the audience accept, or at least seriously consider, the claim that is being made.
- How will you need to structure your argument to make it as clear and convincing as possible? We will return to this question and discuss structure in more detail in Lessons 3, 4 and 5 below.

REFLECTION TASK: WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Reflect on the following questions to test your knowledge on argumentative writing. We recommend you set aside five or ten minutes per question and that you write down your answers.

Question 1: How does argumentative writing differ from descriptive writing?

Question 2: What are the usual steps in making an argument?

Lesson 2:
Research questions and thesis statements

In this lesson, we will move on to explore the two key components of the argumentative essay and show how the ability to construct good research questions and thesis statements is essential to argumentative writing. In Video lecture 7, you will learn to identify these elements and construct research questions and thesis statements of your own:

Video lecture 7: Research questions and thesis statements

Research questions

As stated in the video lecture, academic essays differ from other types of essays because, instead of addressing topics, they deal with problems or questions. Your job as the author of an essay is to identify one or more specific problems or questions to address. It is important to keep in mind your target audience, when identifying these questions. Not only will you need to consider if your target audience find these questions interesting, but you will also need to decide if the problems or questions you raise are significant and meaningful in the context within which you are writing.

In an academic essay, your goal should not be to present everything you know about a topic but rather to come up with evidence that helps you answer your question or solve your problem. The questions that you pose are called *research questions*. Constructing these research questions involves identifying a gap in knowledge, and then attempting to fill this gap with research and new information. We will return to the ways in which you can present and frame this gap in Lesson 7 below, where we discuss the structure of introductions.

But how do you know if your research question is interesting or significant to your target audience? A good research question leads to something that is new to the audience or to something that they cannot find out by merely consulting an encyclopedia. Again, you will need to think of your target audience: what will *they* already know about the topic, and what information will be new to *them*? Your task as an author of an argumentative or expository text is to respond to your problem or question, by proposing a solution in the form of an assertion or claim. It is up to you to persuade the target audience that the assertion or claim that you make is worthwhile and backed up by evidence.

Not all types of questions are suitable as research questions; questions that will lead to answers that are either right or wrong and therefore not debatable are (usually) not suitable as research questions. Take the following question, for instance: *What is the capital city of Denmark?* The answer, Copenhagen, cannot be denied, at least not after members of your target audience have consulted an encyclopedia.

We will illustrate what we have said above with the help of an example from an introduction section to a Master's thesis in business administration. The authors present an explicit research question: *How can this possible lack of debt in a firm's capital structure be explained?* The research question – which we have underlined for convenience – asks a *how* question about a particular phenomenon, and clearly states in the final sentence of the paragraph that this is a question which has not been adequately addressed in previous research. We can ask what sort of answer a question such as this might demand. Based on this research question, the reader would expect to see an answer that describes an explanation for this phenomenon.

Sample paragraph from a Master's thesis in Business Administration[1]

The zero-leverage puzzle is a mystery in the field of corporate finance, since, according to capital structure theories such as the Modigliani and Miller Theorems, the Trade-off Theory, the Pecking Order Theory, and the Market Timing Theory, companies should have at least some debt on their balance sheet (Modigliani & Miller, 1958, 1963; Kraus & Litzenberger, 1973; Myers & Majluf, 1984; Baker & Wurgler, 2002). However, that is not always the case as well-known companies worldwide, such as Apple, H&M and Amazon.com, have been known for being debt free**.** But how can this possible lack of debt in a firm's capital structure be explained? This is a question researchers all over the world have been trying to answer but none have, to our knowledge, been able to fully explain this puzzle (Strebulaev & Yang, 2013; Dang, 2013; Bessler, Drobetz, Haller & Meier, 2013).

In the above example, the research question is presented as a direct question. Although some disciplines require that you present such an explicitly stated research question, you will sometimes see these questions presented also implicitly.

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[1] The source of the quoted material: Hafsteinsdóttir, Á. B. & Helgadóttir, S. (2015). *Does ownership structure explain the zero-leverage puzzle? Evidence from the Swedish stock market* (Master's thesis, School of Economics and Management, Lund University, Lund, Sweden). https://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/search/publication/5471032

Thesis statements

The claim that you make in your essay, that is, the claim that can either be accepted or denied, can also be called the *central idea*. Another term for this is the *thesis statement*. A thesis statement is a sentence or sentences that present your position on the topic and predict how the topic will be developed in the rest of the essay. It also functions as a guide to your reader: it is a kind of road map to your essay in that it predicts the scope, the purpose, and the direction of your essay. A strong thesis statement shows your audience that you have a clear idea of how you want your essay to deal with the topic, in terms of solving the problem you have set out to investigate. In other words, your thesis statement makes a claim that you have carefully thought through and that you can justify with the help of research and evidence.

Let us look at the paragraph below, taken from an undergraduate essay written in a course in academic writing. The topic of this essay is child labour in 19th-century Britain. The thesis statement – which we have again underlined – is easy to identify for a number of reasons. Firstly, it appears at the end of the paragraph, which is where the reader would usually expect to see it. Secondly, it naturally follows the implicit research question which asks what factors were the most influential in improving children's working conditions in the 19th century. And finally, the thesis statement is signalled by a phrase which leaves us in no doubt that this is in fact the thesis statement: *This essay will argue that…*

Sample paragraph from an undergraduate student essay in an academic writing course

Due to the working conditions children had to endure, the British Parliament passed numerous acts aimed at regulating child labor and improving children's working conditions. The acts included the Cotton Factories Regulation Act of 1819 (Tuttle, 2001), the Factory Act of 1833 ("The 1833 Factory Act", n.d.) and the Mines Act of 1842. Although the end of the 19th century saw a decline in child labor, historians disagree on how influential the laws truly were, with some claiming that other social aspects such as economy caused the decline (Tuttle, 2001). Thus, it is significant to attempt to elucidate what factor was the most influential. This essay will argue that the legislations of the 19th century did not influence the decline of child labor during the Industrial Revolution in England, but rather that economic and educational aspects caused it.

It is a good idea to try to pin down your thesis statement, or, the main claim that you will make in your essay, in the early stages of the writing process. Ensuring that you have a clear idea of the main claim that you will make in your text will help you to stay focused throughout the process. Without a thesis statement, it will be very difficult to plot the direction of your argument, as you will not have a clear idea of what you are actually even arguing. Thesis statements often evolve and will consequently need to be *revised* during the writing process. What is vitally important, therefore, is that you regularly go back to your thesis statement, especially when you are nearing completion, so that you can ensure that your thesis statement matches the contents of your final text.

The sample essay above used a specific phrase, *This essay will argue that…,* to indicate that the sentence contained the author's main thesis. There are many useful phrases and formulations that can help you signal your thesis statement to your reader. Below, we list some examples of such phrases; more examples of useful formulations can be located, for example, in resources such as the Academic Phrasebank from Manchester University:

In this paper, I argue that …

This paper attempts to show that …

The central thesis of this paper is that …

In the pages that follow, it will be argued that …

In this essay, I attempt to defend the view that …

This paper argues that …

This paper attempts to show that …

If you are not writing an argumentative essay, but rather a descriptive or an exploratory essay, you may not need a contestable thesis statement, but rather something that we might call a *purpose statement*. A purpose statement lets your target audience know what the central issue or topic of your essay is going to be. Below, we list some suggestions from the Academic Phrasebank from Manchester University for how you can present a purpose statement in an essay:

The aim of this essay is to explore the relationship between …

The purpose of this paper is to review recent research into the …

This paper gives an account of …

This paper discusses the case of …

This paper provides an overview of …

This paper considers the implications of …

This paper proposes a new methodology for …

This paper describes the design and implementation of …

This thesis will examine the way in which the …

REFLECTION TASK: DEVELOPING RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND THESIS STATEMENTS

If you are currently working on a writing assignment, why not use this opportunity to put together a research question and thesis statement of your own? Write down your research question and then write three versions of your thesis statement. Now select the thesis statement that you think is best. If you can, once you have both a research question and a thesis statement that you are happy with, share these with your peers and discuss what makes a good research question and thesis statement.

Lesson 3:
Structuring a text around the three-part essay

In this lesson, we will look at the three-part essay. The three-part essay is a writing format that consists of introduction, body and conclusion. If you have been asked to write an essay and you have not received any further instructions about structure, then the three-part essay is where you should begin. It is, in fact, the basis of all types of formal writing. You can hear about the three-part essay in Video lecture 8:

Video lecture 8: Structuring a text around the three-part essay

As we explore in Video lecture 8, there are a number of reasons why academic writing differs from other genres of writing. Since academic writing aims at presenting and discussing facts and research-based results to an audience already interested in the topic, clarity and trustworthiness are more important ingredients than the kind of attention-grabbing features that you will find in a piece of fiction, or perhaps a newspaper article or advertisement. Academic writing, as well as reports in the corporate world, differs from fiction in a number of ways. Academic audiences do not like surprises, at least where the structure of texts is concerned. Any piece of academic writing in the formal register will therefore have an anticipated structure, and readers will know from the outset what to expect. In other words, the transparency of text structure enables writers to efficiently communicate their discussions and results to their readers.

Let us now take a closer look at the three elements of the three-part essay: the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The introduction is, of course, the first part of the essay. Its function is to present the topic of the text to the reader, and more specifically to raise a question and present the claim that will be made in the essay. As we explored in the previous lesson, these elements are known as the research question and the thesis statement.

Apart from these two elements, there are two distinct types of information that you need to present in an introduction. Firstly, you need to provide some kind of background and contextual information to frame the discussion you will carry out in your essay. And secondly, the argument that you are making has to be introduced. This means that the introduction is the place where you, as a writer, have to pinpoint what your argument will be and, equally importantly, state how you will present it. Such a mapping statement is helpful to the reader as it provides a preview of the ideas that will be presented in the main body of the text.

After the introduction comes the main part of the essay; this is called the body of the essay. Depending on the length of your essay, the body will consist of a number of paragraphs or, in the case of a longer essay, of a number of sections that are divided into paragraphs. Regardless of whether the essay is short or long, the body of the essay is where the discussion takes place, and where the results and the evidence for them are presented. The structure of the body will depend on the kind of argument you present and, of course, on the type of analysis carried out in the essay. The body of the essay will also differ in appearance depending on your discipline. A format for scholarly texts preferred in some academic disciplines is the so-called *IMRaD structure* where the body consists of separate methods, results and discussion parts. We will discuss IMRaD structure in more detail in Lesson 6 below.

The last part of any essay is the conclusion. This is where you conclude or sum up your argument. No new facts, results or ideas should be introduced at this stage, although you could point out topics or angles for possible further studies. Conclusions are usually rather brief, perhaps just one or two paragraphs in a short essay.

Longer essays, such as Bachelor's projects and Master's theses, use an extended version of this same format. However, in these cases, you will find that you also need to divide your discussion up into sections. After an introduction section, a number of body sections will therefore follow, and the text will end with a conclusion section. Although referred to as the body of the essay, it should be pointed out that the term *body* is not used as a heading in three-part essays, in the way that the labels *introduction* and *conclusion* would. Instead, the body sections should have headings indicating their focus. Each essay section will have its own internal structure, which means that each section, in turn, will be structured according to the three-part format, including an introductory passage, a body where the argument and analysis will be found, and a concluding passage, which will also provide a transition to the next section.

It is important to remember that although all academic texts are in one way or another built around the three-part structure that we have described, you will find that there are many variations on this structure depending on the discipline you are studying, the kind of text that you have been asked to produce, and the specific instructions that you have been given. For this reason, it is vital that you reflect on what conventions apply in your field and to the writing task at hand. Reading sample essays, talking to your supervisor or tutor, and carefully following instructions will help you to discover how you should structure your own piece of writing.

You will find more information about the basic essay structure on the AWELU platform:

AWELU: The essay format

Lesson 4:
Structuring information

In order to ensure that your message is transmitted effectively in your writing, it is important to choose an appropriate structure. Structuring information in a logical and intuitive way will assist the reader of your text to make better sense of the contents presented. Readers are accustomed to certain types of information being presented in a certain type of way; if your text conforms to these reader expectations, they will find it much easier to grasp your argument. In this lesson, we will turn our attention to some of the common patterns that can be used for structuring information within texts. These are explained in Video lecture 9:

Video lecture 9: Structuring information

As stated in the video lecture, writing tasks can be time-consuming, but thinking about how you will structure your material before starting to write will save time in the long run. Different text structures serve different purposes, and here we discuss some of the most common choices that you may face.

General to specific

It is not difficult to guess what a general-to-specific text will look like. As the label suggests, general-to-specific texts move from a general statement to more detailed points. Introductions often follow this pattern, beginning with a general claim about the topic, and then narrowing down to a specific thesis. In a similar way, most paragraphs will begin with a **general** topic sentence, which is then supported by **specific** points – we will return to structuring paragraphs in Lesson 5 below. The general-to-specific pattern is, in fact, one of the most common structures that you will encounter in academic writing.

The following sample paragraph from a student essay is an example of a general-to-specific text. The paragraph begins with a general claim about the dramatic changes faced in terms of working life in 18th-century England. The author then goes on to focus more specifically on the effect of the increased use of machinery in this time, and finally ends on the subject of child labour in factories. This paragraph is the opening paragraph of the essay, and the general-to-specific pattern enables the author to zoom in on the particular topic that will be addressed, after having set the scene with some general contextual information.

Sample paragraph from an undergraduate student essay in an academic writing course

The 18th century dramatically changed the working life for people in England. The invention of machines caused a reduction in manual labour, as the machines worked more efficiently and cheaply than humans. This prompted people to leave their villages and farms where they had previously worked and move into cities to become factory workers. In contrast to working on a farm, factory labour meant regulated working hours, often in unsanitary and dangerous environments (McDowall, 1989, pp. 121-123). Especially in poor and working-class families, children were put to work in order to increase the family's income. By the end of the century, child labour became increasingly prevalent, as it was beneficial to factory owners; contrary to adults, children were both easier to discipline and cheaper to employ (McDowall, 1989, p. 120).

It is also possible to turn the general-to-specific pattern on its head and instead opt for a specific-to-general text which moves from a specific instance or example to more general claims. Whilst usually we expect to see the topic sentence at the beginning of a paragraph, a paragraph which has been developed around the specific-to-general pattern might have the topic sentence at the very end. In such a format, the evidence and supporting sentences are set out *before* the main claim is presented.

Problem - solution

Problem-solution texts raise a problem or question, and then provide some sort of answer or solution to this problem. This kind of structure is used frequently in introductions. Commonly, an introduction will pose a problem or question – that is, a research question – and then propose an answer or solution – a thesis statement. In a sense then, the entire essay may be structured according to this pattern, as the body of an essay is a series of claims that each support the thesis statement, or, the proposed solution to the problem. Though the following example uses highly technical terminology, the problem-solution pattern is still clear without the reader necessarily having to understand the contents of the text fully.

Sample paragraph from an academic paper about biosensors and agriculture[2]

Drought, climate change and pollution subject our water resources to big changes, and as the situation gets worse with time, more people experience its negative effects; currently, four out of every 10 people in the world are affected by a lack of water. Our population continues to grow and with it our needs for more water grow, for both industrial and domestic purposes. Our work focuses on optimizing water management in the agricultural sector, being the largest economic sector in the world. It is estimated that the agricultural industry wastes 60% of the 2.500 billion litres of water used each year [1,2,3]. In comparison to the current crop irrigation systems, we seek a more economic and effective solution that incorporates intelligence and context-awareness. This is possible due to the remarkable progress that has been made in the field of electronics in the last decade, whereby the size of end devices has decreased and their production costs as well. As a result, a variety of low cost sensors and communication devices is now available, allowing us to propose new solutions that can solve many every day challenges in an economic way. The possibility of using sensor networks in the agricultural sector would allow us to acquire data and look for intelligent solutions, helping us to create a system that ensures proper crop growth and optimizes water usage. However, the current monitoring systems do not incorporate a minimum degree of intelligence and do not have the ability to adapt to the environment. Moreover, the implementation of industrial equipment for the control of crop irrigation is hindered by its high cost and complexity; the lack of such equipment on farms results in unnecessary water wastage.

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[2] The source of the quoted material: Villarrubia, G., De Paz, J. F., De la Iglesia, D. H., & Bajo, J. (2017). Combining multi-agent systems and wireless sensor networks for monitoring crop irrigation. *Sensors, 17*(8), 1775. https://doi.org/10.3390/s17081775.

Sequence or chronology

If you need to present a process, or perhaps a sequence of events, it is important to signal this clearly to your intended audience. For instance, if the purpose of a paragraph is to present three steps in a process, it will help your reader if your topic sentence clearly indicates this. In the example below, the writers use the words *first*, *next*, and *also* to highlight the three steps of the process that is explained:

Sample sequence or chronology pattern taken from an academic article in the field of Sports Marketing[3]

The method followed three primary stages. First, we went through the O'Reilly and Madill (2012) process model to assess whether each step was carried out in the Teen Challenge program. Next, we used Spearman's correlation coefficient to test H1–H7 and ran logistic regression models to assess objective 1 (H1–H2) and objective 3 (H5–H7). We also undertook longitudinal analyses to test H8–H10. Data were provided to the researchers by an industry partner from a previously undertaken evaluation study.

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[3] The source of the quoted material: Bagramian, R., Madill, J., O'Reilly, N., Deshpande, S., Rhodes, R. E., Tremblay, M., & Faulkner, G. (2019). Evaluation of sport participation objectives within a health-focussed social marketing sponsorship. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship, 20*(2), 206-223.

Cause and effect

If the purpose of a segment of text is to explain why something is the case or why A causes B, then using a topic sentence, or introductory signal phrase that indicates that this is the intended purpose, will help to signpost your reader through your text. There are various useful phrases that indicate cause and effect; below, we list a few of them. These and many others can be located in, for example, resources such as the Academic Phrasebank from Manchester University:

> This may cause / lead to / can give rise to …
>
> The possible / likely / common cases of this are …
>
> This took place as a result of …
>
> X happened. Therefore, Y also happened.
>
> There are arguments for saying that X is the reason for Y

Comparison/contrast

Sometimes you might need to discuss differences and similarities between several things and will consequently need to make some decisions about how the material can best be structured. Again, resources such as the Academic Phrasebank from Manchester University can help with suggestions as to how to go about framing your comparison or contrast. Below, we also give an example of a paper that presents information in this format:

Sample comparison/contrast pattern taken from an academic article in the field of Transportation Economics[4]

The analysis of variance showed no significant differences in perceived accessibility between the groups with different income or between age groups. There was however a difference between the levels of perceived accessibility of men (Mean 3.82, SD = 1.14) and women (Mean = 3.97, SD = 1.12) at the $p < .001$ level of significance, indicating that women perceive their accessibility as higher than men. A closer look at the distribution of main transport modes between men and women revealed no immediate explanation for this discrepancy regarding main mode use, other than that men use the car as their main mode of transport somewhat more (men 46%, women 38%), and that women use public transport as their main transport mode to a greater extent (26.5%, men 18.6%), with bike and walking being equal (walking men 6%, women 7.6%; bike men 28.4%, women 25.9%).

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[4] Lättman, K., Olsson, L. E., & Friman, M. (2018). A new approach to accessibility–Examining perceived accessibility in contrast to objectively measured accessibility in daily travel. *Research in Transportation Economics, 69,* 501-511.

Writers often use a mixture of different patterns when writing, which means that different ways of structuring information can be combined to suit your particular purpose at various points within your text. Now that you know more about some of these patterns, you will be better equipped to start applying them more consciously to your own writing.

REFLECTION TASK: FINDING DIFFERENT PATTERNS IN A TEXT

For this exercise you will need to select an academic article or book chapter to work with. Read through the article you have chosen, and see if you recognize any of the patterns we have talked about. What kinds of patterns did you find? If you can, discuss your findings with your peers.

Use of headings and subheadings

Related to structuring information is the issue of when to use headings and subheadings. Headings and subheadings are like visual bookmarks for your reader and they can make a piece of writing much more manageable. The question of whether you should use headings and subheadings in an essay will of course depend on any specific instructions that you may have been given for a writing task. The use of headings will also depend on the type of essay you are writing and the discipline that you are writing within. A short essay might only have a main title and no subheadings at all. In a longer piece of writing, you will probably find that you will need to break your text down into more manageable-sized chunks. If you are writing a paper which follows the classic IMRaD structure, you might need to use the generic headings that are called *Introduction*, *Method*, *Results* and *Discussion*. In other essays or assignments, you might find topic-specific headings and subheadings to be more useful.

Though headings and subheadings can be a useful way to divide up your text and provide signposting for the reader, this is all that they do. You will still need to state the purpose of any given section of text within the running text itself as well and show how it relates to the rest of your essay.

REFLECTION TASK: THE USE OF HEADINGS AND SUBHEADINGS

For this exercise, you will need a couple of articles or essays from your area of study. Look at the authors' use of headings and subheadings and reflect on how headings can be used to highlight the contents of the text to the reader.

Lesson 5: Structuring paragraphs

In the previous lesson, we explored various ways in which different parts of academic texts can be structured. In this lesson, we will build on this to focus on how to put together a good paragraph. In order to enhance readability, writers will need to divide their texts into paragraphs. Learning how to successfully construct paragraphs is vital for any academic writer. However, it is good to know that the basic internal architecture of the paragraph, no matter what the writing task, remains largely the same. Video lecture 10 looks at how to structure paragraphs:

Video lecture 10: Structuring paragraphs

As we saw in the video lecture, when we look at the architecture of an essay or scholarly article, it will be obvious that it does not just consist of one continuous stream of text. Instead, the essay is divided into blocks. These blocks are called *paragraphs*, and they are the building bricks of the essay.

First of all, it is important to remember that each paragraph should only deal with one topic or idea. By ending one paragraph and beginning a new one, you are signalling a shift or progression of topics or ideas. The breaks between paragraphs thereby represent natural pausing places for your reader. All paragraphs need a topic sentence containing the main idea to be communicated within the paragraph. It makes sense in most cases for the topic sentence to be the first sentence of your paragraph. And if we look more closely at the topic sentence, we see that it has its own microstructure. Firstly, a topic sentence has to state what the paragraph will be about. This is called the *topic*. Secondly, the topic sentence needs to say something about the manner in which this topic will be approached, and this is called *the controlling idea*. In the video lecture, we used the following sample topic sentence: *The study of language and its origins has a long and colourful history extending over thousands of years*. The topic here is *the study of language and its origins*, and the controlling idea is the remainder of the sentence, the *long and colourful history extending over thousands of years*. The topic sentence creates the expectation that the rest of the paragraph will contain more information about the long and colourful history.

Once you have written your topic sentence, you can work on reinforcing your argument in the form of supporting sentences. Supporting sentences can take a number of forms, such as examples or illustrations, explanations, definitions, comparisons or contrasts, or some form of causal analysis. Here you might find the material from the previous lesson on structuring information useful. We can illustrate paragraph structure with one of the examples we have brought up earlier: *Smoking is dangerous, because it causes lung cancer.* If this was the topic sentence of a new paragraph, the rest of the paragraph could then consist, for example, of statistical information presenting figures for lung cancer cases, or of a causal analysis showing the link between specific risk factors and the disease.

However you choose to formulate your topic sentences, the paragraph should form one coherent whole. The basic rule is that all supporting sentences need to connect to the topic sentence. One method is to make sure that all supporting sentences relate directly back to the topic sentence. An alternative is for each sentence within the paragraph to be related back to the previous sentence. By this we mean that the second sentence should be directly connected to the topic sentence, the third sentence to the second, and so on. You can also use a combination of the two methods. To round off your paragraph, you will need a concluding sentence or perhaps a sentence which provides a transition into the next paragraph.

Below, we provide an example of a paragraph from an undergraduate student essay. The first sentence of the paragraph uses the phrase *as previously stated* to form a linking device with the previous paragraph. The sentence then transitions into a new topic, that of the system that was designed to ensure that factory owners obeyed laws concerning child workers. Though it is usual to see the topic sentence as the first sentence in the paragraph, in this instance the second sentence, which we have underlined, is the topic sentence: *As inspectors were few, many owners succeeded in circumventing the laws*. The rest of the paragraph then explains and gives evidence that the legal system did not stop factory owners breaking the laws designed to protect children. The supporting sentences in this paragraph thus offer evidence to support the claim made in the topic sentence, whereas the concluding two sentences broaden out the discussion to make links to the overall thesis of the essay. Phrases like *this indicates that* and *therefore, it is improbable that* signpost that the author of the essay is analysing the evidence presented in the paragraph and drawing their own conclusions.

Sample paragraph from an undergraduate student essay in an academic writing course

As previously stated, the Factory Act of 1833 did not solely include time and age restrictions for child workers, but also a supervising system created to ensure that factory owners abided by the laws. As inspectors were few, many owners succeeded in circumventing the laws (“The 1833 Factory Act”, n.d.), even several decades after the laws had passed. A report from 1863 showcases numerous accusations of factory owners who had violated the child labor laws, for example by employing females and too young children or employing them after a certain time of the day or on a certain day of the week. According to the report, most cases were withdrawn after the offenders had paid the fines they received from the offence – in other words, none of the cases were brought to court (“1833 Factory Act”, n.d.). This indicates that the laws did not profoundly affect factory owners who employed children, as they could avoid harsh sentences by paying a fine if they were convicted. Therefore, it is improbable that the laws caused a decline in child labor, since factory owners employed children without any severe repercussions several decades after the laws had passed.

As well as paying attention to the internal architecture of the paragraph, writers need to consider each block of text in relation to the whole. If we use the metaphor of a paragraph as a brick, the text as a whole is the entire building. Whether this is a simple brick wall or a complex fort, the individual building blocks need to fit together effectively. Although each paragraph in itself should develop just one idea or unit of thought, when they are combined, paragraphs form the basis for a potentially complex development of ideas.

REFLECTION TASK 1: TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE ON PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

Answer the following two questions to test your knowledge of paragraph structure. We recommend you take 5 or 10 minutes per question to write your thoughts down on a piece of paper.

Question 1: Why do we divide texts into paragraphs?

Question 2: What is a topic sentence and what is its function?

REFLECTION TASK 2: LOOKING AT PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE IN A SAMPLE TEXT

For this exercise you will need to select an academic article or book chapter to work with. If you are currently engaged in a writing task, you might want to choose something that is relevant to your particular project. Choose two paragraphs from different parts of the text. Firstly, underline the topic sentence. Is it the first sentence in the paragraph? If not, where does it appear? Next, for each paragraph, consider how the supporting sentences are related to the topic sentence. Do you think there are any ways in which each paragraph could be improved?

Lesson 6:
IMRaD structure of essays and research papers

In this lesson, we will look at the IMRaD structure. As we have already seen, IMRaD is an acronym that stands for introduction, methods, results, and discussion. It is the most commonly used format for scientific papers or for papers that are based on experimental studies. In fact, in some disciplines, such as medicine, the IMRaD structure is almost exclusively used for writing up papers. If you are writing within a discipline that uses IMRaD structure, the material in this lesson will be very important for you. We introduce the basics of the IMRaD structure in Video lecture 11:

Video lecture 11: IMRaD

As we heard in the video lecture, the IMRaD structure has much in common with a typical three-part essay structure. In the paragraphs below, we will take a closer look at each of the component parts of an IMRaD paper.

The introduction section

The first section of an IMRaD paper is the introduction. An introduction should try to convince the reader of the importance of your work and how it correlates with previous research. Since the introductory part of an IMRaD essay or research paper involves positioning and persuasion, the chances are you will find yourself using more of the active voice than when it comes to the method section, for instance; we will return to the issue of active versus passive voice in Lesson 3: The writer's toolbox in Module 4 below This is because what you do in comparison to what other researchers have done is important and the active voice will help you emphasize this. In Lesson 7 below, you will find more detailed information about how to effectively structure an introduction around what is known as the *CARS model.*

The method section

The next two parts of the IMRaD essay, the method part and the results part, are in effect the main body of the paper. The main purpose of the method section – sometimes also called the methods and materials section – is to convince your target audience that the way you have gone about collecting the evidence that lead to the results, that is, the materials that you have used to support your main claim and the possible subclaims, are all valid. Your methods section will answer questions such as the following:

- What did you study?
- How did you set up your investigation / experiment, and how did you collect your data?
- Did you encounter any problems?
- If you did have problems, how did you solve them?

It is important to show that the materials or data that you collect can help you answer your research questions. This means that you should make sure that you collect enough materials or data to accurately support your claims. The materials should also be representative and typical of what you are investigating, and they need to be correct and up to date. And finally, they should be relevant to the claims that you are making in your essay or research paper. Because the method section reports what was done and in what way, it is common for authors to use the past tense in the passive voice in that section.

The results section

The results section is a vital section of your paper, as this is where you present information that is new to your target readers: you can show them what you have actually found or what your contribution to the field consists of. As the author, it is up to you to decide how you want to present your results and the order in which you want to present them. This means that some of the results will get foregrounded, while others get backgrounded. Presenting your results in a particular way, or in a certain order, is part of relating a bigger narrative of your research: some issues are more important than others, and some of your findings will be more conclusive or novel than others.

In your results section, you may find yourself having to use visuals, such as tables, figures, diagrams, charts, or drawings. Here you have the added dilemma of how to comment on your results within the running text. There is usually no need to repeat what readers can already decipher from any visuals that you may have included in this part of your essay: if they can already see from a table you have provided that 27% of your data were affected, there is no need to re-state within the running text that 27% of your data were affected. You will, however, need to show the results to your audience in view of your particular stance. This now leads us on to the discussion part of IMRaD structured papers.

The discussion section

The discussion section is, as the name suggests, where you discuss and interpret your findings and connect them to previous research on the topic that is of relevance. Instead of starting with a broad context and narrowing down to your specific purpose, the discussion section typically begins by restating your main findings. It then broadens out to interpret and discuss the significance of these findings to the field at large. Swales and Feak (2012) have mapped out five stages – they call these *moves* – that are typically present in a discussion section. According to this model, move 1 appears in some, but not all papers, and this is the presentation of background information. Move 2 is the obligatory summarizing of key results. Move 3 is where the actual discussion of results takes place. And sometimes it might be necessary to mention the limitations of your study, which is move 4. Finally, move 5 is the place to suggest further research or broader implications related to your findings.

As was stated in Video lecture 11 above, it is not always easy to separate out results and discussion material. Sometimes the essay guidelines may stipulate that you have to adhere strictly to the IMRaD structure. If not, you may be allowed to use some variation of the structure. For instance, many disciplines tend to combine the results and discussion sections, to get around the problem of having to divide findings from interpretations of these findings; this is also a good way to avoid repetition. It is also common to see a conclusion as a separate section after the discussion part. Other common variations include the addition of a separate literature review or theory section after the introduction. It is important that you read the guidelines for all your writing assignments carefully, so that you know what applies to the text that you are expected to write in each case.

While following the IMRaD setup might initially seem restrictive, there are still many choices that you need to make in terms of the presentation of your research. The IMRaD structure supplies you with a framework with which to write in an economical fashion, and in a way that will be instantly recognizable to your target readers. They are expecting you to do certain things in a certain way, and any deviations from the conventions will direct their attention away from the contents of your paper. By abiding by the rules of the game and sticking to conventions, you are making yourself convincing to your target reader so that when you say something that maybe novel or challenging, you will be taken seriously.

Further reading on IMRaD structure is available on the AWELU platform:

AWELU: Three versions of the RA

REFLECTION TASK 1: TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF IMRaD

Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts on the following questions in order to test your knowledge of the IMRaD structure.

Question 1: What does the acronym IMRaD stand for?

Question 2: What should you do in the introduction-part of your essay?

Question 3: What should you do in the methods-part of your essay?

Question 4: What should you do in the results and discussion parts of your essay?

REFLECTION TASK 2: IMRaD STRUCTURE IN ESSAYS AND RESEARCH PAPERS

Find an essay or research paper that is structured according to the IMRaD model and reflect upon the following questions:

Question 1: How does the author establish the importance of their own research in the introduction?

Question 2: Is there a part where the author discusses previous work that is of relevance? Is this a sub-part of the introduction, or is this a separate section after the introduction?

Question 3: How are the results presented? Has the author used any visuals? How does the author refer to these visuals within the running text? (for example, are all tables, diagrams, and so on discussed within the running text? How are they discussed?)

Question 4: Is there a separate discussion-part in the essay? What does the author do in the discussion-part? If the results and discussion-sections have been combined, how does the author keep the results separate from the interpretation and discussion of the results?

Lesson 7:
CARS: Creating a research space

In this lesson, we discuss the CARS model. CARS stands for 'creating a research space' and was developed by Swales (1990) as a model for mapping out introductions in research articles. We recommend that you read this material if you are, or will be, writing a research-based essay. Even if you are not writing a research-based essay at this time, you will probably find many of the features of the CARS model applicable for writing an introduction in general. If you have not already explored the material from the lesson on IMRaD, we suggest you go back and look at the previous lesson before moving on.

According to Swales, creating a research space involves three moves, each with substeps:

Move 1. Establishing a territory

- Step 1 Claiming centrality

and/or

- Step 2: Making topic generalizations

and/or

- Step 3: Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2. Establishing a niche

- Step 1A: Counter-claiming

or

- Step 1B: Indicating a gap

or

- Step 1C: Question-raising

or

- Step 1D: Continuing a tradition

Move 3. Occupying the niche

- Step 1A: Outlining purposes

or

- Step 1B: Announcing present research
- Step 2: Announcing principal findings
- Step 3: Indication of research article structure

According to Swales, writers are like plants competing for space, water, and nutrients in an ecosystem. They need to find a place to grow, create a gap in this space, and then occupy the space. According to the CARS model, the first move in an introduction should then be to establish a territory. This often means making some sort of claim to centrality which tells the reader why this area is interesting and worthy of research. Reviewing previous work that is of relevance and making general claims about your topic can also be considered part of staking out your territory. What you should aim to do at this stage is position yourself in relation to previous work that is of relevance.

Move 2, according to the CARS model, involves establishing your own niche. To do this, you might counter some claims that other researchers have made. Alternatively, maybe you will raise some sort of problem that needs an answer, a problem that previous work has not been able to solve, or where the solutions are somehow incomplete. Instead, perhaps you might indicate a gap where there is a lack of research. It might also be valid to just claim that you are continuing or developing an existing tradition. Perhaps your goal is to apply someone else's ideas to new material. The exact way that you will articulate the gap will depend on the nature of your study and its relation to previous research.

In the final move of the introduction – so, move 3 of the CARS model as described above – you will need to occupy the space that you have staked out. Continuing with the ecological metaphor, you will need to plant yourself in the soil. Here you will present your statement of purpose, or, the main claim that you will make in your paper. It is usual at this point to provide some sort of outline of the rest of the essay or research article – a sort of blueprint or mapping statement – and perhaps make a claim about the broader significance of your research. In other words, here you will state how it will contribute to further discussions of the topic.

REFLECTION TASK: HOW WELL DOES THE CARS MODEL APPLY IN YOUR DISCIPLINE?

For this task you need two research articles from your field. Firstly, read the introduction to each article carefully. Secondly, go through each article introduction individually and highlight each step from the CARS model.

When you have done this, reflect on your findings. Do the introductions that you have selected match the CARS model exactly? Do they deviate in any respect? Make notes on your findings or discuss them with your peers.

Lesson 8:
Abstracts

When writing a comprehensive essay, such as a degree project, you will most likely be asked to submit an abstract, which is a brief summary of the text outlining its main argument and main points. Even if you are not writing such an essay now, knowing what an abstract is and how to write one is a skill which will provide you with strategies for presenting ideas and results in a condensed way.

Thinking back for a moment on the typical structure of an essay or article introduction, the three moves concerned presenting a background, highlighting a research gap, and indicating how that gap will be filled, that is, what the author's contribution consists of. You will also find this kind of structure in abstracts. In some disciplines, you will find that the structure of the abstract is based on key words such as *objective*, *method*, *result*, and *conclusion*, whereas other fields will allow for a more open structure, although still expecting the abstract to go through the following moves, identified by Santos (1996), or moves that respond to questions like what, why and how.

- Situating the research
- Presenting the research
- Describing the methodology
- Summarizing the results
- Discussing the research

REFLECTION TASK: IDENTIFYING ABSTRACT STRUCTURES

You have now read about the structure of an abstract. Read the abstract below and see if you can identify the features abstracts usually contain. Then find an article or thesis in your discipline, or in a topic that you are interested in. Identify the moves or transitions in your chosen abstract and reflect on any structural differences between the abstracts that you have read.

Abstract from a Bachelor's project in the field of English Language and Linguistics[5]

The focus of this essay is the interpretations of the quantifiers *a couple of* and *the majority of*. Previous research on quantifiers has (among other aspects) investigated numerical denotations of vague quantifiers as well as *not all* implicatures for lower-bound quantifiers. In this essay, the former of these aspects is applied to both *a couple of* and *the majority of* to investigate where their general numerical interpretations lie, and the latter is also applied to *the majority of* to investigate its potential *not all* implicature. The data for these investigations were collected in the form of image/sentence suitability ratings of twenty-five native English speakers, and the ratings were then calculated to determine both which numbers are perceived as most suitable for the respective quantifiers and if the majority of is compatible with *all* or not. The results of the investigation indicate that *a couple of* is largely interpreted as meaning *exactly two*, and when it is interpreted as meaning *at least two*, numbers 3, 4 and 7 are perceived as the most suitable. For *the majority of*, 8 out of 10 is perceived as the most suitable, though 7 and 9 out of 10 are also perceived as highly suitable. Ratings for 10 out of 10, i.e. *all*, were more divided. Generally, participants perceived this as unsuitable, thus indicating a *not all* implicature.

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[5] The source of the quoted material: Brogårdh, E. (2019). *A couple of quantifiers and their interpretations*. Unpublished BA project. Centre for Languages and Literature, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

Module 3:
Using sources in academic writing

Introduction

In this module, we will discuss the reasons for using sources in academic writing and go over some of the practicalities of how sources can be introduced in your texts. We will start with two short quotations that illustrate the main points in the module.

“Standing on the shoulders of giants”

Our first quotation comes from Sir Isaac Newton (1675), who famously wrote to another scholar, Robert Hooke: “If I have seen further, it is by standing upon the shoulders of giants”. This quotation, as you may have noticed, is also the motto of the Google Scholar search engine. Like Newton, you too will need to “stand on the shoulders” of those researchers and thinkers who have come before you, in order to gain deeper insight and perspective in the particular subject area about which you are writing.

Academic writing is based on facts derived from some kind of investigation. Such an investigation is based on an agreed method within a specific academic field. Academic writing and scholarship is also always based on previous research, which means that you, as a writer, will need to base your work on what other people have said or written about the topic before. If no one has investigated what you are working on, there will still be previous work in neighbouring topics and fields that you can base your work on and take as a starting point for your ideas. In other words, when you write a research paper or essay, you write in response to previous work and your text will need to indicate how your contribution is indebted to previous research on the topic.

“Facts not opinions”

Our second quotation is an inscription over a door of Kirkaldy’s Testing and Experimenting Works, which is today a museum in London. “Facts not opinions” was the motto of David Kirkaldy, a 19th-century Scottish engineer who set up a business to test different steel materials so that manufacturers of bridges and railroads would know that the material they used was of good quality. It is not possible to just look at a bar of iron and decide whether it is of good quality or not; it has to be tested in a proper scientific way. Kirkaldy was a pioneer of methodical scientific testing. Much the same applies to all research in the sense that research writing presents facts and ideas that are based on experiments, close reading, or some other agreed method where the researcher has studied the facts at hand before drawing any conclusions. This means that the argument one presents in an essay or research article will have to be based on facts, not on what one's personal opinion might be without actually having studied the topic closely.

If you look up the definitions of the words *fact* and *opinion* in a dictionary, you will see that a fact is something that can be verified, while an opinion is a belief that has not been corroborated in the same way. Going back to Kirkaldy, facts, by definition, can be verified through testing, while opinions cannot. This also means that there cannot be any alternative facts, although there can be different interpretations of facts.

Academic writing does not happen in a vacuum but, just like research, builds on work that has come before. When you compose an academic text, it is necessary to show that you have done your homework and have read up on the subject. This is of course important both for students and for researchers; if you are a student, you might sometimes be given specific texts to read and reflect on, while other times you might need to find the sources on which to base your writing for yourself. The kinds of sources you are expected to use, and the manner in which you should use them, will vary depending on your discipline and the level at which you are studying. However, although a Master's level student will be expected to have acquired a more sophisticated approach to using sources than a student on an introductory undergraduate course, the basic set of skills required for the task is the same on all levels. In this module, we focus on how to go about acquiring these skills. The competencies discussed here require practice and may take some time to develop. However, the module is designed to set you on the right path to honing your skills: in Lesson 1, you will learn about reading strategies. Lesson 2 explores how you can situate your arguments and ideas in relation to secondary sources. Finally, in Lesson 3, we discuss ethical issues surrounding referencing, academic integrity and plagiarism.

Lesson 1:
Reading strategies

Reading in the information age

It can be difficult to know where to begin when it comes to finding and reading secondary material on a specific topic. As it will be impossible for you to read everything that has been written about the topic, getting to the relevant information that will assist you in backing up the claims that you want to make usually means sifting through large quantities of text. You will learn more about how to read strategically and assess secondary material for relevance in Video lecture 12. This kind of reading requires a particular set of skills. Once you have identified certain texts that are of relevance to your project, you will need to take a second, and sometimes even a third, look at these texts. By performing a close reading of a text, you will be able to ensure that you have fully understood the author's argument and can turn your focus on those aspects that will be particularly useful to you.

Video lecture 12: Reading strategies

Video lecture 12 discusses reading strategies that can help you negotiate the complex world of information which you will have to grapple with at university. A central aspect of reading that we cover in this video lecture is how understanding the anatomy of a text can help you understand the content of it. A useful strategy for this is called *predatory reading* (Rael, 2004). Predatory reading is a strategy whereby you are quickly able to pick out the parts of the text that are directly relevant to you, rather than paying equal attention to a text in its entirety. It is equally important to establish the purpose of your reading: do you want to get an overview or are you reading for in-depth understanding?

Another two common reading strategies are known as *skimming* and *scanning*. To skim means that you read something quickly in order to get an overview of the contents, whereas scanning refers to the reading technique you often use when you look for something specific in a text. Both strategies are useful to learn and apply, and they are often used to complement each other. You probably already use these techniques when you read a newspaper, for instance: you skim the newspaper to get an overview of the top news, and you scan the text to find the specific news items that are of particular interest to you. If you read newspapers online, these techniques are of course equally applicable: you scroll quickly to get an overall picture and conduct searches for specific information that you might be after.

Lesson 2:
Integrating sources: Positioning and stance

Lesson 1 introduced you to reading strategies that are useful for deciphering scholarly texts. Now it is time to look at how you can make use of such sources in your own writing. The current lesson explores ways of evaluating sources for reliability and relevance, as well as how these sources can be used to support your own claims. You will also learn about the subtle art of positioning your claims in relation to claims made in the secondary sources that you refer to. The basics are outlined in Video lecture 13.

Video lecture 13: Integrating sources: Positioning and stance

Before we go any further, we should pause and consider why it is necessary to refer to other people's work and ideas in academic writing. There are a number of reasons for this, not least that by referring to previous literature that is of relevance, writers are able to demonstrate that they have knowledge about their topic and the field at large. From this follows that any argument that we make in an essay or scholarly article will involve having to situate ourselves in relation to other people's work and ideas. In other words, we will have to take a stand on what claims we agree with and where our own ideas may deviate from what others have said and done before.

As stated in Video lecture 13, research writing makes use of different types of sources**.** These can be divided into primary, secondary and tertiary sources:

Type of source	Function of source	Examples of source
Primary sources	Present original data	Statistics, experimental data, text documents, illustrations
Secondary sources	Comment on or analyse a topic or primary data	Scholarly articles, monographs, conference presentations
Tertiary sources	Sum up what other sources say on a specific topic	Study guides, wikis

A primary source is the data that researchers collect to investigate and base their claims on. Depending on the discipline, primary sources may be text-based or they may consist of interviews or experimental data of various types. In the field of literature, the primary source material might thus consist of novels, for instance, whereas blood samples may make up the primary source material in medicine. Secondary sources, in turn, are often articles, books and reports written about the topic that you discuss and other aspects that may be of relevance for the study. In university essays, authors are often expected to use research articles and scholarly monographs as secondary sources.

Tertiary sources should always be used with caution in academic writing, as they only provide facts collected from other sources. Tertiary sources can be useful in that they provide a quick overview of a field or a topic, but they do not give any in-depth analyses and they may not be quality-controlled – for example peer-reviewed – in the same way as scholarly publications (that is, the work that counts as secondary sources) are. Their target audience may also be laymen rather than experts in the field, which in turn means that the information provided may be too simplified to serve any purpose in academic writing. From the point of reliability, the type of sources you find in a university library are usually far more reliable than tertiary sources, such as wikis, textbooks and study guides, especially if these tertiary sources have not been reviewed by someone who has expert knowledge within the field.

Positioning one's own argument in relation to secondary sources is something of an art. On the one hand, authors of academic texts will need to show that they know their topic and have read the sources that are of relevance as well as understood what the original authors are saying in these sources. This knowledge will need to be made visible in their writing, in the form of citations, direct quotations, paraphrases and summaries. It will also need to be made clear at all times whose words and ideas are presented, discussed and integrated in the text, and how the current author views the information taken from the sources. In the remainder of this lesson, you will learn more about the mechanics of incorporating secondary material into your writing. In Lesson 3, you will receive even more tips on referencing in general and on how to avoid plagiarism in particular. Although you will learn more about referencing and the use of different referencing styles or systems also later on, we want to stress already here the importance of checking from the essay guidelines or stylesheet you may have received what referencing style you are required to use, as well as to clarify to yourself what information you will need to include in the citations. Understanding what information you will need and keeping careful records as you go along will save time in the long run.

It is also important to bear in mind that different disciplines have different referencing conventions and the way in which sources are cited will vary; quoting directly from a source is more common in the humanities than in the sciences, for instance, and the choice of referencing style will, to some extent, affect the way in which writers need to present and make use of their sources. There are, at the same time, many rules that apply across the disciplines. One such rule concerns the need for balance between the sources referred to in the text and the writer's own text. In other words, it is important not to lose one's own voice as the author. Including too much borrowed material in an essay or research article may give the impression that the other writers are more important and trustworthy than you, the present writer, are. You may also become reduced to someone who simply introduces a cluster of quotations and weaves them together into a bigger whole, but who does not otherwise have anything interesting or original to say.

Selecting sources: Reliability and relevance

As already noted, authors of academic essays are often expected to use research articles and scholarly monographs as secondary sources. When selecting sources, authors need to consider what counts as a reliable and relevant source in the writing situation at hand, as the use of inappropriate and unreliable sources may actually undermine their attempts to persuade the reader of their knowledge and expertise. With all of the internet resources available at our fingertips, we might think that this makes the task of finding relevant and reliable sources easier. However, the sheer volume of material out there actually makes the task much harder. One reason for this is that the majority of sources that a quick Google search will generate are likely to be completely inappropriate to use in an academic essay.

There are certain ways of identifying what will constitute a reliable source in an academic writing situation. The best sources in terms of reliability are published sources that have been through an editorial, and preferably also a peer review, process. This means they have been vetted by experts in the field before having been published. Reliable sources are also objective and backed up with enough evidence. If you are a student, your university library catalogues and databases will usually be good places to search for appropriate sources. You can start by tracking down databases that are relevant to your field of study, as searches in such databases will generate a list of potential sources. Once you have produced a list of potential sources, it is important to consider their relevance to your own piece of writing. Just because a source is reliable does not automatically mean that it is also relevant for you or the writing situation you are in. A relevant source is one that speaks the language of your discipline and that is appropriate to the level at which you are writing. It also says something useful about your specific research question or the surrounding context. As we noted earlier in Video lecture 13, supporting claims that you make in a biochemistry essay with evidence that you find in an academic journal article on geography from the 1950s is probably not a good idea, for instance. Similarly, although encyclopedia entries may be perfectly adequate on an introductory level course, they are not nearly specific enough at the more advanced levels.

Integrating sources

Once you have chosen sources that you are happy with in terms of reliability and relevance, you can begin to consider how to use them and how to integrate them into your own writing. Usually, the introductory section of an essay is where you provide a survey of previous research. Sometimes, there is also a separate literature review or background section where you can develop this survey of previous work even further; we have discussed some examples of this in connection with the IMRaD structure of essays in Module 2. In some disciplines, such as literature, the entire essay may function as a literature review of sorts where you carefully sift through relevant secondary sources and look at how these can help support the claims that you are making. Wherever it is placed, this survey of literature is necessary, because it helps writers indicate where they themselves stand in relation to previous work and to the ideas that others have had on the topic in question. Going back to Newton's words about standing on the shoulders of giants, in order to have a standpoint, one will need to have some foundations to stand on.

When it comes to integrating secondary sources and information into your writing, you will have some important decisions to make. First, you will need to decide if you should quote from the source directly, or if you should paraphrase or perhaps summarize in your own words what the original author is saying. A direct quotation means that you reproduce exactly the words from another source and show this by placing the words inside of quotation marks. A paraphrase, in turn, means that you take a section of text and rewrite it using your own words and sentence structure. A paraphrase is often slightly shorter than the original passage of text. A summary means that the original text is condensed into a much shorter version. Just like a paraphrase, a summary is written entirely in your own words. Learning to summarize is an important skill in the academic world: the literature review section of an essay or research article will typically consist of several summaries of other people's work which can be articles and sometimes even entire books.

Another decision that you will need to make when you integrate sources concerns how you want to position yourself to the information presented in the sources. Will you, for instance, align yourself with this material, or do you want to indicate a gap or a problem with the previous work? Decisions of this type will, in turn, determine how you need to introduce the material into your writing: to say that Smith hypothesizes that something is the case is very different from saying that Smith proves this to be the case. And if you state that Smith proves something, then you also signal that you are yourself convinced of the validity of Smith's claims. This brings us to what are commonly known as reporting verbs.

Using reporting verbs

As already stated in Video lecture 13 above, so-called *reporting verbs* can help you indicate whether you align yourself with or position yourself against previous work that is of relevance; reporting verbs are sometimes also referred to as *communication verbs* or *signal verbs*. They are words that are used to introduce what is stated in the source. They need not always be just verbs, as expressions such as those listed below can also introduce secondary sources into texts:

> According to Smith, the Earth is flat.
>
> Smith's claim that the Earth is flat is …

Reporting verbs and other reporting words can be embedded in various types of sentences. Some examples are given below:

> Smith argues that the Earth is flat.
>
> Smith argues for the Earth being flat.
>
> Smith presents the argument that the Earth is flat.

Below is a list of some common reporting verbs in English academic writing. To build up your own list of useful reporting verbs and other words, you may find it useful to also study research articles within your field and identify what reporting verbs and other words writers tend to use and what purpose these words serve in their writing. Another source for useful reporting verbs and signal phrases for specific contexts is the Academic Phrasebank from Manchester University.

acknowledge
add
admit
address
agree
argue
claim
comment
compare
confirm
describe
illustrate
imply
emphasize
mention
note
observe
point out
propose
report
state
suggest
suppose
write

When selecting a reporting verb, you will need to consider three things:

- the verb's meaning as stated in a dictionary
- your own position vis-à-vis the source text
- how the original source text authors position themselves in their text

It is also important to vary the way in which you incorporate other people's words and ideas in your writing, as using the same sentence structure and sticking to the same 3-4 reporting verbs throughout the essay will make the text not only informationally vague and imprecise but also repetitive and dull to read. Aiming for a varied, precise and correct use of reporting expressions will thus help create more nuanced and informationally accurate texts. Verbs like *describe, point out* and *observe*, for instance, can be used to signal that the original author is neutral towards what they are saying, whereas verbs such as *suggest* and *suppose* signal that the original author is hesitant. It would be inappropriate to use a strong verb like *argue* or *claim* in a situation where the original author is hesitant; it would be equally inappropriate to use *suggest* in a situation where the original author presents a proper argument that is backed up with evidence.

As reporting verbs affect the meaning of the sentence and give a specific impression about the source that you are citing, it is a good idea to look up their meanings in a good dictionary before you use them in your signal phrases. Doing this is especially important for non-native writers of English, since being aware of all the different senses of meaning that a single word can have can help you write a more interesting, specific and informationally accurate text. In addition to dictionaries and phrasebanks, you can use a thesaurus to search for alternatives for your favourite reporting verbs and in this way create variation in your writing. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind that you should not look for new words just because you need alternatives and the words you find sound "academic" or "learned" – we will return to these issues in Lesson 2: Style in Module 4.

The citational present

As brought up in Video lecture 13 above, in many disciplines it is common to use what is often referred to as the *citational present* to discuss previous work. This means that even if the source cited may have been published many years ago, you will still refer to it in the present tense. In other words, you write *Smith (1983) proves that…* or *Smith (1983) claims that...* instead of *Smith (1983) proved that…* The effect of the citational present in terms of how you position yourself in relation to the source is worth considering, as this is a powerful way for writers to align themselves with the study they are referring to: it allows them to highlight the "nowness" and the continued relevance of the contents and findings of an earlier study. If you had instead written *Smith (1983) proved that…*, the past tense could have been taken to indicate that, although Smith's claims might have been regarded as trustworthy when they were first made, the thinking has changed and more recent studies have undermined Smith's original claims.

More on integrating sources: Direct quotations

By introducing and contextualizing other people's words and ideas properly, as we have seen above, the author will be able to inform the reader of not only where the information comes from, but also of how the original author views the information. The reporting expression that is chosen will inform the reader if the original author of the source presents an argument or makes a claim about something, or if they merely suggest that something might be the case. The way in which you introduce or contextualize borrowed material will also reveal your own attitude towards this material. This means that, when you incorporate the material in the form of a direct quotation, a paraphrase or a summary, you will need to ask yourself three pertinent questions:

- Do you agree or disagree with the original author?
- Do you think that the original author has presented a valid argument, or do you see any gaps or flaws in their argumentation and thinking?
- What is your purpose of using the source text? Do you use it to validate your own argument, or do you use it to clarify or perhaps exemplify something that you have discussed in your essay, or is your aim to present the reader with a statement that you will then refute in your essay?

As integrating other people's material in the form of direct quotations can sometimes be tricky, we give some additional guidelines on this below. There are two main ways of integrating direct quotations in your writing. One way is to use a full sentence followed by a colon and then place the quoted material inside of quotation marks:[6]

> Joyce (2013) claims that potential answers to the question of what is meant by the concept of the state are likely to be complex: "On the surface it is a simple question, but below the surface it is a difficult and troubling one" (p. 1).

Another way is to begin the sentence in your own words and then complete it with the quoted material inside of quotation marks:

> There are, according to Joyce (2013), "a multitude of conflicting answers" to questions about the nature of the state (p. 1).

The first system, especially if used extensively, can make the text sound clumsy, as it can interfere with the flow of reading. The latter system only works for short quotes, which typically means quotes that are less than three lines or 25 words in length. If the quotes are longer than that, they may need to be formatted as block quotes. How you do this is usually stated in the reference style guidelines or in the stylesheet or essay guidelines that you may have received from your teacher. Such guidelines also have information on the use of quotation marks and on how you need to punctuate and capitalize your quotes, so that they follow the appropriate style manual's rules. In most reference styles, block quotes do not need to be inside of quotation marks, for instance, as the fact that they are separated from the running text already indicates that they are quotations.

To ensure that the quotation marks are presented in the appropriate way, you should also make sure that your word-processing programme is set to English language. In English, quotation marks often look like this: "quote". In some other languages, they may be turned around or be positioned elsewhere. In English texts, both single and double quotation marks may be used. Again, matters of this kind are normally dealt with in the reference style guidelines or the stylesheet or essay guidelines that you may have received from your teacher. One particular detail regarding the use of single and double quotation marks concerns quotations within quotations: if you use double quotation marks to introduce a quotation into your own text and the quoted material contains a direct quotation from another source, quotations within quotations are often signalled by placing them inside of single quotations marks. In many cases, it is worth bearing in mind that quotations within quotations will make the text very difficult to read, so it is usually advisable to try to paraphrase the information using your own words. And instead of taking someone else's words for what another person is saying, it is always advisable to try to locate the original source and read the information yourself.

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[6] The source of the quoted material: Joyce, P. (2013). *The state of freedom: A social history of the British state since 1800.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The sandwich metaphor

As quotations are used to illustrate your argument or support what you say, you will have to distinguish them from your own text and inform the reader about the source as well your reasons for using the quotations. The function of the quotation – in other words, why it is there – must be clear to your reader. Furthermore, as the quotation is often there to back up your argument, it cannot stand on its own and it can never do the job of presenting your argument for you. Another way of putting this is to say that the quotation has to be contextualized, which means that it has to be introduced to the reader so that the reader can see what the quotation is about and what function it has in your writing. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, although you as the author will be familiar with the text that you quote and are able to see the connection, your reader may not be and hence needs to be told what the connection is. Secondly, by clearly indicating that you are not misrepresenting what the source author has stated, you do justice to the quotation and to the original author.

The three-step procedure that writers need to go through every time they use a source is sometimes described with the help of a sandwich metaphor. The three layers of quotations are like a sandwich: the bread provides the frame (the introduction and the follow-up) for the filling (the quotation itself). Dissecting the following short passage according to the sandwich model helps illustrate these three parts:[7]

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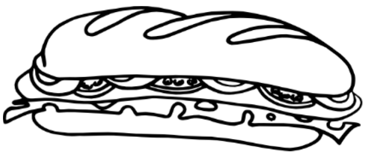
[7] The source of the quoted material: McDowall, D. (1989). *An illustrated history of Britain.* Harlow: Longman. The sandwich is from https://www.nicepng.com/maxp/u2w7q8e6a9a9u2a9/.

> Outlining socio-economic changes in late Victorian Britain, McDowall (1989) argues that “between 1875 and 1914 the condition of the poor in most of Britain greatly improved as prices fell by 40 per cent and real wages doubled” (p. 151). Such drastic changes in living standards affected consumer buying behaviour at this time. For instance,…

	**Introducing quotation**	Outlining socio-economic changes in late Victorian Britain, McDowall (1989) argues that …
	Providing quotation	…“between 1875 and 1914 the condition of the poor in most of Britain greatly improved as prices fell by 40 per cent and real wages doubled” (p. 151)…
	Following up on quotation	Such drastic changes in living standards affected consumer buying behaviour at this time. For instance,…

The sandwich metaphor captures the idea behind paraphrase and summary as well. Even these need to be contextualized, that is, they need to be introduced to the reader so that the reader can see what the information is about and what function it has in your writing. If we would paraphrase the quotation used in the example above, the passage could look like this:

> Outlining socio-economic changes in late Victorian Britain, McDowall (1989) states that Britain saw a huge improvement in living standards among the poor around the turn of the century 1900 (p. 151). Such drastic changes in living standards affected consumer buying behaviour at this time. For instance,…

This means that even when the filling is written in your own words, there needs to be the bread that provides the frame for the filling. The reader also needs to be told whose ideas constitute the filling, which means that there needs to be a reference to the original source.

EXERCISES ON REPORTING VERBS

As you have seen, there is a rich variety of reporting verbs that are at your disposal when it comes to introducing secondary sources. It can, however, be tricky to ensure that you use the right word for the job.

Exercise 1: Consider the following situations and choose the most suitable reporting verb to complete each sentence.

1. You want to report that the claim that the author makes has been established (so far as it can be) as fact, and there is no evidence to the contrary.
   a. Smith *proves* that...
   b. Smith *implies* that...
   c. Smith *estimate*s that...
   d. Smith *suggests* that…

2. You want to report that the author speculates that something might be the case, but only has preliminary evidence to support their case.
   a. Smith *conjectures* that...
   b. Smith *warns* that...
   c. Smith *outlines* that...
   d. Smith *claims* that…

3. You want to report that the author has presented something as if it was the case, but you are not entirely convinced by their claims.
   a. Smith claims that … but s/he is wrong.
   b. Smith stupidly argues that …
   c. Although Smith has argued that … there are reasons so doubt this conclusion [followed by a list of these reasons].
   d. Smith claims that … but there is also evidence that points the other way [without showing what the evidence is]

Exercise 2: Look up synonyms for the verbs listed in the table above in this lesson in a thesaurus and make a note of what other verbs carry (roughly) the same meanings. Once you have produced a list of verbs, look all of these up in a good dictionary, such as *Longman* or *Merriam-Webster*, to determine if the verbs you found in the thesaurus have any “unwanted” meanings or sound too old-fashioned or too informal. After this, assess if they could truly be used in place of the original verbs in the list, to create variety in one’s writing. This is exactly the kind of detective work that skilful writers are engaged in, when they proofread and edit their text for language and style!

Lesson 3:
Referencing and academic integrity

In this lesson, we investigate how proper referencing goes hand in hand with the concept of academic integrity and is a key to avoiding plagiarism in a text. Academic integrity is the code of ethics that all writers and researchers at university need to follow. Plagiarism is, in turn, the intentional or unintentional use of someone else’s material and passing it off as one’s own. In Video lecture 14, we take another look at the central aspects of referencing, including when it is advisable to use quotations, paraphrasing or summary in your writing. We also address the basics of what type of information will need a reference in a text.

Video lecture 14: Why references?

As stated in the video lecture, you can make different use of sources in your writing. Irrespective of whether you quote directly, paraphrase or summarize other people’s work and ideas, it is important to signal accurately where the original material and information come from and in what ways, as well as to what extent, these sources have affected your work. In this lesson, we will go over some of the main points in how you can do this so that it is clear to the reader who has done what and how your writing has been shaped by work done by someone else.

The nuts and bolts of referencing

Whenever you choose to quote, paraphrase or summarize material from a source, you will need to provide a reference to the original. The reference will, in turn, need to be formatted in accordance with a particular referencing system or style. As Video lecture 15 informs you, there are many different systems for referencing and the one that you should use often depends on the discipline that you are studying. Being able to follow a referencing system accurately and consistently is yet another way in which you can show your target audience that you understand the conventions of your own discipline. This means, in turn, that the audience is more likely to take your ideas and writing seriously.

Video lecture 15: The parts of a reference

Whatever referencing system you use, it is important to keep careful record of your sources at all times. This can be done manually, although it is also worth exploring if there is any reference management software that could help you with this. These tools can, for example, help you in collecting and sorting the references and in creating in-text references as well as a bibliography in the output style of your choice. There are many different reference management software systems available; some of these are free of charge, while others may require the purchase of a licence. If you are a student, you should check if your school or university already has a campus licence for a reference management tool that is easy to use and that can help you keep track of your sources.

If you feel that you need more information about different referencing styles, you may find the following texts on the AWELU platform helpful:

AWELU: Using a reference style

AWELU: Quick guides to reference styles

EXERCISE ON REFERENCING STYLES

Do you know how to accurately use an appropriate referencing system? If you are currently working on a writing assignment, consider the referencing system that you have been instructed to use (if you do not know, ask your instructor). If you are not currently working on a writing assignment, consider the referencing system that is most commonly used in your field. According to this referencing system, how would you go about citing the following items:

1. An electronic journal article
2. A print version of the same article
3. A book (monograph)
4. An electronic version of the same book (e-book)
5. A chapter in an edited collection (an edited collection / volume is a book on a particular theme which consists of chapters or articles by different authors)
6. An entry in an online encyclopedia
7. Video lecture 15 that is part of this guidebook (as linked above).
8. A newspaper article, when the author's name is stated at the top of the article
9. An official report, such as the United Nation's latest Sustainable Development Goals report, available on the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals website.
10. A conference presentation you attended.

Academic integrity

Throughout this module, we have used terms such as academic integrity and plagiarism. To be able to use secondary material and sources in a convincing, honest and responsible manner, it is necessary to understand what these terms mean. Academic integrity refers to the code of conduct that governs academics and students, when it comes to the production and use of scholarship and research. On the one hand, it means that academics and students must show respect to work done by others, and they must demonstrate professional honesty when using this work to support their own research and ideas. On the other hand, it means that one must demonstrate professional honesty also when presenting one's own research and ideas: it is not acceptable to fabricate or falsify data and results, or to refer to sources that do not exist, for example. Such dishonesty can be discovered years, or even decades, after the research has been completed. There are cases, for example, where a university degree has been revoked retroactively after the discovery of academic misconduct.

The International Center for Academic Integrity (ICAI) is an organisation that promotes academic integrity, defined as the "commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility, and courage" (Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity, 2020; see also their booklet *The Fundamental Values of Academic Integrity*, 2013). Most of these six values are closely intertwined. Honesty means, in the ICAI sense, that individual researchers, teachers and students as well as the academic institutions that they are part of are all committed to "doing the right thing" and show zero tolerance for behaviours such as invention or falsification of data and results; theft or misuse of other people's data and results; and downright lying. Trust means, in turn, that there are institutional policies and clear guidelines on what is and is not acceptable behaviour and everyone – researchers, teachers and students alike – is equally committed to following these policies to the best of their ability. A university department, for instance, may have set up their own set of guidelines and criteria for student essays that outline what students are expected to do and what they must not do in their writing assignments, and teachers then assess and grade the students' work based on these guidelines and criteria. When understood in this way, trust becomes a principle that applies both ways: teachers will need to trust that their students will follow the guidelines when preparing their assignments, and students will need to trust that their teachers will assess their work fairly, impartially and according to the stated guidelines and criteria. Without trust, academic research would become quite impossible to do; academics need to be able to discuss their work and ideas with colleagues, and to collaborate and share knowledge with others, without needing to worry about someone stealing their work, passing it off as their own, or misusing it in some other ways.

Fairness means, in the ICAI sense, that everyone – researchers, teachers and students as well as the academic institutions they are part of – are committed to fair treatment. Researchers are being fair to each other, for instance, when they give credit to each other's work in the appropriate fashion; teachers are being fair to their students when they assess the students' work accurately and impartially, using a set of criteria that are clear, reasonable and transparent; and students are being fair to their teachers when they follow the stated guidelines to the best of their abilities. Fairness also means that, if academic misconduct is detected, the consequences are consistent and everyone is treated in the same way.

Although respect is closely intertwined with honesty, trust and fairness, respect in the ICAI sense also means that academics will need to recognize and show tolerance towards other people's views and they need to allow their own work to be questioned, interpreted and re-interpreted in various ways and from angles that might differ from their own viewpoint. Challenging, testing and revising one's own as well as other people's ideas and thinking is a fundamental part of doing research; at the same time, these discussions – including possible disagreements and even debates over research questions, methodologies, data, analyses and interpretations and/or the results – will need to be conducted in a professional manner, without the fear of being threatened, ridiculed or laughed at. Respect means, then, that the tone of the discussions and debates needs to be kept as neutral and objective as possible, and that the focus is always on the topic rather than on the individuals involved in the discussion.

Responsibility, in the ICAI sense, deals with the need for individuals and institutions to work together in upholding the values of academic integrity. Courage, finally, deals with the commitment to act in accordance with these values as well as with one's own convictions.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism refers to the undocumented use of someone else's work and ideas for your own benefit. Plagiarism can be either intentional – a person makes a conscious decision to use someone else's material without giving proper credit – or unintentional. Unintentional plagiarism is in many cases the result of lacking academic competencies. In other words, a person may not be adequately aware of the rules and what constitutes plagiarism, or they may be misinterpreting and/or misapplying the rules. Although the word *plagiarism* is one that strikes fear into the heart of many students, plagiarism is plagiarism, irrespective of whether it is intentional or unintentional. A more precise understanding of the term can help you avoid some of its most common causes. In the following passages, we discuss the definition of plagiarism in more detail and bring up factors that may lead to unintentional plagiarism, that is, to misconduct that is the result of lacking academic competencies.

Private versus public

In view of the fact that plagiarism is often defined as the intentional or unintentional use of someone else's work and ideas and passing them off as your own, the question that immediately arises is if plagiarism also covers cases where you have taken notes by copying verbatim from a source and that are intended for your private use. The short answer is No: copying passages of text (or other materials) for your own private use is not plagiarism. However, if you later use these notes for an essay or some other type of writing assignment that no longer falls under the label *private use*, you might by that time have forgotten that the material was copied directly from a source. To avoid accidentally using someone else's words as your own, it is advisable to develop a system even for private notes where you format material that has been reproduced verbatim as a direct quote and write down the correct reference right next to it. That will ensure that you do not accidentally end up committing plagiarism in work that you hand in for assessment or publish in a journal under your own name. It will also save time: even if you remembered that the passage of text you want to use is copied from somewhere else, you might have forgotten the exact source and trying to relocate it several months later may take time that is best spent on other things.

Someone else's work and ideas

Plagiarism is not just copying passages of text – words, phrases and sentences – directly from a source and passing them off as your own. It also covers copying material of other kinds, such as:

- tables, figures, charts
- pictures, illustrations, images, drawings, paintings, photographs
- cartoons, newspaper and magazine articles, TV programmes
- songs and song lyrics, poems
- teaching materials, such as course compendia and classroom handouts
- translations of material that was originally written in another language

Please note that copying materials of this type without stating the source may not only constitute plagiarism; it may also constitute a copyright violation. We will return to copyright issues briefly at the end of this lesson.

In addition to taking concrete material like words or an illustration from the web, plagiarism covers situations where you have taken someone else's research ideas (including the research question/s and thesis); their specific approach to a topic; their specific ideas for data and/or data collection; their actual data; and their results, analyses and findings, without properly acknowledging the source. In many cases, lectures as well as conference and workshop presentations (including handouts that may have been distributed in these situations) fall into this category; all reference styles or systems have guidelines on how to refer to materials of this type. Even ideas that have been discussed between researchers in an informal situation and that have shaped the way your thinking has developed will need to be acknowledged. A good way of acknowledging informal, often spoken material, is to use the expression *personal communication,* or *p.c.* For example, if a fellow student Smith's thoughts on an idea that you presented while having coffee have inspired your research and thinking, you can indicate this by writing along the lines of *Smith (personal communication) has proposed that…* or *As Smith (p.c.) has pointed out to me…* The expression *personal communication* can also be used when you want to refer to a personal email.

Copying someone else's design or way of organizing their material or discussions can also constitute plagiarism. For example, if someone has written a report where they go over a number of bullet points in a specific order, or if they have designed a questionnaire where the questions appear in a specific order and/or have been formatted to look a specific way, these designs and/or formats cannot be replicated in your work without properly indicating the original source. A situation where you have received instructions to follow a specific format might constitute an exception to this; in these situations, it will normally be clear from the instructions, of course, what you are and are not expected to do.

One final point to bring up here is whether the phrase *someone else's work* also covers the author's own work. The short answer is that it does: you are not allowed to copy work and ideas that you have presented yourself in some other context, such as another essay or research article, and pass them off as if they were new ideas. Quoting one's own work without acknowledging the source is known as *autoplagiarism* or *self-plagiarism*. It may sometimes be connected with what are known as *double-dipping* and *duplicate publishing*. Double-dipping refers to a situation where a student submits identical – or nearly identical – work in separate courses or separate test occasions on one and the same course. Duplicate publishing is a more tricky issue: the basic idea is that the same work should not be published and then re-published in more or less the same format. Many publishers have strict guidelines against this. However, at the same time it is still quite common for researchers to publish what is essentially the same work in a variety of contexts and ways. The results of an experiment, for example, can be discussed from various viewpoints in a number of different research articles, so that each article focusses on a different aspect. A conference talk may be published in a conference proceedings volume and be later on revised into an article that is published in a journal (although many journals nowadays have restrictions against this as well). In all these cases, it should be clearly stated how the different texts or versions of a text are related to each other. To avoid autoplagiarism, authors will also need to learn to distance themselves from their own previous work and ideas and view these as if they were materials produced by someone else. This is a skill that requires practice; the more experienced you become as a researcher and the more you have written about your work, the easier it will become, however. Ultimately, there will even be situations where you want to disagree with your own earlier work and ideas and revise them, so that they can form a starting point for something new.

Passing it off as your own

Learning to recognize what constitutes plagiarism can be tricky, not least because the instructions can appear contradictory. Even in this textbook, we have said that authors will need to find a topic and come up with a research question and thesis that are firmly couched within previous work done by others, while at the same time create something new and original. We have emphasized the need to give credit to others, while at the same time make an original contribution. And we have advised you to observe and follow the writing conventions within your field, while at the same time write a text that is entirely in your own words. A further problem is that it may sometimes be impossible to write everything in your own words, because you will still need to make use of the same concepts and terminology that are used in the original source material.

Many non-native writers of English may face yet another tricky issue, namely having to write academic texts in a language that is not their native tongue. This may mean that the authors are not always sensitive to the fine nuances of language, and it may lead to an overuse of lengthy phrases and fixed expressions that are taken directly from academic phrasebanks and other sources of this type. This need not be just a non-native writer problem, of course; many inexperienced writers, irrespective of their native tongue, may worry so much about not sounding academic enough that they rely excessively on expressions that are lifted directly off a source, just because these sources "say everything so much better" than they feel they ever could.

There may also be situations where material – words, phrases, sentences and strings of sentences – has been taken from a source but changed in minimal ways:

this may mean changing the tense or replacing some of the words with a synonym; leaving out one or two sentences that were part of the original; adding a few new sentences in otherwise copied material; presenting the original sentences in different order; and taking sentences directly from a number of different sources and putting them together into a new passage of text which is presented as if it was the author's own writing. In many of these cases, the end result is a text that falls in the grey zone between plagiarism and what is an acceptable original piece of writing: it is not the same as the original, but it is not the result of the author's own intellectual labour either. There is a specific term, coined by Moore Howard in a 1993 article, that refers to this way of writing: it is known as *patchwriting*. A common reason for patchwriting, according to Moore Howard in a later article (Moore Howard, 1995), is the author's inability to paraphrase correctly; another cause is the author's inability to truly understand what the original source is saying; yet another cause is the lack of time to think for oneself and to come up with original thoughts and one's own wording. Patchwriting is a form of dishonesty precisely because, even if the wording may not be exactly the same as in the original, the information and ideas presented still are.

Many of the issues discussed above are, in one way or another, related to the need to "stand on the shoulders of giants" to be able to see further. Research is always based on work done by others: on the basis of work done by others, you will be able to create something new; and being able to refer to sources and show how they support your line of reasoning or perhaps how your particular line of reasoning is preferable to what has been done by other authors is a good way to add credibility to your own work. At the same time, you have a responsibility to show how your work is based on and how it has been inspired by other people's work – in other words, what belongs to you and what belongs to someone else. Yet, in many cases, it is impossible to pinpoint the exact moment when someone else's work becomes your work. What, exactly, will need to change? How much will need to change? What will you need to do to other people's work, so that it can become your work? There may even be situations where you have taken ideas and parts of ideas from a number of different sources and combined them into something that did not exist before: a new approach or way of thinking about or responding to a problem or, perhaps, a new answer to an old question that is based on novel data that you have collected and analysed yourself. Although your work is clearly indebted to other people's work, it is no longer the same – and it need not even be very similar – to what any of them said or did as individual researchers. Is it therefore acceptable to start claiming credit for what you have done and pass the work off as your own? Or does it still constitute a case of patchwriting, where you have just combined bits and pieces from a number of places but where you have not truly been able to think for yourself?

There are no easy answers to these questions and even experienced writers may struggle with issues of this type. An author who is committed to the fundamental values of academic integrity discussed in this module should, however, always try to indicate to the best of their abilities what information and ideas have been taken from where and how they have used the previous work, even partially, as inspiration for their own work. Below we list examples of expressions that can be useful in indicating this:

> My approach is partially based on work done by Smith (2013) in that… My approach will differ from Smith's original work in that…
>
> In line with Smith (2013) I will assume that… However, unlike Smith, I will…
>
> My argument is based on ideas that have previously been presented in Smith (2013) and in Jones (2013). By combining these two approaches, I will be able to…
>
> Similar ideas have been presented previously in e.g. Smith (2013). Smith's data did not, however, allow the investigation of … whereas my data will allow an investigation of these aspects as well.

If you are a student, these matters should also be discussed in the classroom and you should have access to information and guidelines that state your institution's policy on these issues. Our final piece of advice is that when you are in doubt, you should always cite – your teacher or tutor will tell you if they think that you are overdoing it or if the material you discuss can be viewed as common knowledge that cannot be owned by an individual researcher. Again, although these are all skills that will require quite a bit of practice – sometimes through trial and error – the practice will eventually pay off and writers will develop a feel for what is and is not acceptable to do in their field.

Common knowledge?

A question that many student writers ask is whether it is necessary to provide a reference to common knowledge and factual statements, such as *Water freezes at 0 degrees Celsius* and *India became independent in 1947*. Most guidelines will say that, if the information that you present can be located in a number of tertiary sources, such as encyclopedias, without a reference, then it may be viewed as common knowledge or a factual statement that is not owned by an individual researcher or author. This means, in turn, that a reference may not be needed in your writing either. It is, however, worth bearing in mind that what constitutes common knowledge and factual statements will also vary depending on the author's own level of expertise and who the target readers are expected to be. In a Master's thesis in general linguistics, for instance, you may not need to provide a reference when you discuss what a finite clause is, as that is something that linguists generally agree upon and are expected to know, while in a beginner's level essay in the same subject a reference – for example to a grammar book – may be necessary. As a general rule, if the information you discuss cannot be expected to be already known by the target reader, nor is it the result of your own intellectual labour, a reference to a source should be provided. As already noted above, if you cannot decide whether a reference is needed, the safe option is to always provide one and hence leave it to your teacher or tutor (or journal editors) to tell you if it can be omitted.

Joint work versus collusion

There are situations where academics need to work together and where they also write up the results of their joint work into an article that is submitted under all the collaborators' names. In some fields, such as medicine, articles that report joint work and are written as a team effort are more or less the norm, whereas in other fields, articles tend mostly to be single-authored and are hence also viewed as the result of one person's work only. Even in these cases, as we have seen, the author has of course been influenced by what other people have said and done before: these influences should be clear from the references.

Collusion happens when more than one person contributes to work that is submitted as the work of one individual. An example is when you discuss your work in progress with someone and get a number of ideas that you integrate into your writing, but fail to state the source of these ideas and how they have shaped your thinking. Another example is when you divide the workload with someone else, so that each of you is responsible for writing specific parts of a text, and then pass off the final product, with possible minor changes and editing, as if it was an individual piece of work. The difference between joint work – which is an accepted form of working with other people – and collusion – which is a form of plagiarism – should now be easier to understand: in joint work, everyone who has participated in the work and the writing is listed as an author or is otherwise cited as a source in the appropriate way, whereas in collusion the collaborators are either not mentioned at all or their contribution is not made clear to the reader.

Plagiarism versus copyright violation

From a legal perspective, referencing is connected to copyright, which is the legal term for the ownership of a text, picture, image, drawing, table, chart, and so on. The copyright holder – usually the author or publisher of the text or other material at hand – owns the legal right to print, publish, and sell copies of that work. If you write an essay or article, this means that you cannot re-publish other people's texts or other materials without their consent. Although copyright refers to the right to copy, publish and sell, it also gives the copyright holder the right to be credited for the work. This means that if you reproduce a passage of text written by someone else, you have to provide a reference so that the source can be identified. As long as you provide a proper reference, you may quote and refer to someone else's text, but you may not be allowed to reproduce the text in its entirety, without the copyright owner's (usually written) approval. Regarding how much you can include in a quote, you will need to check the copyright regulations in your country.

From a student perspective, copyright issues may be important also in cases where you want to use, for example, an illustration from a textbook as part of your questionnaire. You cannot just copy the illustration and paste it in a questionnaire that you pass on to your test subjects or informants, without acquiring (written) permission from the publisher first. You may, for example, email the publisher and ask for permission to use their material in a questionnaire as well as explain to them what role the illustration will have in your work. You should also confirm if they allow you to publish the finished work and the questionnaire containing the illustration (with proper acknowledgement and citation, of course) in a student essay database, for example, or if you should remove the illustration from the version that you publish.

REFLECTION TASK ON PLAGIARISM

Now that you understand the terms *plagiarism* and *academic integrity,* look up the guidelines provided by your own university. There may also be specific guidelines provided by your department or guidelines that you have received in relation to a specific assignment. Read through these guidelines and consider what action you will take in order to ensure that you write in an academically honest way. Make a bullet-point list of your thoughts. If possible, share these reflections with another person studying at your university.

Module 4:
A writer’s toolbox

Introduction

In this module, we will focus on revising, editing and proofreading a text and pay special attention to areas where non-native writers of English may have problems. Although revising, editing and proofreading are activities that you should be doing throughout the entire essay writing process — all these activities are good ways for writers to evaluate their ideas, to generate new ideas, and to polish their argumentation — it is necessary to develop a structured approach to the task. As a general rule, you should revise, edit and proofread as soon as you have completed a piece of text. The pieces of text will be of varying lengths, of course, and their size will determine what you need to focus on: if you have completed a sentence, you should quickly glance through the sentence, to make sure that there are no spelling errors or obvious grammar mistakes. If you have completed a paragraph, you should glance through this, to make sure that you have written a topic sentence which is then adequately developed, and that all the sentences in the development-part fall under the topic sentence. The advantage with this approach is that, if you have taken care of the most striking micro-level issues as soon as you have completed a relatively short piece of text, you will not need to spend too much of your time on fixing such issues later, when you are working with bigger pieces of text. At that stage, you will need to be able to focus on more global issues, such as the contents of the essay and making sure that the arguments are presented convincingly. You will also need to pay attention to issues such as how cohesive the text is — in other words, whether all the sub-parts hang together and create a uniform whole that says what you want it to say, in a way that you want to say it.

One important task is to clarify to yourself how important each piece of text is going to be to the finished work. A passage that contains ideas that are directly relevant to the research questions and the thesis may be worth checking and revising several times. The introduction section, for example, is one of the most important parts of an essay or research paper; this means that you may want to spend quite a bit of time on it, both during and at the end of the essay writing process. A passage that contains additional information that is not directly linked to your research questions or the thesis may, in turn, need less attention, and in some cases, you may get away with only proofreading the text quickly for surface-level errors. This way, if you end up removing such passages from the essay before you submit it for assessment, you will not have wasted your time on re-writing materials that were not of importance anyway.

This module is divided into three lessons that follow the structure of our MOOC *Writing in English at University*. Lesson 1 will introduce you to issues that require both large-scale and small-scale revision and editing. We will also talk about how you know when you have done enough and should hand in your text for assessment. Lesson 2 will focus on checking your writing for register, tone and style. In both lessons 1 and 2, there are exercises that will help you practise the issues brought up in relation to your own writing. In Lesson 3, we give practical advice on micro-level issues that may cause problems for non-native writers of English. The module finishes with a checklist based on the type of issues that our own students have struggled with over the years. This list can be used as a stepping stone to create your own personalized checklist with items that you tend to have problems with when writing in English.

The discussions in this module will necessarily include some grammar terminology. Readers who are not very familiar with such terminology may find the following texts on the AWELU platform helpful:

AWELU: Selective mini-grammar

AWELU: Common problems and how to avoid them

Lesson 1:
The need to revise and edit one's text

Above, we used the terms *revising*, *editing* and *proofreading*. These terms can be used in various ways, but in academic writing, revising and editing often mean that you are working with a slightly bigger piece of text that is nearly complete, trying to improve its quality. You may be working globally with the entire essay, or you may be working with some sub-part, such as a section or paragraph. The goal is to make sure that what you have written makes sense, and that there are no contradictions or other flaws in your reasoning. Proofreading, in turn, means checking your text more locally for surface-level errors, such as typos, spelling and grammar mistakes, and the choice of words. The difference is explained in Video lecture 16.

Video lecture 16: The need to revise and edit one's text

In the video lecture, we mention how sloppy editing and proofreading can also affect the readers' image of you as a researcher. In other words, if the final version of your essay contains a number of spelling errors or grammar mistakes, or if your text is written using inappropriate register, tone and style, the reader may start to wonder whether the results of your research are also sloppy, and whether your claims can be taken seriously. If that happens, the text has failed to achieve its purpose: it has failed to persuade the target audience that your argument —

your particular point of view, your reasons and the evidence that you have presented for them — is valid. It is easy to think of similar situations from everyday life: would you trust the information in an encyclopedia article that contained several spelling errors? Or would you be able to take seriously a letter that started with *Yo!* and was signed by your bank manager?

Editing your writing globally

Writers who are checking their text globally need to focus on different aspects than writers who are checking their text more locally. Video lecture 17 gives advice on what you should focus on, when revising and editing your writing globally.

Video lecture 17: Global editing and revision

As mentioned in the video lecture, a useful strategy when revising and editing globally is to first locate the research questions and the thesis or focus. These should be clearly presented in the introduction of the essay. Many writers find it helpful at this stage to work with a printout, so they can underline or highlight the sentences that contain the research questions and the thesis statement. If this information is not clearly presented in the introduction — in other words, if you have problems deciding what you should underline — you will need to revise the text to make sure that the reader is able to see, right from the start, what the essay is going to be about.

The next step is to check how the contents of the rest of the essay are related to the thesis or focus, as well as how smoothly the discussion proceeds from one passage to the next. Even here it may be helpful to work with a printout, so you can underline the parts that you consider to be directly relevant for the thesis. For each underlined part, you should try to explain to yourself exactly how the information is relevant for your thesis; the explanations can be written as bullet points in the margins. And if you find that the connections are not as clear as they ought to be, you will need to fix them somehow. This can be done by providing a definition, by adding details or explanations, by giving examples, by creating contrasts, or by showing causes or effects. You could also try presenting the information in a different order. The examples below illustrate how order can affect how we interpret information:

> I ate in that restaurant and became sick.
>
> I drank coffee and ate cake.

In the first sentence, many readers will assume that the eating took place before the getting sick, and that the eating is what caused the getting sick. If you reverse the order (*I became sick and ate in that restaurant*), the interpretation changes; the eating no longer caused the getting sick. In the second sentence, the coffee drinking and the cake eating are likely to be viewed as having taken place at the same, and readers do not usually assume a causal link between them. Reversing the order (*I ate cake and drank coffee*) is also unlikely to result in changes in interpretation.

Adding cohesive ties, also known as *transitional expressions*, is another good way to show the reader how they should interpret the information. Below, we list common transitional expressions in English. Because many of them have more than one meaning, it is advisable to always check them in a dictionary to make sure that the possible additional meanings will not confuse the reader unnecessarily. If there is a risk of misunderstanding, choose another expression that lacks the unwanted additional meanings. Because many of these expressions also initiate subordinate clauses, we will return to them in Lesson 3: The writer's toolbox.

Purpose	**Transitional expressions**
To add information	additionally, also, and, as well, besides, beyond that, further, in addition, moreover, what is more, one more thing, too, …
To compare and show similarity	also, in other words, in the same way, likewise, similarly, that is, to put it another way, …
To create contrast	a contrasting view is, although, an opposing view is, but, conversely, even if, even though, however, in contrast, nevertheless, on the contrary, on the one hand…on the other hand, whereas, while, yet, …
To give an alternative	instead, rather, …
To concede	certainly, naturally, of course, undoubtedly, true, without a doubt, …
To emphasize	above all, clearly, especially, importantly, even more importantly, indeed, in fact, in particular, it is a fact that, most certainly, most importantly, …

To illustrate or give an example	as an illustration, a case in point is, for example, for instance, to give/take an example, …
To qualify a claim	can, could, may, might, maybe, perhaps, possibly, in many cases, it is possible, …
To give reason or cause	as, because, for, since, …
To show result, consequence or effect	as a result, as a consequence, consequently, because of this, for this reason, it follows, hence, so, therefore, thus, …
To deny consequence	still, nevertheless, …
To summarize or conclude	all in all, in brief, in conclusion, on the whole, summarizing, to sum up, lastly, finally, as the final point, …
To locate something within own text	above, in the previous section, in the Introduction-section, on p. 45, in Table 3, in the next section, below, after this, as we have already seen, as has already been shown in chapter 2, …
To show spatial or temporal location	in Sweden, in the document, in Shakespeare's writing, in Victorian thinking, after the Industrial Revolution, according to / on the basis of this document, during the war, in the 1990s, several years ago, then, at the time of writing, before, currently, now, at present, in present time, briefly, immediately, immediately before/after, meanwhile, in the future, afterwards, after this, simultaneously, at the same time, …
To order things or events	first, second, third (and so on), first…then, first…later, in section 1, in the next section, then, after this, finally, …

Below, we give some simple examples of transitional expressions in use. Try to explain to yourself how the change of transitional expression results in a change in interpretation; when, for example, is there an implied causal relation?

I drank coffee. I also ate cake.

Although I did not drink coffee, I ate cake.

Although I drank coffee, I did not eat cake.

I was not hungry. Therefore, I only drank coffee and ate cake.

Because I was not hungry, I only drank coffee and ate cake.

I was not hungry; nevertheless, I drank coffee and ate cake.

I was hungry, so of course I drank coffee and ate cake.

Another point that was brought up in Video lecture 17 was the need to check if you have included information that is not relevant to your research questions and thesis and that can be omitted. This can mean passages that contain information that the target reader is already familiar with, or information that you have already provided somewhere else. Repetition can serve a purpose, as it can help establish cohesion or make it easier for the reader to see connections between what you have said earlier and what you are saying now, but there is a difference between this and just repeating yourself.

Even when you are editing and revising a slightly smaller piece of text, for example a section or a subsection, you can follow the strategies listed above. Each section or subsection should have an introductory part where you state its purpose or topic. Each of these subtopics should be linked to the main thesis that you have identified for the essay as a whole; you should also be able to explain to yourself how each subtopic is relevant for and motivates the main thesis or point of the essay. After you have been able to locate the sentences where you state the purpose of each section or sub-section and have clarified their status to yourself, you should go over the body paragraphs in the section or subsection and decide if they, too, present information that is relevant. Again, if you find that the relationship is not as clear as it ought to be — for example, if you find that a certain paragraph does not fit in — you may try to provide a definition, add an explanation, or give examples. You may also try to present the information in a different order, or add a transitional expression that clarifies what the connection is meant to be. As a final test, you may try taking away the paragraph altogether, to see if anything changes; if there is no change, the paragraph could be removed from the essay permanently.

EXERCISES IN USING TRANSITIONAL EXPRESSIONS

The following exercises are designed to show you how transitional expressions can govern the way in which readers interpret information.

Exercise 1: Add information that fits the logic of the transitional word given. Note: A good first step is to add the same sentence — for example *we need to read the manual very carefully* — after each of (a)-(f) and explain to yourself why many of the sentences will end up sounding very strange.

a. Building a spaceship is difficult; therefore, _____.
b. Building a spaceship is difficult; nevertheless, _____.
c. Building a spaceship is difficult; for example, _____.
d. Building a spaceship is difficult; on the other hand, _____.
e. Building a spaceship is difficult because _____.
f. Building a spaceship is difficult; similarly, _____.

Exercise 2: In the following pairs of sentences, one of the alternatives may feel more natural than the other one; try to explain to yourself how the transitional expression changes the way in which you interpret the information.

a. I have a car and I like driving.
b. I have a car but I like driving.

c. I have a car and I hate driving.
d. I have a car but I hate driving.

e. I won the lottery; therefore, I bought a new car.
f. I won the lottery; nevertheless, I bought a car.

g. Because I won the lottery, I was able to buy a new car.
f. Although I won the lottery, I was able to buy a new car.

Flaws in reasoning

One more area that you need to check when you revise and edit a text globally is making sure that you do not contradict yourself anywhere and that you have managed to avoid so-called logical fallacies, that is, flaws in reasoning and thinking. This is important to do, because errors of this kind undermine the power of your argument.

When checking a text for issues of this kind, it is important to distinguish between "everyday reasoning" where we often base claims on insufficient data and observations and "proper academic reasoning" where claims need to be backed up by the necessary facts and evidence, and where conclusions follow logically from adequate premises. Below is a list of common flaws in reasoning and thinking, with simple examples. If you are interested in more examples, lists like this one are available in several places online:

False cause and effect (*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*)
Confusing sequence with a cause; assuming that just because A comes before B or occurs before B, A is the cause of B.

I ate in that restaurant and became ill.

Slippery slope
Assuming a chain of cause-and-effect relations; assuming that if A happens, it will cause B to happen, and because B happens, it will cause C to happen, too.

If you eat in that restaurant, you will become ill. And because you are ill, we will have to cancel our trip.

Hasty generalization
Basing claims on insufficient evidence or unrepresentative data; jumping to conclusions without considering possible other views and evidence that points the other way.

Five of the theatre goers did not like the play. Therefore, it must be a really bad play.

The anecdotal evidence fallacy
Confusing proper evidence and examples with personal experience or opinions.

Smoking is not hazardous to people's health. My cousin has been a smoker for 55 years and she has no health issues.

Appeals to false or to irrelevant authority
Relying on information and statements from people who are not experts in the field or the topic that is being investigated.

> More scientists and educators smoke Kent. Therefore, it must be a good / safe brand of cigarettes. [based on a 1960s cigarette ad campaign]

Bandwagon appeals (*ad populum*)
Relying on support from "everyone" or from "many people" when these people are not identified and their qualifications in the field are left unclear; assuming that something must be true, because so many people believe in it.

> We have hundreds of thousands of satisfied customers all over the world; this proves that our products really work.

Against the person (*ad hominem*)
Attacking the person, rather than their argument or the reasons and the evidence for their argument.

> You have no right to have opinions about social inequality, because your parents are millionaires.

The Texas sharpshooter fallacy
Selecting evidence and results that fit a predetermined conclusion and ignoring all the evidence and results that point the other way.

> This is what I want my result to be; what facts and evidence do I need to present, to make sure that I arrive at this result?

The burden-of-proof fallacy
When making a claim, it is your responsibility to provide the necessary evidence for your claim. You cannot demand that your claim will hold until someone else is able to prove that it does not hold.

> My argument is valid; if you don't agree, you will need to come up with reasons and proof showing why my argument isn't valid.

False / weak analogy
Relying on an analogy between two or more objects, ideas or events and overlooking the fact that the objects, ideas or events that are being compared are not similar in the relevant respects.

> All my teachers look things up in books. Why then aren't students taking an exam allowed to look things up in books?

It does not follow (*non sequitur*)
No logical connection between the claim and its reasons or the previous statements; a conclusion that is not based on what has been said before.

> A ban on public smoking has made us healthier; there is a lot of evidence that shows this. Therefore, we should also ban public drinking of alcohol.

Circular argument / reasoning
The claim is restated as its own reason; the same proposition is presented both as a premise and a conclusion.

> Smoking is dangerous because it is very harmful to our health.

Either-or reasoning / false dilemma
Reducing a complex issue to only two positions or choices. The arguer usually eliminates one of these, so it seems there is only one other position left, which is assumed to be the correct one.

> You cannot be a communist, because you don't seem to accept all of Marx's ideas.

The middle ground fallacy
Assuming that a compromise between two opposite positions is true, just because it is the middle ground. Ignoring that both of the opposing views could be completely true or completely false; the truth need not be found as a compromise between two positions.

> Doctor 1: Take 2 of these pills a day and you will be cured.
> Doctor 2: Take no pills at all and you will be cured.
> Conclusion: I will be cured if I take 1 of these pills a day.

Red herring
The practice of raising an unrelated or irrelevant point deliberately to throw the audience off track. Often used to avoid the opposing arguments, instead of addressing them.

> My opponent argued that I don't care about the ordinary people. Who are the ordinary people, I wonder. This is a term that is often brought up—but who are these people, really? How do we know what they think?

EXERCISE ON GLOBAL REVISION AND EDITING

Look at an essay that you have written in the past and answer the following questions. As you can see, the questions are very similar to those that you would pose to other authors, when you are peer reviewing their texts.

1. What is the thesis or focus of your essay? Where is it presented? Could it be presented more clearly?
2. Who is your target audience? How have you managed to take the target audience into account in your writing?
3. Is your writing focused on a central topic? What could be improved?
4. Is there something that does not really seem to fit in? Are there any gaps where something seems to be missing?
5. Have you paid attention to the possible counter-arguments and tried to refute them or concede to them?
6. Are there any examples of informal fallacies? How could these problems be fixed?

Knowing when to stop

Although revising and editing are an important part of the writing process, there comes a point in every project when you need to decide if you have done enough and should stop. If you are working with a supervisor, they will usually tell you when you have reached that point and should hand in your text for assessment. The supervisor may also have asked you to hand in your text in instalments, and they may have given you feedback on these instalments, pointing out both global and micro-level issues. If you have already produced a complete first draft of the essay and have revised, edited and proofread the text according to the supervisor's instructions, it is unlikely that further revision will improve the quality of your work. In such cases, you are probably ready to hand in the final version. It is important to learn to recognize what in your drafts you can improve through careful revision and editing and what is enough, as otherwise you may run the risk of becoming a perfectionist who is never ready to hand in a text, because it never turns out exactly the way you intended.

Deciding when to let go can, of course, be more difficult when you are working on your own and have only been told to hand in the final version of your essay. Even here it may help to work in instalments and produce a version that you consider to be a complete first draft. By a complete first draft we mean a text that is of the prescribed length or nearly so and where everything is more or less in its right place and there are no unfinished sections or paragraphs. You should feel that you have presented enough evidence for your claims and that all the sources are properly acknowledged and the references are formatted according to the instructions. It may then be helpful to leave the draft for a couple of days, if you can, and then come back and assess whether it truly meets the stated requirements. In many cases, you will have received instructions on what the finished essay should do and how it should be formatted, and you will probably have been informed about the criteria that the examiners will use, when they assess your work. It is important to go over these instructions and assessment criteria and try to evaluate, as objectively as you can, whether your work really meets all of them. It may be a good idea to also look at your own past work and analyse the feedback you have received and the possible motivations for the final grade — have you been able to avoid the type of issues that you may have been criticized for in the past? If you are confident that your work meets the stated criteria, and you have already put some serious effort into revising, editing and proofreading your writing, making use of the advice in this module and in other sources that you may have consulted and found helpful, it may be time to hand in your work for assessment.

To make sure that you have a structured approach to revising, editing and proofreading and that you know when to stop, it may be useful to develop your own personalized plan of attack for the task. This can mean compiling a list of things that you always check in your writing, and once you have checked these points and introduced the necessary corrections to the best of your abilities, you hand in the work for assessment. The list should contain both global and local issues — you will receive tips on the type of things you could include in your list in Lessons 2 and 3 below — as well as a selection of writing matters that you struggle with. These can be words that you tend to have difficulty spelling correctly — and these can sometimes be such simple words — or they may be grammar errors that you have a tendency to make, or the overuse of specific words and expressions that you should watch out for.

Lesson 2:
Editing a text for register, tone and style

In Lesson 1, we looked at issues that you need to be aware of when you revise and edit the contents and structure of your essay and work with passages of text that are nearly complete. In this lesson, we focus on revising and editing a text for language and discuss changes that affect the register, tone and style of your writing. We begin with some examples:

What you want to say	**Alternative ways of saying the same thing**
Napoleon died in 1821.	Napoleon passed away in 1821. Napoleon checked out in 1821. Napoleon took his last breath in 1821. Napoleon kicked the bucket in 1821. Napoleon joined the heavenly army in 1821. Napoleon met his maker in 1821.
The students lost their temper.	The students became angry. The students went mad. The students went bananas. The students blew a fuse.

While all the alternative sentences have the same basic meaning as the original sentence, one would not expect to find most of them in a serious newspaper article or academic essay. The reasons are explained in Video lecture 18.

Video lecture 18: Editing for register and tone

As stated in the video lecture, when you revise and edit your writing for register and tone, you will need to consider it in relation to three key questions:

1) What is the purpose of the text that you are writing?

   For example, is the purpose to present a claim; to contradict a previous position; to inform; or to entertain?

2) Who are the intended readers / recipients of the text?

   Are they experts in the field? How much do they already know about the specific topic? What position are they likely to hold towards the topic?

3) What kind of a text are you writing?

   What is the field and what are the conventions of this field? What is the forum? Are you writing a text that is meant to be read or spoken aloud? Read where? Spoken aloud in what type of situation?

How you answer these questions will help you select the type of language that is appropriate for the writing situation you are in; in other words, they will help you decide how you can address your audience in the right way, given the situation that you are in. Below, we bring up further aspects of register, tone and style of writing, and provide practical tips on what to do and pay attention to in academic writing situations.

Register

As stated in Video lecture 18, register means the level of language use: the level can be ceremonial, formal, or informal, for example. The choice of register will determine what type of words and expressions are appropriate to use; the type of grammar you need to use; the way of spelling; and the way of punctuating your text. In academic essays and research papers, the safest option is to aim at a relatively formal register. You can think of this in relation to how you might dress: if you have been invited to a dinner party with people you do not know well, you probably do not want to show up wearing the same relaxed outfit, such as old jeans and trainers, that you might wear when you go to a barbeque party with your friends. Equally, you might also feel out of place in a barbeque party if you were wearing the most formal items of clothing that you own.

Non-native writers of English may have problems identifying features that belong to the "wrong" register, because these are not actually examples of "incorrect" language and therefore, they might not be discussed in grammar books. Still, these features may be inappropriate in most academic writing situations and prevent the text from reaching its ultimate purpose. Below, we list features that characterize the formal register of writing:

Common properties of formal register	
Expectation:	The author is an expert on the subject or topic, and the target audience is expected to be sufficiently knowledgeable about the field. This means that some specialized vocabulary and jargon may be used; some terminology may still need to be defined and explained.
Purpose:	The main purpose is to argue, to inform and to communicate, not to entertain.
Language:	The tone is neutral: not subjective, conversational or personal. The writing is objective and the author is not present in the text. The writing is clear and straightforward. Language is viewed as a tool that allows the text to achieve its purpose. The main focus is on the contents, not on the author's persona or the language.
Always uses:	*Standard grammar:* Follows the rules of general-purpose, present-day standard English—in other words the variety that is accepted as appropriate to use in the public sphere (for example, the government, education, and the "serious" news media / broadcasting). The variety that is described in grammar books. *Standard vocabulary:* Avoidance of all colloquialisms and sub-standard expressions and/or slang. Avoidance of biased and/or loaded terms. Avoidance of stereotypes. *Standard spelling:* Words are spelled as they are spelled in a dictionary; avoidance of novel and creative spellings and abbreviations. *Standard punctuation:* The text is punctuated following the rules for standard English. Limited use of exclamation marks; … is only used to signal omission.

Besides academic essays and research papers, the formal register is often used in

- official documents and reports
- education
- newspapers, national radio and TV
- many official company websites
- international communication

This is the register to use when you want to be on your best linguistic behaviour and give a good impression. It is important to bear in mind, of course, that the formal register is not automatically "right" while the informal register is "wrong" — there may be situations even in the above-mentioned situations where you are expected to use more informal language. For example, if you are writing a text that is meant to be spoken aloud in a relaxed situation, such as a seminar talk among colleagues, you may prefer language that is formal enough so you come across as an expert in the field, but relaxed enough — which may include the use of playful, jocular language and a conversational tone — so you can keep your audience interested and are able to connect with them on a personal level.

Informal register is used in a variety of situations, ranging from almost formal to very relaxed and informal. Examples include advertising; many tabloid papers; personal communication and websites; and many official company websites. The level of in/formality is related to the situation at hand. For example, a website for a bank or another financial institution may require very formal language and expressions, while a website for a company that produces, say, shampoo, may use more informal and creative language and include anecdotes that are intended to make the readers feel as if they were the company's best friends. But even these contexts might not allow the use of slang or biased language; such features could be acceptable in an email to a friend, however. Below, we list some common features of informal register:

Common properties of informal register

Expectation:	The author is not necessarily an expert on the subject or topic; the author and the target audience may be equally un/knowledgeable about the topic. This means that specialized vocabulary and jargon are usually avoided; if such terms are used, they will need to be defined and explained (often in layman's terms).
Purpose:	The main purpose may be to argue, to inform and to communicate; the purpose may also be to entertain.
Language:	The tone may be neutral, but it may also be subjective, conversational and personal. The writing may be objective, so the author is not present in the text; the writing may also be more subjective and the author's persona may be visible in the text. The writing usually aims at being clear and straightforward; in some contexts, creative and playful language use may be allowed. Language is viewed as a tool that allows the text to achieve its purpose; language may also serve as a purpose in its own right and draw attention to itself.
Often uses:	*Standard grammar:* Follows mostly the rules of general-purpose, present-day standard English as described in grammar books. Some deviations from standard grammar may be allowed. *Standard vocabulary:* May allow the use of colloquialisms and other sub-standard expressions; slang should be used in moderation and with great care. May use biased and/or loaded terms. May rely on stereotypes. Offensive language and expressions should be used with great care. *Standard spelling:* Words are for the most part spelled as they are spelled in a dictionary; novel and creative informal spellings and abbreviations may be used. *Standard punctuation:* The text is for the most part punctuated following the rules for standard English. There may be instances of sub-standard and other creative or playful use of punctuation.

It is important to view register as a continuum, where some situations require extremely formal language and allow no deviation from the norm, whereas others require relatively formal language and allow for some deviation from the norm. In the same way, there may be situations where the text is written using the informal register in terms of for example tone and the choice of words, but where the language will still need to follow the conventions of formal register in terms of grammar, spelling and punctuation.

REFLECTION TASK ON REGISTER

Look at an essay or article that you have written in the past and where you have received feedback from a supervisor, tutor, peer reviewer or editor. Are there any comments that focus on the register – for example, are there comments that a word or a particular way of saying something is too informal or colloquial? How did you address these issues: what did you change?

Tone

The tone of writing – sometimes also called the *voice* – means the author's personality and attitude to the topic or to the audience that are noticeable in the text. In academic writing, you should try to aim at a tone that is clear, straightforward, confident and carries an undertone of respect. You want to give your readers the impression that you argue for your view on the basis of facts and evidence; that you know the topic well; and you have no need to ridicule or look down on anyone who may not agree with you. The tone should also be objective: this means that you should avoid bringing up your own personal preconceptions and opinions about the topic, and that you should avoid biased language and generalizations. The examples below help illustrate these points:

Problematic:

> William Shakespeare was one of the greatest playwrights of all time: he wrote at least 37 plays and collaborated on several more.
>
> All this "evidence" fools Jones (2019) into conclusing that the earth is flat.

Edited version:

> William Shakespeare was one of the most productive playwrights of his time: he wrote at least 37 plays and collaborated on several more.
>
> All this evidence, Jones (2019) argues, leads to the conclusion that the earth is flat.

The first two sentences reveal the author's personal opinions about the topic: Shakespeare is presented as one of the "greatest playwrights of all time" even though it is not an indisputable fact that authoring 37 plays would make someone qualify for that. The reader may simply have a different opinion on the matter. And in the first *Jones*-sentence, the author reveals that they do not consider the evidence that Jones has presented to be proper evidence. The edited sentences could, in turn, be used to just report a fact, and further evidence and proof could then be presented to back them up.

One specific aspect that has increased in importance in recent decades is the need to use unbiased and (gender-)inclusive language. This does not mean just the avoidance of obviously sexist language but also the avoidance of words and phrases that identify people as women or men, when this is not relevant in any way to what is being discussed, and language that excludes one gender, when there are no reasons for doing so. Below, we list some typical examples in English and suggest possible alternatives:

	Use with care	**Use instead**
Occupational terms	actress	actor
	stewardess, air hostess	flight attendant
	policeman, fireman	police officer, fire fighter
***Man*-words**	All of mankind should be free.	all people; all humans; humankind; …
	Who is the best man for this job?	Who is the best person / candidate / applicant for this job?
	When the ship sank, 255 military men lost their lives.	When the ship sank, 255 people lost their lives.
The generic *he*; assuming that lawyers, doctors, and presidents are always men	Anyone who thinks he can get away with this is wrong.	Anyone who thinks they can get away with this is wrong.
	A lawyer will always charge you for his services.	A lawyer will always charge you for their services.
	A presidential candidate must be a natural born citizen of the United States. He must also be a resident for 14 years, and 35 years of age or older.	A presidential candidate must be a natural born citizen of the United States. They must also be a resident for 14 years, and 35 years of age or older.

It is worth observing that choosing a term will sometimes also mean choosing a side. There is a well-known saying that one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter; in other words, using a term like *terrorist* will reflect an attitude that is very different from that associated with the term *freedom fighter.* As a general rule, you should always try to select terms and titles that are as neutral and unbiased as possible, when writing about people who may differ from you in ethnic background, physical condition, religious beliefs, political views, educational background, age, and so on. In many academic writing situations, people's marital status and age are also not something that need to be brought up. This means that you should try to address people by their academic titles *(Professor Jones; Dr Jones*) instead of titles that reveal marital status (*Mrs Jones*). In many cases, your teachers and other university staff will tell you how they wish to be addressed. There are also cultural differences in what is appropriate, so you should always consider the context and the target audience, before deciding what to do. You should also bear in mind that academic language aims to be as clear and straightforward as possible, and that excessive use of vague terms and titles so as not to offend anyone may sometimes result in a text that is difficult to decipher, because it is not possible to identify who or what the text is about and what it is that you are actually saying.

Style

Let us now turn to revising and editing your writing for style. Video lecture 19 introduces you to features that you should be aware of and pay attention to, when you revise and edit a text for style.

Video lecture 19: Editing for style

The goal should always be a text that is clear, concise and easy to follow; this does not mean that the text should also be boring. The readers' interest will soon wane if the information is presented in a dull writing style, such as using short, choppy sentences and joining all of them with one and the same conjunction: *and*. Short sentences and excessive use of *and* do not on their own make for dull writing style, but if there is no variation in the length of sentences or in how they are connected, the readers will soon get tired and lose their interest. Below, we give some examples of how such sentences could be edited.

Problematic:

> The Spanish Armada was an enormous naval fleet and it was dispatched by Spain in May 1588 and it was first crippled by the English Royal Navy in August 1588 and then demolished by storm winds.
>
> First I will discuss previous work that is of relevance and then I will introduce my data and explain how they were collected and then I will present my results and discuss them and finally I will summarize the main points.

Edited version:

> The Spanish Armada was an enormous naval fleet that was dispatched by Spain in May 1588. It was first crippled by the English Royal Navy in August 1588 and then demolished by storm winds.
>
> First, I will discuss previous work that is of relevance. After that, I will introduce my data and explain how they were collected. Then, I will present my results and discuss them. The paper will end with a summary of the main points.

Punctuation is a good way to combine a series of sentences into a more sophisticated passage of text. Another good way is the use of subordinating conjunctions; we will return to the use of punctuation and to subordinating conjunctions in Lesson 3 below. In the remainder of the current lesson, we will look at some other aspects of academic style that non-native writers may need to pay extra attention to, when revising and editing their writing. The first of these is the need to avoid unnecessarily complex and wordy expressions. These include what are called *nominalizations*; these can be described as sentences that have been turned into nouns, and the end result is often an abstract and vague construction that contains many layers in it.

Problematic:

> The removal of all the nominalisations from the final essay was the result of the student's careful consideration of the instructions from the teacher.

Edited version:

> All the nominalisations were removed from the final essay, because the student considered the teacher's instructions carefully.

Secondly, one should try to avoid the use of *unnecessary jargon* and/or *pretentious words*. In academic writing, some jargon — the use of terminology that is specific to the field — may be necessary to use, as the texts are usually written for an audience who is knowledgeable about the field and the terminology allows the author to capture the exact intended meaning. However, the (over-)use of jargon, especially when the jargon is not even part of the field in question, will just make the writing sound pompous. A related issue is the use of pretentious words and phrases, in other words expressions that are too complex or grandiose for the meanings that they are meant to deliver. An example is choosing a word like *vociferate* instead of *shout* or *yell* when there is no apparent reason to do that. Many writers may choose such expressions, because they are trying to make their text sound more "academic" and "learned" but there is a difference between using complex words because they carry the right meaning and using complex words to try to impress the readers or sound a certain way. In the latter case, the readers will soon discover the truth and the result may be quite the opposite of what the author intended.

A further example of unnecessarily wordy language includes the use of *clichés* and other *trite expressions*. These are tired, over-used phrases and sayings that once made an impression but have since lost their edge. Because they are often also vague in meaning, they just take up space without contributing to the text. They may make the text sound long-winded and dull and the author may risk coming across as someone who has not bothered to give their writing the final polish it needs. Below, we list examples of clichés and other expressions that should be used sparingly in academic texts.

at the end of the day

better late than never

bird's eye view

in this day and age

it all boils down to this

last but not least

not written in stone

opposites attract

the bottom line

the long and the short of it

the part and parcel of this

to be running in circles

to be skating on thin ice

to call a spade a spade

to have an ace up one's sleeve

to make a long story short

to read between the lines …

A question that arises is what distinguishes transitional expressions such as those listed in Lesson 1 from clichés and trite expressions. The answer is that, although the lists overlap, a transitional expression serves a purpose in the text by signposting and instructing the reader how to interpret the information. Clichés and trite expressions, on the other hand, do not add anything of value to the text. An occasional cliché will not make or break an essay — and here the cliché *make or break* was indeed intentional — but overusing them will make your writing sound impersonal, unoriginal and uninteresting.

The last aspect of academic style that we bring up here is the use of pronouns. Pronouns are words like *they, it, her, this, these, them* and *there* that do not have independent meaning. Instead, they receive their interpretation through other words in the context. This can mean words that are part of the same passage of text, or words that are understood from the context to be part of the same passage of text. Without a context, pronouns do not mean anything: in a sentence like *They should put it over there,* we have no way of knowing who *they* are; what *it* is; and where *they* should put *it*.

A common problem with pronouns is deciding what the pronoun's antecedent is; the term *antecedent* refers to the word that gives the pronoun its meaning. Usually the antecedent is assumed to be the closest possible noun in the same context, but in some cases, there may be more than one alternative. Here are some examples that clarify this:

Problematic:

> Both Dr Jones and the student realized that the essay draft must have been eaten by her dog.

Edited version:

> Both Dr Jones and the student realized that the essay draft must have been eaten by Dr Jones' dog.
>
> Both Dr Jones and the student realized that the essay draft must have been eaten by the student's dog.
>
> Both Dr Jones and the student realized that the essay draft must have been eaten by the janitor's dog.

If both Dr Jones and the student are known to be female, it will be unclear if it was Dr Jones' dog or the student's dog that had eaten the essay draft. There could even have been a third female — for example the janitor — in the same context who also had a dog. When editing the sentence, we therefore need to specify whose dog we are talking about.

Another common problem is an antecedent that is too far away from the pronoun, for the reader to be able to make the connection. The reader will usually look for the antecedent in the same sentence or the sentence immediately before; if the antecedent is further away, the reader is almost certain to become confused. A pronoun's reference can also be muffled, which means that the antecedent is only implied, instead of being stated explicitly. We illustrate this below and show how the sentences could be edited, so the problem with muffled reference does not arise.

Problematic*:*

> The biggest problem in the academic world is their inability to agree on anything.
>
> It was during this period that the Indian National Congress was founded. It was a party that was formed to express their nationalist opinions.

Edited version:

> The biggest problem with academics is their inability to agree on anything.
>
> It was during this period that the Indian National Congress was founded. It was a party that was formed to express the members' nationalist opinions.

In general, pronouns should always be used with caution at the beginning of a new section, sub-section or paragraph. Because there is no preceding context, the reader will not be able to find a suitable antecedent for the pronoun. An antecedent that is mentioned in a previous section is too far away for the reader to make the necessary connection.

EXERCISE ON REVISING, EDITING AND PROOFREADING YOUR TEXT FOR REGISTER, TONE AND STYLE

Look at an academic essay that you have written in the past and see if you can find examples of the types of issues we have discussed above. Again, you may find the following resources on the AWELU platform helpful, when you do this exercise:

AWELU: Selective mini-grammar
http://awelu.srv.lu.se/grammar-and-words/selective-mini-grammar/

AWELU: Common problems and how to avoid them
http://awelu.srv.lu.se/grammar-and-words/common-problems-and-how-to-avoid-them/

AWELU: Vocabulary awareness
http://awelu.srv.lu.se/grammar-and-words/focus-on-vocabulary/vocabulary-awareness/

Lesson 3:
The writer's toolbox: Proofreading

In Lessons 1 and 2 above, we have looked at revising and editing and discussed both global issues that affect the contents of your essay and more local issues that affect the register, tone and style of your writing. In this lesson, we will focus on other micro-level issues that may pose problems for non-native writers of English. The goal is to make you more aware of these issues and help you compile your own list of things that you check in your writing, before handing it in for assessment.

Use of first-person pronouns and choosing between the active and passive voice

Two of the most common questions that students have concern the use of the first-person pronouns *I, my* and *me* and the choice between the active and passive voice, that is, whether to write *The dog ate the bone* or *The bone was eaten.* Both questions are addressed in Video lecture 20.

Video lecture 20: First person pronouns and choosing between active and passive voice

As stated in the video lecture, many writers worry that the use of *I* can make their text sound too personal or subjective, or that it can make the text read like they are mixing personal opinions with proper facts and evidence. While this may be true, it is also true that the use of *I* will not automatically mean that the author will be discussing personal opinions and experience.

In many fields, the first-person pronouns *I, my* and *me* are perfectly acceptable to use in an academic essay or research paper, especially when announcing the purpose or aims of the essay and when forecasting structure. Below, we give some examples of such uses:

> In this essay, my purpose is to investigate … / I will address the question …
>
> In my paper, the aim is to …
>
> In section 2, I will present … while in section 3, I will address …
>
> In the next section, I move on to … / In this section, my aim is to …
>
> I will now return to the question of …

The pronoun *I* can also be used when describing how the research was carried out and when establishing the originality or value of the research:

> I collected my sample …
>
> I carried out an experiment on …
>
> I then analysed the results …
>
> As my results show …
>
> I have managed to present new evidence for …
>
> I discovered that …
>
> My findings contrast with previous work …

The pronoun *I* can even be used, together with other appropriate expressions, to qualify the claims made (*As far as I am aware … / I am inclined to think that … / This leads me to believe that …*). Whether *I* is acceptable to use will also vary from field to field, so you should familiarize yourself with reputable texts in your own field and observe if *I* is used at all and if it is, what functions it has in these texts.

Irrespective of the field, if a text is written to be spoken aloud, it is often preferable to use *I* or *we.* In these situations, it can sound awkward and unnatural to avoid referring to yourself, when you are standing right in front of your audience. The use of *we* can also be useful in these situations as a tool for establishing a rapport with your audience.

If the pronoun *I* is not used in your field, there are ways to avoid it. Below, we give some examples of how this can be done. It is worth noting that many of these alternatives are in the active voice. In other words, the avoidance of *I* should not mean that the entire text is written in the passive voice.

With first-person singular *I, my, me*	**Without any first-person pronouns**
In this essay, I will address the question … In this essay, my aim is to … In section 2 I will present …	This essay will address the question … The aim of this essay is to … Section 2 will present …
I collected my sample … I carried out an experiment …	The sample was collected … An experiment was carried out …
As my results show … I present new evidence for … My findings contrast with …	The results show that … / As the results show … There is new evidence for … These findings contrast with …
I think that … This leads me to believe that … It seems to me that …	It is possible to think that … This leads one to believe that … It seems that …

If an essay has more than one author, it is natural to use *we, our* and *us* in the same way as you would use *I, my* and *me* in a single-authored paper. This use of *we* should be kept separate from the inclusive 'I-the-author-and-you-the-readers' use of *we*. The inclusive *we* can be used to identify the author with the readers (*The way in which we interpret this text might reveal our …*). It can also be used when announcing the structure of the text or when providing signposts for the reader.

As we will see in section 2 …

As we have previously discovered …

Let us now turn to …

We can interpret these facts as …

Table 2.3 shows us that …

The inclusive *we* is less common when describing the methods or announcing originality, although even here different fields may have different conventions.

Video lecture 20 also gives advice on the use of active and passive voice. In many fields, active sentences are preferred, as they are usually shorter and easier to comprehend than passive sentences. An active sentence like *The dog ate the bone* also shows more clearly who the agent or actor is: who did what or caused something to happen. In a passive sentence, for example *The bone was eaten,* the agent or actor is either not stated at all, or the information is added separately at the end of the sentence — *The bone was eaten by the dog* — which makes the sentence longer. In many fields, the passive voice is preferred in specific parts or sections of the essay or research paper. These include the description of methodology or the various steps in an experiment, where specifying the agent would not only be unnecessary — the readers need not know *who* did something; the focus should be on *what was done* — but it might also interfere with the description of the various steps.

There are also situations where the active voice is either not available at all or it is not the best way to present the information. For example, when the agent or actor is truly unknown, as in *The Cathedral was built in the 12th century*, the passive voice is the only alternative: if you do not know who the builders were, there is nothing you can present as the agent. The passive voice sometimes also allows you to be vague on purpose. Sentences such as *These findings were misinterpreted* or *Because this problem was overlooked, …* do not expose you as the culprit, in the same way as *I misinterpreted these findings* or *Because I overlooked these problems, …* do.

EXERCISE ON THE USE OF PRONOUNS AND ACTIVE AND PASSIVE VOICE

Find some articles that are written by experienced writers in your own field and observe their use of pronouns and active vs passive voice. Do they use first person pronouns like *I* and *we* in their writing? If they do, how do they use them? If they do not use such pronouns very much, what other strategies have they made use of in their writing? Do these authors use mostly active or passive voice in their articles? Can you detect any differences between the various sections of the article?

Punctuation and sentence structure

Another problem area in many non-native writers' texts is punctuation. The writers may be unaware of the punctuation rules of English, or they may punctuate their text following the conventions for their own language. Our purpose is not to provide a complete guide to punctuation in English — such guidebooks already exist, and the interested reader is referred to these resources when there is a need to learn more about the details. Instead, our goal is to make you aware of the need to follow the conventions of standard punctuation in English. We also bring up examples of situations where punctuation can interfere with readability. Finally, we try to encourage you to create variety in your writing by using more punctuation marks than just the comma and the full stop. In Video lecture 21, we introduce these issues and bring up some examples.

Video lecture 21: Standard punctuation

As stated in this video lecture, punctuating your text properly will increase its readability and make it easier for the reader to follow your line of thought. The examples below help clarify this:

> All the students who also handed in an essay on time passed the course.
>
> All the students, who also handed in an essay on time, passed the course.

In the first sentence, only those students who also handed in an essay on time (in addition to doing something else) passed the course. In other words, if 10 students out of 20 students in total did that, then only those 10 students passed the course and the rest failed. The second sentence means that all the students, however many they were, both handed in an essay on time and passed the course. In grammar, these two sentence types are known as *restrictive* and *non-restrictive relative clauses*. In this case the punctuation is a tool which signals how the reader is to interpret the information given. A change in punctuation will result in a change in interpretation.

Another common punctuation problem concerns how sentences are combined. In grammar books, the term *sentence* is often defined as a piece of writing that starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. A sentence can consist of one or more clauses; if a sentence consists of several clauses, the clauses will need to be combined in some way and the reader needs to be told what their relationship is. One option that we have already discussed above is the use of coordinating conjunctions *and, or*, or *but.* When using a coordinating conjunction, the clauses are meant to be read as if they were at the same level.

Separate	**Conjoined**
I like coffee. You like tea.	I like coffee and you like tea. I like coffee but you like tea.
I must write an essay. I must also take a final exam. I must write an essay. I need not take a final exam.	I must write an essay and take a final exam. I must write an essay but need not take a final exam.
I must write an essay. Alternatively, I must take a final exam.	I must write an essay or take a final exam.

Instead of a coordinating conjunction, you can also use what is called a *subordinating conjunction*. Subordinating conjunctions initiate subordinate clauses, in other words clauses that are interpreted as subordinate to information that is located at a higher level. A subordinate clause can modify a specific word or phrase at the higher level and give more information about it. The relative clauses mentioned above are an example of this, and they often start with what are called *relative pronouns*. In English these include, among others, *who, which* and *that.* Whether a comma is needed will depend on what the intended reading is: a restrictive relative clause reading is signalled by the absence of commas in standard English, a non-restrictive reading by the presence of commas. The relative pronoun *that* can only initiate restrictive relative clauses and hence, it is never preceded by a comma in English. In the following example, the head word of each relative clause is underlined and the relative clause is in italics:

> All the students *who also handed in the essay on time* passed the course.
>
> All the students, *who also handed in the essay on time*, passed the course.

> The article *which was written by Dr Jones* was based on inconclusive evidence.
>
> The article, *which was written by Dr Jones,* was based on inconclusive evidence.

> The claims *that Dr Jones made in the article* were based on inconclusive evidence.

There are also other types of subordinate clauses that modify a specific word or phrase at a higher level. Very often these words are nouns like *claim, belief, rumour, accusation, fact*, and so on; the clauses that follow them usually initiate with *that* and even in this use, there is no comma before *that*.

> The claim *that the earth is flat* was based on inconclusive evidence.
>
> Many researchers do not agree with the belief *that the earth is flat.*

Sometimes a subordinate clause can specify how, when, where or why something that is brought up in a higher clause happened. Such clauses are called *adverbial clauses*, and they often start with conjunctions like *when, as soon as, whenever, wherever, if, although, as, because,* and so on. As the examples below show, the subordinate clauses (which we have indicated with italics) can come either before the higher clause or after it. When the subordinate clause precedes the higher clause, it is common to separate the clauses with a comma; when the subordinate clause follows the higher clause, a comma may or may not be needed in between the two clauses.

> *After we finished the experiment*, we made sure to calculate the results carefully.
>
> *Wherever we decide to publish the paper*, we will need to make sure that the text has been edited carefully.
>
> They presented the article as though it were the best piece of research ever to have been published.
>
> You should hand in your essay as soon as you have finished the editing.
>
> Dr Jones wrote this article, because she wanted to prove that the earth is flat.

As you may by now have noticed, many coordinating and subordinating conjunctions also function as transitional expressions, in the sense that was discussed in Lesson 2 above. This means that their role is to signal to the reader the way in which the information is meant to be interpreted. They help clarify what follows from what and for what reasons. They also help clarify how the points you discuss are related to what you have said earlier. While the list of transitional expressions in Lesson 2 contained items that could initiate both main clauses and subordinate clauses, the list below only contains items that initiate subordinate clauses; please note that the list is not intended to be definitive and the reader is directed to a good grammar book for a more complete list.

> after, although, as though, as, as if, even if, because, before, if, for, since, so that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, while

But how is anything we have said above a *punctuation* problem? It is a punctuation problem, because writers often fail to view punctuation as a tool for signalling how the information that is presented is meant to be interpreted and ignore even the most basic of conventions. In the most extreme situations, they leave out all conjunctions and punctuation marks altogether and just write one clause after the other. The end result is a long passage of text that starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. Such passages are known as *run-on sentences* or *fused sentences*. We give some examples below and show how they could be edited, so that they follow the standard punctuation rules for English.

Problematic:

> The doctors were powerless nothing could possibly stop the disease.
>
> It was no longer possible to bury the victims in individual graves people continued to die like flies.

Edited version:

> The doctors were powerless; nothing could possibly stop the disease.
>
> The doctors were powerless, as nothing could possibly stop the disease.
>
> It was no longer possible to bury the victims in individual graves, as people continued to die like flies.

A run-on sentence can sometimes be combined with what is known as a *comma splice*. This means that the author has used a comma to separate clauses, when a conjunction, a full stop, or a semicolon would be have been a better option. Below, we give examples of run-on sentences with a comma splice, and show how the passages could be edited.

Problematic:

> The discrimination of Māoris in New Zealand was not as obvious as the discrimination of the Aboriginals, the Māoris are today better integrated in society than the Aboriginals are in Australia.

Edited version:

> The discrimination of the Māori in New Zealand is not as obvious as the discrimination of the Aboriginals, and the Māori are today better integrated in society than the Aboriginals are in Australia.
>
> The discrimination of the Māori in New Zealand is not as obvious as the discrimination of the Aboriginals. The Māori are today better integrated in society than the Aboriginals are in Australia.
>
> The discrimination of the Māori in New Zealand is not as obvious as the discrimination of the Aboriginals; the Māori are today better integrated in society than the Aboriginals are in Australia.

Yet another issue with sentence structure and punctuation is the occurrence of so-called *sentence fragments*. A sentence fragment is a passage of text that is punctuated as if it were a complete sentence. A complete sentence can be defined as a sentence that contains a finite main clause that has both a subject-part and a predicate-part. Finite means that the sentence has tense; in other words, it can locate the action or event in time and tell the reader whether something is happening right now or whether it happened, has happened or had happened in the past. The subject-part is the part that contains the agent or actor — in other words, the entity that is doing something. The predicate-part, in turn, contains the verb, or the word or words that describe who or what the agent is, was, or has been doing. A sentence fragment often lacks one of these two parts: it either contains the subject-part or the predicate-part but not both. We give some examples of this below, as well as show how the examples could be edited, so that they follow the conventions of standard English.

Problematic:

> My cousin, who is an archaeologist. She was up all night to work on her new article.
>
> My cousin was up all night. Worked on her new article.

Edited version:

> My cousin, who is an archaeologist, was up all night to work on her new article.
>
> My cousin was up all night. She worked on her new article

A sentence fragment can also be a phrase that is used all by itself, without any subject-part or predicate-part at all.

Problematic:

> *Oliver Twist* is one of Charles Dickens' most famous novels and it deals with problems and injustice in Victorian England. A novel about an orphan boy and poverty.

Edited version:

> *Oliver Twist* is one of Charles Dickens' most famous novels and it deals with problems and injustice in Victorian England. It is a novel about an orphan boy and poverty.

Yet another type of sentence fragment is a subordinate clause that is used all by itself, without any higher-level main clause.

Problematic:

> My cousin had to work on her new article all night. Because the deadline was at 12 noon today.

Edited version:

> My cousin had to work on her new article all night, because the deadline was at 12 noon today.
>
> My cousin had to work on her new article all night. The reason was that the deadline was at 12 noon today.

Sentence fragments can be very tricky, because writers may view them as being similar to isolated thoughts in spoken language. In written language — and particularly in formal academic register — such constructions should be avoided, however.

One final point that we bring up here is the need to create variety through the use of more punctuation marks than just the comma and the full stop. Below, we list the punctuation marks that are most useful in academic texts, and give brief comments about their uses. Again, more complete lists and guidelines can be located in grammar books and style guides and the reader is referred to such resources.

Punctuation at the end of sentences	
Full stop / period	Used at the end of declarative sentences. The most common end punctuation mark. All the physics students went home after class.
Question mark	Used at the end of interrogative (=question) sentences. What are the possible reasons for this?
Exclamation mark	Used at the end of exclamations. Must be used with caution in academic texts, as there is no need to shout or use exclamations in formal, academic style. All the physics students went home after class!
Punctuation within sentences	
Comma	1. To separate a subordinate clause from the main clause: The physics students went home after class, because they were tired from last night's party. Because they were tired from last night's party, the physics students went home after class. 2. To indicate a non-restrictive relative clause or other non-restrictive modifier: The physics students, who were tired from last night's party, went home after class. The physics students, tired from last night's party, went home after class. 3. Between items in a list: To be able to pass, the students need to write an essay, take an exam, and bring an apple to the teacher. I bought apples, oranges, pears, and bananas. The teacher was wearing a bright, colourful hat and a long, dark, woollen coat.

Colon	1. To separate two sentences where the second sentence explains or clarifies the first sentence: This is a good example of what we have been talking about: two sentences can be separated by a colon. 2. To separate a sentence and a word or phrase that explains or clarifies something in the first sentence: The student selected the most appropriate clause-internal mark of punctuation: the colon. 3. To introduce a list: This is what you will need to do: write an essay, take an exam, and bring an apple to the teacher.
Semicolon	1. To separate two complete but related sentences: I like coffee; you, however, like tea. 2. Instead of commas, to separate items in a list when items are phrases and/or clauses and may already contain commas inside them. To be able to pass the course, you will need to write an essay; take a final exam that is worth 100 points; and bring an apple to the teacher.
Dashes	To signal a non-restrictive relative clause, phrase or word group, especially when these already contain comma inside them: All the students — who also handed in an essay, took a final exam, and brought an apple to the teacher — passed the course.
Parentheses	To give additional information, i.e., information that is relevant but not of vital importance: My cousin who is an archaeologist was up all night to work on her new article (archaeologists need to publish on a regular basis, so they can receive continued funding for their excavations).

Ellipses	Used to indicate that something has been left out (usually from a direct quotation). Must not be used to signal unfinished thoughts. According to Jones (2008) Saturn is “the sixth planet … from the sun”. According to Jones (2008) Saturn is “the sixth planet […] from the sun”.

It is also important to pay attention when punctuating individual words. By this we mean the use of apostrophes and hyphens. The apostrophe has two main uses: to indicate ownership, and to indicate a contraction. Below, we give examples of the first situation:

The student’s essay = one student

The students’ essay = many students

If a singular word ends with the letter *s,* the apostrophe can come after the *s*, or ownership may be indicated by adding both the apostrophe and another *s:*

Dr Jones’ classroom

Dr Jones’s classroom

When the apostrophe is used to indicate a contraction, we are usually dealing with negation or with auxiliary verbs, such as *have, will, shall* or *would.*

Full form	**Contracted form**
I do / did not go.	I don't / didn't go.
I am not eating.	I'm not eating.
I was not eating.	I wasn't eating.
I will not go. / I would not go.	I won't go. / I wouldn't go.
I cannot go. / I could not go.	I can't go. / I couldn't go.
They have already eaten.	They've already eaten.
Mary has already eaten.	Mary's already eaten.
They will eat.	They'll eat.
We would like to eat.	We'd like to eat.

It should be noted that contracted forms are often considered too informal to use in an academic essay. Your supervisor will be able to tell you whether contracted forms are allowed in your essays. The use of contracted forms is also regulated in many stylesheets, as we will see at the end of this lesson.

Hyphens should not be confused with dashes. They are used differently, and they even look different, with hyphens being slightly shorter than dashes. Hyphens are mainly used in compound words, such as *grown-up, so-called* and *run-on sentence.* Hyphens can also be used to join words that modify the same head word, such as *passive-aggressive behaviour, old-fashioned writing style* and *one-page abstract.*

It is also useful to learn to use italics and underlining appropriately; italics and underlining are often used in the same way, the difference being that italics are used in texts that are word-processed, while underlining is used in texts that are hand-written or type-written — a quick look at academic books written in the 1970s or before will show you what we mean. As a general rule, academic texts use italics or underlining for titles of books, magazines, journals, newspapers, websites, plays, and films. For some types of titles, you may sometimes be instructed to use single or double quotation marks instead of italics or underlining, so it is important to always read the instructions and/or the stylesheet, so that you know what system you should follow. Below, we give some examples of italics in the above-mentioned functions:

My favourite painting is Vincent van Gogh's *Sunflowers.*

I do not know the meaning of this word, so I will need to look it up in the *Oxford English Dictionary.*

The film is loosely based on *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen.

Italics may also be used for foreign words and phrases. In such situations, the meaning of the words or phrases may then follow in single quotation marks. In some fields, such as linguistics, words, phrases or sentences that are cited as linguistic examples within the running text are also often given in italics, while their meaning is given inside of single quotation marks. You may have noticed that this is also the system we follow in this textbook.

Many of the presidential candidates failed to avoid the *ad hominem* fallacy.

These solutions seemed to be very *ad hoc*.

The word *blomma* means 'flower' in Swedish.

The sentence *I drank coffee and ate cake* consists of two main clauses that are conjoined with the conjunction *and.*

Many writers use italics and underlining for emphasis. It is a good idea to check the stylesheet before doing this, because there are various conventions on how to emphasize something in a written text – italics and/or underlining is just one way to do this. It is also important to always follow the same system consistently throughout the essay or research paper; if you use italics for emphasis in one sentence but capital letters in the next sentence, you will end up confusing the reader unnecessarily.

EXERCISES ON PUNCTUATION AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE

Exercise 1: Add the necessary internal marks of punctuation to these sentences.

1. For a perfect omelette you need 2 eggs a tablespoon of water a pinch of pepper some butter for frying and about ½ cup of filling such as grated cheese finely chopped ham or vegetables.
2. With just a couple of eggs and a pinch of salt you can whip up a tasty meal in minutes adding your own personal flair with a whole range of filling ingredients.
3. Not to put all the eggs in one basket is a well-known strategy that many people keep in mind.
4. All the children who were under 10 years of age got an ice-cream.
5. President Kennedy said I am the man who accompanied Jacqueline Kennedy to Paris and I have enjoyed it.
6. Every time we ate the geese wanted to eat too.
7. From the dessert menu which also included a list of tea and coffee options we selected Bakewell tart and whipped cream.

Exercise 2: Decide which of the 12 options listed below (1-12) apply to the following four passages of text (a-d). After you have identified the potential problems, rewrite the passages so they become more appropriate for a university-level essay.

a. Possible problems:
b. Occurrence of sentence fragments
c. Problems with sentence variety: some of the sentences look too similar
d. Problems with sentence length: some of the sentences are too long
e. Problems with combining clauses into sentences: run-on sentences
f. Problems with combining clauses into sentences: incorrect use of conjunctions and other linking words
g. Unnecessary repetition: several sentences say the same thing
h. Words that are repeated unnecessarily
i. Occurrence of pretentious language
j. Occurrence of vague words and expressions
k. Use of unnecessarily complex and wordy expressions
l. Use of clichés and trite expressions

m. (Over-)use of non-literal language

a. The Lindow Man is a dead body that was dug up in a bog in 1984. Along with it came proof that the man was violently murdered. Had his head smashed in whilst at the same time getting strangled and slashed by a sharp object. And these multiple lethal actions proved that he was a victim of murder.

b. Smoking is dangerous because it exposes your body to a number of harmful substances. Your body is not designed to deal with harmful substances, they have bad effects on your health. Not every part of your body comes into contact with harmful substances though, but because the harmful substances contained in a cigarette get into your bloodstream and from there, they travel around your body, smoking poses such a great threat to your health and increases your risk of illnesses and many other health problems.

c. Shakespeare scholars sometimes make much ado about the fact that the early Shakespeare plays did not have Shakespeare's name on the front page and they take it as a sign that there was a reason keep his name a secret, but the bottom line in this is that contemporary plays at Shakespeare's time were not considered literature, and most people at that time did not pay attention to the authors of the plays, and only about a third of all the plays authored at that time had the author's name on the title page.

d. Famed astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus entered the world on February 19, in 1473. He was born and bred in Poland, more precisely in the city of Torun. He entered the University of Cracow in 1491 and studied painting and mathematics. He did not study astronomy but developed a growing interest in the topic and started to collect books on the topic. He graduated from the University of Cracow and returned to Torun in 1494 and started to work as a canon at Frombork's cathedral. He travelled to Italy in 1496 and started to study at the University of Bologna where he also met astronomer Domenico Maria Novara.

Exercise 3: Re-write the passage below so that you avoid clichés and other trite expressions.

Here is something worth getting a bee in your bonnet about. Busy bees perform a vital ecosystem service by pollinating plants. Without bees, it would be impossible to produce the food that we need to sustain human life. Bee communities have been in perilous decline over the last fifty years and saving these creatures is a race against time. Get the ball rolling and help a bee by planting bee-friendly plants in your garden and by staying clear of chemicals and pesticides. Actions speak louder than words, and we all need to do our part to ensure the survival of the world's bee population for the sake of our children, and our children's children.

Spelling and typos

As we have stated earlier, academic writers should aim at standard spelling. This means that all words should be spelled like they are spelled in a good dictionary, and novel or creative spellings and abbreviations should usually be avoided. Checking how words are spelled is important even for experienced writers and native speakers, as two words that sound the same – for example *of* and *off*; *their* and *there;* and *right* and *rite* – may not be spelled in the same way, and this may cause unnecessary confusion. It may also result in a grammar error, as is the case when writing *Your my best friend* instead of *You're my best friend.* We discuss the need to check for spelling mistakes and typos in Video lecture 22.

Video lecture 22: Spelling and Typos

As stated in this video lecture, electronic spell checkers can be a useful tool, but you should never rely on them completely. This is because most spell checkers do not catch misspelled words that look like other existing words. A spell checker will not tell you, for example, that you have written *rip* when you intended to write *tip* — a mistake that is easy to make, because the keys for *r* and *t* are next to each other on a keyboard.

You should set your spell checker to follow the correct variant of English: British English or American English, for example. Words that are spelled following the conventions for British English may be viewed as mistakes in an otherwise American English text. Your supervisor may have told you which variant of English you should use; if you are free to use whichever variant you like, you should select the variant that is most natural to you and follow the conventions for that variant consistently throughout the essay. This means that you should spell all your words consistently following the same system, and that you should not switch back and forth between different systems. The need to be consistent also applies to aspects of vocabulary and grammar; your text will not look very professional, if you have followed the British English spelling conventions, but used a lot of American English vocabulary items and grammar.

Many writers find that they have specific spelling errors and typos that they have a tendency to make. These errors may occur even when the writers actually know how to spell the words correctly — it sometimes feels as though one's fingers have a mind of their own. In many spell checkers, you will be able to tell the programme to watch out for such personal errors, so that the mistakes will be corrected automatically, if and when your fingers play tricks on you.

One final tip for proofreading a text for spelling errors and typos is to leave the final version for a couple of days, if you can. When you have not looked at your text for a few days, you will be able to see it with fresh eyes and spot problems that you might otherwise have missed. It is a well-known fact that writers become blind to their own mistakes; their eyes will see the words in their correctly spelled forms, even when this is not how the words are actually spelled on paper or the computer screen. Being able to leave the text for a few days will help you re-gain your vision, so you are able to spot and correct such errors, before submitting the text for assessment.

Using a stylesheet

In all the preceding modules and lessons, we have encouraged you to check various things in a stylesheet and to follow the instructions given there. In Video lecture 23, we summarize these points and say some general things about stylesheets.

Video lecture 23: Using a stylesheet

Stylesheets are documents that regulate how your finished essay should look and how the text should be formatted: what font and font size to use; how the margins should be set; whether you should indent your paragraphs and/or leave a blank line between them; how the headings should be formatted; if you need to insert page numbers and if so, where these should be placed. Secondly, stylesheets tell you which referencing style you should use: APA, MLA or something else. Thirdly, stylesheets regulate what kind of language you should use: what level or formality you should assume; what the tone and style of your writing should be; and which variant of English you should use. Stylesheets may also give instructions on issues such as the use of contracted forms like *can't* and *it'll*; how you indicate emphasis; and so on.

A checklist for writers

- ✓ I have a clear research question that I have located in the introduction-part of my essay.
- ✓ I have a clear thesis that I have located in the introduction-part of my essay.
- ✓ My essay has structure: A beginning, a body and an end.
- ✓ All my sections and sub-sections have structure: an introduction, a body and an end.
- ✓ Each body section focusses on developing one main point or idea.
- ✓ I have been able to motivate to myself how the main ideas presented in the body sections are related to and develop my thesis.
- ✓ I have used enough secondary sources in my essay.
- ✓ All my sources are reliable and relevant, given my topic.
- ✓ I have cited and acknowledged my sources accurately and correctly (that is, following the instructions I have received).
- ✓ I have compared all my in-text references against the reference list at the end of the essay, to make sure that the information given in consistent and there are no sources that are missing from the list of references.
- ✓ I have used enough cohesive ties in my writing.
- ✓ I have used the correct register, style and tone of writing.
- ✓ I have run a spell checker and corrected all the problems that it detected.
- ✓ I have run a grammar checker and addressed the cases that it detected.
- ✓ I have checked for and corrected my punctuation.
- ✓ I have checked for and corrected my formatting, so it follows all the guidelines I have received.
- ✓ I have double-checked for errors that I tend to make when writing in English.

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