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Grammar & Style

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Grammar – it saves lives!



«Harsh Grammar Lesson» by [CHEEZburger](#)

1 Tenses – present tenses

Tense	Rule	Example
Present simple <i>infinitive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • habits • facts, figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I start work at 8:30 everyday. • The world is round.
Present continuous <i>is / am / are +ing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ongoing or temporary activity • sth. arranged in the future 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are doing a grammar review (now). • I am going to the doctor today at 2 p.m..
Present perfect simple <i>have / has</i> + <i>past participle</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an action or event that was completed in the recent past • the same action completed multiple times in the past and likely to be completed again • an action completed very recently (usually with <i>just</i> or <i>now</i>) • an uncompleted action that is expected to be finished • adverbs: for, since, just, never, ever, yet • time expressions: today, recently, this morning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have lived here since 2011. • He has had a phone for 1 year. • I have never been to Japan. • They have seen the movie recently. • My niece has grown so much this year. • We have tricked him every April Fool's Day since we were kids.
Present perfect continuous <i>have / has +been +ing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an activity that started in the past but continues up to now 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have been studying English for 9 years.

1 Tenses – past tenses

Tense	Rule	Example
Past simple <i>past simple form (-ed)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> actions completed in the past 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I lived in Spain in 2009. This morning, I went to the store.
Past continuous <i>was / were +ing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ongoing action in the past habitual actions in the past Adverbs / phrases: always, all the time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We were watching TV last night. I was always playing outside as a kid.
Past perfect <i>had + past participle</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two different actions in the past, referring the first of the two often with: before, after, when 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> She had arrived at the office before she realized it was Sunday. When we arrived, they had not eaten yet.
Past perfect continuous <i>had +been +ing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Like past perfect, but to describe ongoing actions in the past (instead of one-time actions) to connect it to another past action, often with words like: when, until, before, after 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I had been waiting for 20 minutes before the bus came.

1 Tenses – future tenses

Tense	Rule	Example
Future simple <i>will + infinitive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> actions that have not happened yet but will later future facts, predictions promises, offers, threats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I start work at 8:30 everyday. The world is round.
Future continuous <i>will + be +ing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future actions happening over a period of time, especially when a specific time is mentioned Shows more certainty and likelihood than future simple 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I will be travelling to London tomorrow evening.
Future perfect <i>will + have + past participle</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an action that will be completed in the future by a specific time often used with words like: by, before, at, when 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By the time you read this, I will have already left.
Future perfect continuous <i>will + have + been +ing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future ongoing actions that continue up until a certain point Used with a specific time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In April, I will have been living here for 5 years.

1 Tenses

Section	Tenses	Examples
Abstract	present simple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «The flow depends largely on the distribution of density...» «We report the first observation and quantification of...»
Introduction	present simple	truths <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «There is an increasing need for...» «Gaseous forms of carbon and nitrogen are important products of...»
	present perfect	past studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «In the past, geophysical methods have been used to study...» «Recent studies in French Guiana have suggested the existence...»
	present simple	this study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Here we present a strategy for imaging...» «Our data challenge some widely held assumptions about...»
Methods	past simple	experiments, processing steps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Temperature was measured...» «Generic probes were used as positive and negative controls...»

1 Tenses

Section	Tenses	Examples
Results	present simple	figures, tables, theories <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Figure 1 shows the photo of...» «The acquisition parameters are summarised in Table 2...» «According to equilibrium theory, the rate depends on...»
	past simple	observations, findings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Soils were slightly alkaline with a mean pH of...» «Two variants were found...»
Discussion	present simple	truths, implications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Understanding a glacier's mass balance is crucial...» «This suggests that biovolume is a better indicator...»
	present perfect	past studies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Recently, it has been found that...» «Other studies have indicated that...»

1 Tenses

Section	Tenses	Examples
Conclusion	past simple	this paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «We showed that...» «Our transcriptomic analysis revealed that...»
	simple future	prospectives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> «The kinetic parameters will inform future models...» «The influence of iron will be the object of future research...»
Acknowledgment	present simple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «We thank...» «I am grateful to...»

2 Punctuation



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1 Punctuation

Mark	Function	Examples
Full stop .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> marks the end of a sentence indicates abbreviated words punctuates numbers & dates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Carbon is stored by live vegetation.» «Growth rates of e.g. taxa...» «They range from 0.1–1.1 μM...»
Comma ,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensures correct reading of long sentences sets off parentheses or contrasts separates items in a list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «When we began sampling the four sites starting in 2016, there was...» «High porosity, as an indicator for potential aeration, is likely to enhance...» «We performed an S-wave reflection survey, MASW, and ERT...» <div data-bbox="1684 939 2015 1249" data-label="Image"> </div>

1 Punctuation

Mark	Function	Examples
Colon :	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicates a list, quotation, calculation, or summary separates an initial clause from a second clause, list, phrase, or quotation that supports the first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «fluxes were calculated as follows:» «This is in line with previous observations: that epiphytes only grow...»
Semicolon ;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> separates two complete sentences that are closely linked uses as second level of punctuation in a series of words which already have commas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «We attributed this to the presence of biogas in the pore spaces; the presence of biogas is a fact well-known for this site.» «Only Elasmognatha, a clade of air-breathing land snails, were found at this site; one family being the...»
Hyphen -	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> compound nouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «process-based» «oxygen-rich»

1 Punctuation

Mark	Function	Examples
Dash —	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use as colon or semicolon use as comma or brackets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «This is in line with previous observations — that epiphytes only grow...» «High porosity — as an indicator for potential aeration — is likely to enhance...»
Apostrophe '	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> contractions possessives <p>«It's» is the contraction of «it is». «It's» is not a possessive.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «don't» (do not), «It'll» (It will) «Henry's law», «The farmers' area»
Quotation Marks “ ” / ‘ ’	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> quote a source <p>Set off a quotation by quotation marks only. Punctuate the rest as usual. Do not insert additional punctuation marks!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Smith et al. (2014) write that microbubbles “are indicators of...”» «Wang et al. (2010) define resource availability as ‘the presence of...’»

1 Punctuation

Mark	Function	Examples
Parentheses ()	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include extra information include references, abbreviations, manufacturers, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «To keep filtration time as short as possible (typically < 10 min)...» «(Mayr et al., 2020)» «The halfsaturation constant (Km)...» «Polycarbonate membrane filters (Whatman, UK)...»
Brackets []	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> add to or change a quotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Smith et al. (2014) write that “microbubbles [bubbles smaller than one hundredth of a millimetre] are indicators of...”» «According to Mayr et al. (2020), “[t]he absence of these taxa from the lake sediment enabl[ed]...”» «Garcia et al. (2018) claim that “the effects of material properties [on microbial adhesion] are...”»

1 Punctuation

Mark	Function	Examples
Ellipsis ...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> leave out part of a quotation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «According to Mayr et al. (2020), “[t]he absence of these taxa [...] enables...”»
Exclamation mark !	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> indicate surprise, anger, or alarm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Use exclamation marks very sparingly!»
Question mark ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask a question, rhetorical device 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> «Speciation on islands: what are we learning?»

Style – choose your words wisely & be consistent!

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3 Coherency – paragraph structure

Coherency within paragraph

- spatial or temporal
- general → specific
- specific → general
- least important → most important
- familiar → unfamiliar
- simple → complex
- certain → uncertain

Examples

- spatial

large-scale → «Globally, wetland soils are at risk of conversion and destruction [...]. This is particularly relevant in East Africa [...]. Even protected wetlands in Kenya have [...]»
 mid-scale →
 small-scale →

- certain → uncertain

certain → «Stratified lakes accumulate methane in their bottom waters. During lake overturn, stored methane may reach the surface layer [...]. [T]he fate of methane during the overturn period is still a matter of controversy.»
 possible →
 unknown →

3 Coherency - relational devices

Relational devices

- parallelism
- repetition
 - Use for clarity
 - Use in moderation!
- transitional expressions
 - Use for variety

Examples

« First, ... Second, ... Third, ... »

To quantify **cell** numbers, we applied CARD-FISH. Samples were fixed onto **filters**. **Filters** were embedded in agarose, **cells** were permeabilized for 70 min at 37 °C and peroxidases inactivated for 10 min. **Filters** were incubated for 2.5 h at 46 °C. After washing, **filters** were placed into the buffer for 30 min at 37 °C. DAPI was used for counterstaining **cells** and the **filters** were mounted on slides... »

«however», «nevertheless», «on the other hand», «in contrast»

«therefore», «consequently», «as a result»

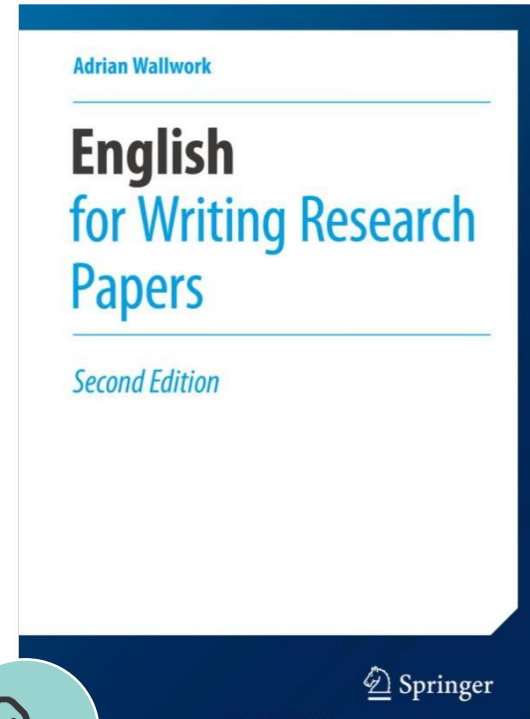
4 Phrasing - useful phrases

Establishing why your topic (X) is important

- X is the main / leading / primary / major cause of ..
- Xs are a common / useful / critical part of...
- Xs are among the most widely used / well-known / widespread / types of ...
- X is recognized as being / believed to be the most
- ...

Explaining why you chose your specific method, model, equipment, sample etc.

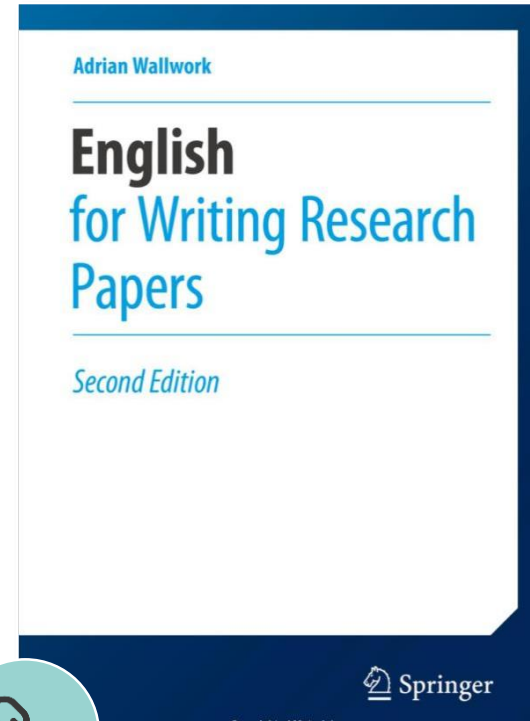
- The aim / purpose of X is to do Y. Consequently we / As a result we / We thus ...
- We chose this particular apparatus because / on account of the fact that / since ...
- It was decided that the best procedure / method / equipment for this investigation was to ...
- An X approach was chosen / selected in order to ...
- ...



4 Phrasing - useful phrases

Referring to tables and figures, and to their implications

- *Table 1* compares / lists / details / summarizes *the data* on X.
- *Table 2* proves / shows / demonstrates / illustrates / highlights *that X is ...*
- *Figure 1* presents / reports / shows / details *the data* on X.
- *Figure 3* pinpoints / indicates *exactly where X meets Y*.
- ...



4 Phrasing - paraphrasing

Elements of paraphrasing

- use different vocabulary
- use different structure
- retain meaning
- retain key words and phrases

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Use online thesauri for synonyms!

Techniques for paraphrasing

«Mangrove forests are frequently inundated by brackish water»

- change vocabulary

«Mangrove forest biomes are often flooded by estuarial water.»

- change word order, exchange active ↔ passive

«Brackish water inundates mangrove forests frequently.»

- change word class

«Mangrove forests are subject to frequent inundation by brackish water.»

- combine techniques

«Brackish water flooding of mangals is frequent.»

5 Brevity

DOs

- keep it short and simple
- be stingy with words
- have one idea per sentence
- use the active form
- use positive phrases
- use concrete terms

«we used the method» **not** «the method was used»

«the results are different» **not** «the results are not the same»

«it will be published in Nature» **not** «it will be published in a reputable journal»

DON'Ts

- write in «sophisticated style»
- Use too many adjectives & adverbs
- use unnecessary constructions
- nominalise
- use empty modifiers
- use tautologous modifiers

e.g. «It is clear that», «the fact is that», «in an attempt to», «in order to»

e.g. «basically», «indeed», «quite», «actually»

e.g. «completely finish», «may potentially», «ultimate result», «blue in colour»

Final checks

Content

1. Content
2. Logic

Is the information correct and accurate?
 Is my chain of reasoning clear?

Content

1. Plagiarism
2. Phrasing
3. Coherency
4. Brevity

Is my writing free of plagiarism?
 Are my words and phrases appropriate?
 Is my writing smooth and clear?
 Is my writing concise?

Content

1. Spelling
2. Grammar

Are all words spelled correctly?
 Are all tenses and punctuation marks used correctly?

Content

Formatting



Resources

- Heard, S.B. (2016): «The Scientist's Guide to Writing». Princeton University Press.
- Johnson, S. (2012): «Getting it Across». Techne Press.
- Luellen, W.R. (2001): «Fine-Tuning Your Writing». Wise Owl Publishing Company.
- Silvia, P.J (2014): «How to write a lot». American Psychological Association.

Thank you for your attention! Any questions?



«I can not eat this dissertation» on [imgflip](#)

Contact

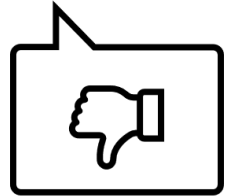


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