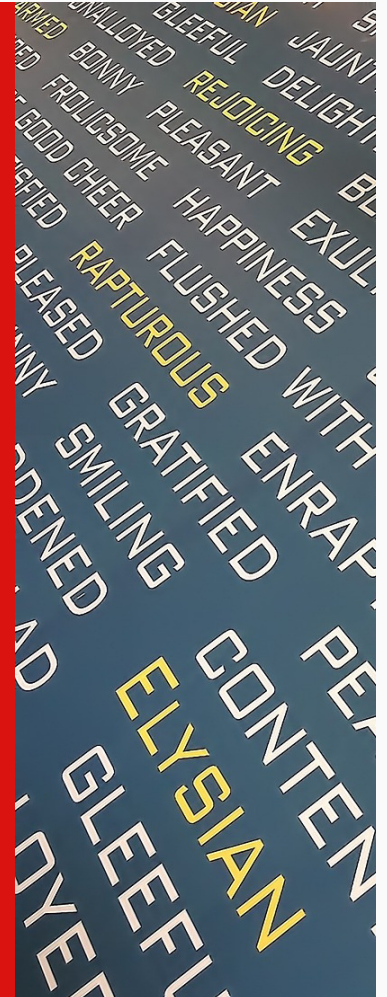


Useful Tips for Drafting Academic Manuscripts



Dear Reader,

Language and grammar are an essential aspect of communicating your research work. Poor language and grammar can lead to rejection of your manuscript by a journal. It is absolutely essential that you pay attention to your writing skills when you draft a manuscript for publication.

In this ebook, we will give you a list of essential language and grammar considerations you need to keep in mind while drafting your manuscript. If you need further help, you can also avail our editing services at <https://www.enago.com/> to ensure that you submit an error-free manuscript for publication.

Happy reading!

Regards,
The Enago Academy Team



<https://www.enago.com/academy/>



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Importance of Correct Usage of Language and Grammar

An academic or scientific publication is a means of communicating the results of your study or your findings and transmitting your knowledge to others.

Considering the significance of the work that researchers carry out, it is important that their work is not misunderstood.

Therefore, it is absolutely essential that your manuscript is written appropriately in order to ensure that your audience properly understands what you are trying to convey.

Poor language quality can also lead to delay in publication of your manuscript or in certain cases even rejection of your manuscript by the journal.

Therefore, correct usage of language and grammar is absolutely essential in academic or scientific publications.

Use of Punctuation Marks

The Period

The purpose of the period, also known as the full stop (.) is to end a sentence. In academic writing, it is used to denote an abbreviation such as “et al.,” which is an abbreviation of the Latin et alii. Other abbreviations include et cetera = etc. and nota bene = n.b. In case of a sentence that ends with an abbreviation with a period, use only one period instead of two. Also, in the case of Harvard or APA referencing styles, a citation at the end of a sentence should be included before the full stop [1].

The Comma

The comma has several functions in academic writing. It can be used for any of the following-
a) separate elements in a list of three or more items, b) Used between the author surname and the date, c) Separate citations from the same author d) Separate supplementary elements in a sentence e) Between adjectives f) Before co-ordinating conjunctions g) Separate dependent and independent clauses h) Separate introductory words and short phrases i) Separate direct speech and quoted sentences [1].

Colon

The colon (:) is used when a pause is required to introduces related information. It indicates that more information is yet to come. A colon can be used in the following cases- a) To introduce the items in a list b) to introduce an explanation, conclusion, or amplification of an earlier statement. In certain cases, the colon also separates and highlights a second statement, showing that it follows on from the first. There is a general rule that colons should not be used after a linking verb, a preposition, or expressions such as such as, like, and, for example [2,3].

Semi-Colon

A semi-colon (;) is used when a break within a sentence is stronger than a comma, but lesser than a full stop. It allows the writer to avoid overuse of the comma and preserve the finality of the full stop. Semi-colons can be used for several purposes such as a) To separate items in a list wherein some of the items are already separated by commas b) To link closely related sentences c) To link sentences which use connectors such as otherwise, however, and therefore [2,3].

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks, which are also sometimes known as inverted commas are used to emphasise a word to quote other writers. In American English, double quotation marks are used to show quotations from other writers. Double quotations are also used to show quotations in quotations. Use of quotation marks after words such as said or asked should be avoided, as they are indirect quotations rather than direct quotation.

While referencing in academic/scientific papers, single quotation marks are used for the names of articles and chapters [4].

Hyphen

Hyphens (-) are commonly used for compound words in academic writing. In the case of the APA style of writing, a hyphen can be used for a compound adjective if there are chances of that word being misread. However, compound adjective rules can be applied only when the compound adjective precedes the term it modifies. If a compound adjective follows the term, there is no need for a hyphen. Also in the case of two or more compound modifiers having a common base, the base is sometimes omitted in all except the last modifier, however, the hyphens should be retained [5].

En Dash

The en dash (–) is slightly wider than the hyphen (-) but narrower than the em dash (—). The en dash can be used to represent a span or range of numbers, dates, or time. Based on the context, the en dash can be read as “to” or “through.” You should avoid using the en dash if you are introducing a span or range with words such as from or between. It can also be used between words when conflict, connection, or direction need to be reflected. In cases where a compound adjective is formed with an element that is itself an open compound or hyphenated compound, the hyphen can be replaced with an en dash for aesthetic purposes [6].

Em Dash

The em dash (—) is one of the most versatile punctuation marks. Based on the situation, it can be used to replace commas, parentheses, or colons—in each case to slightly different effect. It is advisable that the use of an em dash is restricted to not more than two per sentence. It can be used to replace commas to enhance readability, parentheses if you want to draw attention to the content, colon when you want to lay emphasis on the conclusion of your sentence. Two continuous dashes can be used to indicate missing portions of a word, either if it is unknown or intentionally omitted [7].



Language and Grammar Errors to Avoid

Excessive Exclamation Marks

Exclamation marks are often used to express strong feelings of astonishment or joy.

However, they are considered inappropriate in academic writing. If it is absolutely essential, use only one instead of multiple exclamation marks. Use them sparingly throughout your manuscript. Repeatedly using exclamation marks can distract the reader.

You also need to avoid combining an exclamation mark with other punctuation. Inserting exclamation marks within parentheses to emphasize a specific word within a sentence should be avoided [8].

Phrasal Verbs

A phrasal verb is a verb made up of two or more words: the main verb with an adverb or preposition, or both. When these words are used in combination, the meaning of these words changes from the individual words. They can be classified into two types- intransitive phrasal verbs (they have no object) and transitive phrasal verbs (they do have an object)

Although these words are commonly used in spoken English, they are considered too informal for academic or scientific English. However, some exceptions to this rule commonly used in manuscripts include words such as- carried out, consists of, discussed by, based on, subjected to [9] .

Long and Complex Sentences

Long and complicated sentences need to be avoided. Use direct and short sentences instead. Avoid multiple statements in one sentence. Long and complex sentences can end up confusing your reviewers and readers. The average length of sentences in scientific manuscripts is about 12-17 words. Use of long sentences can lead to several other errors such as- use of passive voice, poor sentence structure, excessive use of subordinate clause, mixing different levels of parallelisms connected by "and" in one sentence [10].

Run-on Sentences

Long sentences and run-on sentences are not the same. Long sentences are not always run-on sentences. Run-on sentences are those that have incorrect or missing punctuation. Incorrect or missing punctuation can lead to a misunderstanding of what you are trying to convey. Following tips can be used to avoid run on sentences-

- a) Write two independent clauses as two separate sentences.
- b) Use a coordinating conjunction after a comma.
- c) Use a semicolon between the two independent clauses.
- d) Use a semicolon and a linking word between the two independent clauses [11].



Other Important Considerations

Subject-Verb Agreement

The basic requirement of the subject-verb agreement rule in English states that a singular subject takes a singular verb, while a plural subject takes a plural verb.

However, there are certain exceptions to this rule that need to be mentioned.

If the verb be and the modal auxiliaries are disregarded, all verbs have one form that is used in the third person singular, with the pronouns he, she, and it, and with subjects that can be replaced by one of the three pronouns. However, in the case of the verb be, subject-verb agreement only takes place in the present tense.

If he, she, or it can be used instead of the subject, we have a singular agreement, but if we could use they instead of the subject, we have a plural agreement [12].

Numbers

Researchers often have to use numbers to communicate the findings of their work. There are certain things that they need to keep in mind while using numbers. 1) While drafting a manuscript numbers should be spelt out instead of using numerals, at the beginning of sentences. 2) Maintain consistency while using numbers. If you want to spell out numbers, ensure that the same format is followed throughout and you do not have a mix of numerals and spelt out numbers. Exceptions can be made in case large numbers need to be used. 3) Ensure a consistent format for numbers larger than 1000. E.g. You cannot use 15000 and 25,000 in the same paper. Either format by itself is fine, but consistency needs to be maintained [13].

Voices

In academic or scientific writing the third person voice is preferred over the first or second person. The third person voice is referred to as an objective voice because it allows the writer to assume a position of neutrality. It allows the writer to create a formal relationship with the audience. The third person voice can be used to write academic arguments and scientific reports [14].

However, there are exceptions to this with certain journals allowing authors to use the first person point of view in abstracts, introductions, discussions, and conclusions. The use of second person is generally avoided in academic or scientific writing [15].

Abbreviations

Abbreviations may be convenient to use and can help you save time and avoid repetition, but it may not be understood by everyone who would read your manuscript. You should try to reduce your use of abbreviations as much as possible and use only standard ones wherever they exist. Try to reduce your use of abbreviations to an absolute minimum; they are rarely essential [16].

If you decide to use an abbreviation in your manuscript, ensure that it is spelt out at the first occurrence. Some journals may specify a list of abbreviations that need not be spelt out. It is also recommended to avoid the use of abbreviations in the title or abstract of a paper [17].

Conditional Sentences

Conditional sentences are commonly used in academic writing. They are often used to discuss the results of the research studies and can also be a part of a research hypothesis statement. Conditional sentences may often be necessary to state and test a condition and its outcome. Most authors of scientific papers will use conditional sentences in their abstracts to discuss the reasons to conduct their study. They are used in the case of a “if-then” or “unless-then” situation or a probability [18].

There are five types of conditional sentences- zero, first, second, third and mixed. Details of these types can be obtained in reference [18]

Transitional Words/Phrases

Transitional words and phrases can help you relate your various ideas to each other. These words/phrases helps you to guide readers through the connections you are making by using transitional words in individual sentences. This will in turn help your readers understand your paper’s logic. They should be used strategically to ensure that the word or phrase you’re choosing effectively conveys your intention.

Use these words sparingly, to avoid giving readers an over-explanation of your work. These words/ phrases can be classified into several categories such as causation, chronology, combination, intensification, summary etc. to name a few [19].

Active Voice vs. Passive Voice

The use of active voice over passive voice is preferred in scientific writing. There are several benefits to using active voice such as- a) Shorter and simpler sentences can be framed b) Passive voice sounds impersonal c) Authors tend to use dangling modifiers (modifies a word not clearly stated in the sentence) while using the passive voice d) Passive voice encourages nominalizations (use of words which is not a noun as a noun).

It is not always possible to avoid the use of passive voice. However, you should use passive voice judiciously. Use it only when necessary to maintain cohesion. Make sure to check for dangling modifiers and abusive nominalizations [20].

Tenses

The past tense is often used in scientific writing, specially when the focus of the writing is to describe experiments or observations that were done in the past (literature review). However, it would not be appropriate to use the past tense in every situation and sometimes you will have to consider using different tenses.

Different tenses can be used to clarify what happened or what you did in the past , what you are concluding (present tense) and what may or will happen in the future (future tense). An appropriate use of past, present, and future tenses can help you write in a clear and unambiguous style [21].

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manuscript better



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