Academic Research and Writing

Addressing Common Language Issues in Academic Writing

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Definite Article

A definite article is the word **"the"**. It is used before a noun to refer to a specific person, place, thing, or idea that is known to the speaker and the listener (or reader).

A definite article introduces a noun that is *specific* or *already known* in the context.

1. Use "the" when the noun is specific or known

The results of the experiment were conclusive. (The experiment is specific or already mentioned).

Many marketers rely on the Facebook algorithm to improve engagement.

2. Use "the" with superlatives or ordinal numbers

The most effective email campaign had a 45% open rate.

This is the first time such a method was used.

3. Use "the" when referring to a specific group or category

SEO is critical in the digital marketing landscape.

Understanding the customer journey helps tailor content more effectively.

- Avoid "the" when using general or abstract nouns

The research is important in the science.

Research is important in science. (Not referring to specific research or science)

- No "the" with uncountable or plural nouns when speaking generally

The water is essential.	Water is essential.
The students must study.	Students must study.

Indefinite Article

An indefinite article is used when referring to a *non-specific* or *unknown noun*—something not previously mentioned or not unique.

Two indefinite articles:

- **"a"** (used before words that begin with a consonant sound)
- **"an"** (used before words that begin with a vowel sound)

- She created a marketing strategy.
- We saw an advertisement on YouTube.
- He is a digital marketer.

It's about sound, not spelling:

a website, an app, a campaign, an advertisement, a user, an email, a blog post, an update

Numbers in Academic Writing

1. Words vs. Numerals

Use words for: numbers one to nine, when beginning a sentence, common phrases (one of...), approximate numbers

Use numerals for: numbers 10 and above, units of measurements (2 kg), statistics, data, percentages, dates, age, money, time

2. Decimals and Fractions

Use numerals for decimals and exact fractions –

The sample measured 2.7 cm.

Approximately 1/3 of the participants agreed.

3. Time, Dates, and Ages

The experiment lasted 3 hours.

The event occurred on May 5, 2023.

The child was 7 years old.

4. Large Numbers and Ranges

- Spell out round numbers under one million, but use numerals for large figures:

About five hundred students applied.

Over 2 million people were surveyed.

- Use an en dash (–) (not a hyphen) for number ranges:

Pages 25–30

Between 2000–2010

Time Markers

Time markers are words or phrases that indicate when something happens. They're essential in academic writing to clarify *sequence, tense,* and *logical flow*.

- Past- used when discussing completed actions or historical events.

For Example:

The survey was completed yesterday.

Data were collected last month.

The study was published in 2020.

The experiment ended two weeks ago.

- Present- used to describe current findings, ongoing processes, or general truths.

For Example:

The experiment is currently in progress.

Nowadays, most data is stored digitally.

Researchers are now focusing on new methods.

- Future- used for describing plans, predictions, or future research.

In the future, AI may assist doctors.

The system will eventually be automated.

By 2030, emissions must be reduced.

- Sequence or Chronology - used in literature reviews, methodology, or historical discussion.

First, the participants were selected.

Then, the samples were tested.

After that, conclusions were drawn.

The team subsequently published their findings.

Finally, the paper was peer-reviewed.

Style in Academic Writing

Style in academic writing refers to the tone, formality, and clarity of your language. It shapes how ideas are communicated and how professional and credible your work appears.

❑ Formal Tone

Academic writing avoids casual or conversational language.

A lot of research was done.	Extensive research was conducted.
The results were kind of odd.	The results were somewhat unexpected.

❑ Academic writing should be unbiased and evidence-based.

Avoid personal opinions unless specifically required.

Use third person (e.g., “The researcher observed…” rather than “I observed…”).

Use evidence (data, studies, citations) to support claims.

❑ Be clear and direct. Avoid unnecessary complexity or vague expressions.

It is important to note that…	Notably, …
The thing that was found…	The finding…
Many people think that…	Scholars such as Smith (2020) argue…

Singular and Plural

1. Singular Nouns and Verbs

A singular noun refers to one person, item, or concept.

It usually takes a verb with -s or -es in the present tense.

Ex: A marketer creates content for social media.

Digital marketing plays a key role in e-commerce.

2. Plural Nouns and Verbs

A plural noun refers to more than one.

The verb does not take -s in the present tense.

Ex: The marketers design personalised email campaigns.

General Rules:

Type of Noun	Singular Example	Plural Example
Countable noun	The study shows...	The studies show...
Uncountable noun	Information is limited.	(No plural form: “informations” ❌)
Collective noun	The team was effective.	The teams were effective.

❑ Common Errors to Avoid

The datas are from social media.	The data are from social media.
This reports shows good results.	This report shows good results.
Many feedbacks were given.	Much feedback was given.?
The advertisements is engaging.	The advertisements are engaging

❖ **Sentence Structure Problems in Academic Writing** refer to errors or weaknesses in how sentences are constructed, making the writing unclear, confusing, or grammatically incorrect.

Approaches to Vocabulary

- Use of Formal and Objective Language

Avoid colloquial language, slang, and contractions. Choose precise words that convey meaning without emotional or personal bias.

"Lots of people saw the ad" "A large number of users were exposed to the advertisement“

- Discipline-Specific Terminology

Use vocabulary that is specific to the academic field (also known as jargon, when appropriate). Helps demonstrate familiarity and authority in the subject area.

"Clicked a bunch of links""Engaged with multiple hyperlinks“

- Normalisation

Turning verbs or adjectives into nouns to create a more formal tone.

“The company advertised its product” → “The advertisement of the product was strategic.”

- Hedging and Cautious Language

Avoid overgeneralization. Use cautious language to reflect the nature of research.

“Social media always boosts sales.” → “Social media may contribute to increased sales.”

- Avoid Redundancy and Simplify Phrasing

Be concise and precise.

"People buy more..." → "Consumers demonstrate increased purchasing behaviour..."

"Social media is huge" → "Social media plays a substantial role in modern marketing strategies."

- Use of Connectives and Transition Words

Essential for cohesion and logical flow.

Addition: Furthermore, In addition

Contrast: However, On the other hand

Cause and Effect: Therefore, As a result

Active & Passive Voice

- In active voice, the subject does the action.

Structure: Subject + Verb + Object

- In passive voice, the object receives the action. The subject (doer) may be missing or come later in the sentence.

Structure: Object + Form of "to be" + Past Participle (+ by Subject)

Active vs. Passive

ACTIVE VOICE	PASSIVE VOIVE
The designer created the banner.	The banner was created by the designer.
The analyst prepared the performance report.	The performance report was prepared by the analyst.
The marketing team created a new ad campaign.	A new ad campaign was created by the marketing team.

Punctuated Abbreviation

The use of a full stop (period) after an abbreviation to indicate that it is a shortened form of a word is called a **punctuated abbreviation**.

Full stop abbreviation is a conventional punctuation rule that shows the word has been shortened.

e.g. exempli gratia (for example)

etc. et cetera (and so on)

i.e. id est (that is)

Prof. Professor

Dr. Doctor

Duplicate Abbreviation

The term duplicate abbreviation typically refers to a *redundant or incorrect repetition of abbreviated words or phrases*. This is considered a stylistic or grammatical error in formal writing.

In academic writing, clarity and precision are essential. Avoiding duplicate abbreviations shows: an understanding of technical terms, attention to detail, professional and polished writing.

Examples of Duplicate Abbreviations

PIN number	**PIN**	"PIN" stands for Personal Identification Number
ATM machine	**ATM**	"ATM" = Automated Teller Machine
URL link	**URL** or **link**	"URL" = Uniform Resource Locator — already means a web link.
HTML language	**HTML**	"HTML" = HyperText Markup Language

Prepositions

Prepositions are words that show the relationship between a noun (or pronoun) and another word in the sentence.

They often indicate time, place, direction, cause, manner, or instrument.

- Prepositions of Time

At - The campaign launched at 9 a.m.

On - The webinar was held on Monday.

In - Engagement increased in March.

Since - Metrics have improved since last year.

- Prepositions of Direction/Movement

To - Users are redirected to the landing page.

Into - Traffic was funneled into the sales pipeline.

Onto - Ads were placed onto specific webpages.

- Prepositions of Cause/Purpose

due to - Traffic dropped due to poor SEO performance.

because of - Conversion rates increased because of targeted ads.

for - The campaign was designed for lead generation.

- Prepositions of Method/Instrument

By - The data was collected by Google Analytics.

With - The ad was created with video editing software.

Through - Leads were generated through email marketing.

THANK YOU