

# Writing Academic English

Gregory Bracken

29 August 2019

# Getting Started

Research question / theme.

1. Thesis – others' material/the discourse.
2. Antithesis – your own material/thinking.
3. Synthesis – combination of both/situating your work in the discourse.

1. Introduction – introduce what you're going to say and do (15%).
2. Text – do it (75%).
3. Conclusion – tell what you've done (10%).

## **You are expected to:**

1. Gather and present your research.
2. Combine it with your own thinking.

## **Remember**

You will be judged on your critical research skills (*hint: don't describe, explain*).  
Good writing will enable you to communicate your ideas more clearly.

# Writing Stages

1. Think – decide on the central question(s).
2. Plan – draw up a plan of action (plan backwards from a deadline).
3. Write – write a first, and subsequent, draft(s).
4. Revise – write a final version.

1. Be relevant.
2. Write only what you believe or have evidence for.
3. Be clear – avoid ambiguity, obscurity or wordiness.
4. Make the text no more and no less informative than it needs to be.
5. Be enthusiastic.

# Introduction

*Can contain the following:*

1. Statement of importance/interest (and to whom?).
2. Mention previous (recent) work on this topic.
3. Justification for dealing with this subject.
4. Statement of your objectives in this work.
5. Statement of the limitations in the scope of this work.
6. Brief details on the different parts dealt with in the main body of the text.
7. Mention differing viewpoints on the subject.
8. Mention your own viewpoint (be enthusiastic).
9. Mention future research you intend to undertake on this subject.

# Conclusion

*Can contain the following:*

1. Summary of the main body of the text.
2. Deduction made on the basis of what has been discussed in the text.
3. Your personal opinion of the subject discussed.
4. Mention others' research on this subject.
5. Statement of dissatisfaction with the gaps or limits of this work.
6. Implications of your findings for the future/future research.

# Paragraphs

*Consider your opening and closing paragraphs very carefully*

*They're important for scene-setting and summing-up*

A paragraph should have the following:

1. Unity of focus; a single idea or theme.
2. Inner coherence – sentences should lead from one to another in a logical and sequential way.
3. Adequate supporting content – select appropriate details to support the paragraph's theme.

# Writing

1. Write often, and early for an assignment.
2. Have a typical target for writing sessions: a word count or finish an idea.
3. Allow time between writing and editing (it makes it easier to edit).
4. Keep files with notes, quotes, ideas, adjectives, etc.
5. Start with research areas/specific questions (don't be afraid to change).
6. Check and correct mistakes as you go.

# Editing

1. After you've read something a few times errors become almost invisible.
2. Spellcheck is useful but a bit of a blunt instrument.
3. Change the font.
4. Enlarge the font.
5. When nearly finished, print out and read it.
6. Final draft: read **out loud** (helps with punctuation, style, etc.).
7. Get someone else to proof read for you – team up and swap.

# Citations

This is very reminiscent of what Jane Jacobs refers to as ‘organized complexity’ (Jacobs 1993: 20) which she sees as essential for the healthy life of city streets.

This is what Manuel Castells calls the Network Society (Castells 2000; Castells 2006).

# Bibliography

Herzfeld, M. (2005), 'Spatial Cleansing: Monumental Vacuity and the Idea of the West', *Journal of Material Culture* 11, no. 1/2: 127-49.

—(2005a), *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. New York: Routledge.

Jacobs, J. (1993) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Modern Library Edition.

Wu, F. (2009), 'Globalization, the Changing State, and Local Governance in Shanghai' in *Rising Shanghai: State Power and Local Transformations in a Global Megacity*, edited by Xiangming Chen, 125-144. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

—(2006), *Globalization and the Chinese City*, Routledge Contemporary China Series. London: Routledge.

—(2004), 'Residential Relocation under Market-Oriented Redevelopment: The Process and Outcomes in Urban China', *Geoforum* 35: 453-470.

# Quotations

1. Paraphrasing someone else's ideas must also be cited.
2. Keep direct quotes short.
3. Longer ones must be indented and in a smaller font.

Michel Foucault has identified the emergence of crime literature in the nineteenth century with the spectacle that had previously surrounded criminals and as having been transposed to a different class of society. It was in this period that the crime novel flourished because people had been robbed of their old pride in crimes; as Foucault says, 'the great murders had become the quiet game of the well behaved'. With no more popular heroes or great executions, the wickedly intelligent criminal appeared, and with him the even more cunning detective. Foucault states in *Discipline and Punish*:

The crime novel, which began to develop in the broadsheet and in mass-circulation literature, assumed an apparently opposite role. Above all, its function was to show that the delinquent belonged to an entirely different world, unrelated to familiar, everyday life. This strangeness was first that of the lower depths of society (*Les Mysteres de Paris*, *Rocambole*), then that of madness (especially in the latter half of the century) and lastly that of crime in high society (*Arsene Lupin*) (Foucault 1995: 286).

It is this last stage of the crime novel, the high-society stage, that had its finest flowering in the 1920s and '30s.

# Quotations

“Quotation marks” v. ‘inverted commas’

For something with a [q]uote within a “quote”.

Quote exactly as you find it, even if there’s a mistake

‘This is a mistaike [*sic*]’.

Altering quotes to fit your text

Elipsis: ‘This is part of a[...] longer paragraph’.

Additions ‘He [Smith] said...’

# Spelling

US v. British (e.g. honor v. honour; colonise v. colonize )

Pick one and stick with it (consistency is the key)

# Foreign Words

Should be in italics (unless in common use in English)

E.g. et cetera v. *sui generis*

# Italics

Italics can be used for emphasis, but only very sparingly

How do you do that?

How *do* you do that?

How do you do *that*?

# Capitals

**DON'T USE THEM!**

# Gender Neutrality

‘She/he’

‘Hers/his’

*Keep this to a minimum, or use*

‘They’

‘Their’

# Timelessness

Forty years ago.../thirty-eight years ago...

In 1980...

# Information

The Qing Dynasty.

The Qing Dynasty (1644-1912).

# Punctuation

A woman without her man is nothing.

A woman: without her, man is nothing.

Stop Diane (telling someone to stop her).

Stop, Diane (telling her to stop).

He shot himself as a child.

He shot, himself, as a child.

## *Appositive usage*

My sister, who received a scholarship, will attend TU Delft.

The girl who received the scholarship is my sister.

## *The Oxford (serial) comma*

Blood, toil, tears and sweat.

Blood, toil, tears, and sweat.

# Dangling participle

On my way to the Faculty this morning I saw a huge pile of rubbish walking down the street.

Walking down the street on my way to the Faculty this morning I saw a huge pile of rubbish.

# Colon

*Separates sentences where the second one illustrates the first:*

This term consists of three definitions: the first one; the second; etc.

# Semi-colon

*Separates two related sentences:*

Don't try to impress; just be yourself.'

# Word order

Race horse.

Horse race.

A long, pretty dress.

A pretty long dress.

# Hyphen

Man eating shark.

Man-eating shark.

The nineteenth century.

Nineteenth-century architecture.

State of the art.

State-of-the-art design.

Two- to three-storey houses.

A finely tuned design.

A very elegant outfit.

(Adverbs aren't hyphenated – e.g. 'very' or words ending in 'ly').

# Dash

Don't use dashes.

# Apostrophes

The boy's books.

The boys' books.

Yeats's poetry.

Jesus' teachings.

Its.

It's.

# Common errors

Inconsistent use of US or UK spelling and conventions.

Inconsistent formatting of lists, terms, numbers, references, etc.

# Author voice

I think...

This author... (useful for blind peer review).

This research has... (useful for blind peer review).

We suggest... (co-authors *or* taking your readers on a journey)

## Passive versus active voice

I ate more than was good for me last night (active).

It was quite a party, drink was taken (passive).

## Tense

This research is a vital and ongoing part of...

The result of the experiment showed a bias towards...

## Ensure grammatical agreement

Tense.

Plurals.

## Note

Be aware of the tone author voice sets.

Make sure that's the tone you want to use.

# No No's!

Contractions: don't, he'll, wouldn't, etc.

Slang: OTT.

Jargon: the *problematique*.

Pretentious words: sesquipedalian (i.e. don't try to impress).

Clichés.

Mixed metaphors: 'The Fascist octopus has sung its swansong.'

Tautology: 'Eternal truths and verities.'

Exclamation marks! (unless in a quotation).

# Requirements

*Check with the person you're writing for*

1. Title (subtitle optional).
2. Include your name, student number, email address.
3. Date of submission.
4. Page numbers on every page.
5. Text (word count +/- 5%).
6. Abstract, bibliography, footnotes *not* included in word count.
7. Abstract should be as short as possible.
8. Abstract has three key elements: discourse; gap; what you do to fill it).
9. Keywords (5 maximum).
10. Proper references and citations.
11. Bibliography.

## **Note**

Check these for each assignment you do, requirements change from course to course.

# TAKE AWAY

Writing is communicating.

Always write to the highest standard.

Don't just describe, explain!

Write as if you're explaining something to a friend.

Good writing is a practice (and practice makes perfect).

Good writers are good readers (and vary what they read).

Good writers develop good writing habits (work out what suits you best).

## The 4 C's

Communicate *with*

Clarity

Concision *and*

Care

*and*

Keep it Concrete