



9

Writing

AIMS

By studying and doing the activities in this chapter you should:

- ◆ understand some of the different kinds of writing students do at university;
- ◆ consider cultural differences in writing styles;
- ◆ learn how arguments can be constructed in writing;
- ◆ understand plagiarism, what it is and how to avoid it;
- ◆ practise how to use information from your reading in your writing, through referencing and bibliography; and
- ◆ develop strategies for editing and proofreading your writing.

GLOSSARY

These key words will be useful to you while reading this chapter:

Abbreviation: A shortened word or phrase using only the first letters of each word.

Categorical: Without any doubt, certain.

Contraction: A shortened form of a word or combination of words.

Criteria: Standards by which you judge something.

Dissertation: A long piece of writing sometimes done in the last year of a degree.

Format: The structure and design of a written document.

Indenting: To make a space at the edge of something.

Plagiarism: Using another person's idea or a part of a person's work as if it is your own.

Priority: Something that is very important.

Reputable: Respected and able to be trusted.



Substantial: Large in size, value or importance.

Suspended: Temporarily not allowed to take part in an activity because you have done something wrong.

Different kinds of writing

At university you will have to write often and in various different formats, depending on the subjects you are studying. The most common form of writing is the essay, but you may also be asked to write reports, case studies, summaries, book reviews and, on some undergraduate programmes, there will be a dissertation in the final year. All pieces of writing will need to be structured in a particular way. Generally you will be given instructions by your tutors on how to structure your writing and what form to use. It is important to be clear about this so, if you are not sure what you should be doing, always ask the tutor. You will generally be expected to wordprocess your writing and you will be told how many words you should write, for example 2,000 to 3,000 words in your first year and sometimes 4,000 to 5,000 in the final year of a degree and about 10,000 words for an undergraduate dissertation. If you do not write enough words you may lose marks and, if you write too many, the tutor may not mark the extra words. All pieces of writing have an introduction and a conclusion with sections of information in between and all except summaries have references or a bibliography at the end.

Task 9.1



What kind of writing are you familiar with already? Which do you enjoy?

Kinds of writing I can do	Kinds of writing I enjoy

ESSAYS

The purpose of an essay is to show the tutor that you have done some reading on the topic, have understood and thought about it and are able to explain what you have understood to the reader. Reading is a very important part of essay writing, but it is also essential to explain what you have read in your own words as much as possible to show that you have understood it and applied it to the title. An essay is a way of helping you develop your thoughts and knowledge on a topic. A good essay depends on the following points.

What you say

It is important that your essay:

- ◆ answers the question (or matches the title);
- ◆ gives information from different sources;
- ◆ gives more than one point of view; and
- ◆ includes some of your own thoughts.

We explain this in more detail below.

How you say it

It is important that your essay:

- ◆ is well organized;
- ◆ is easy to read;
- ◆ includes good grammar and spelling; and
- ◆ is in a suitable style.

Again, we explain this in more detail below.

What you say

The most important aim here is to show that you have understood the topic and have done what you were asked to do, including answering the question if there was one. The next most important thing is that you have demonstrated your understanding of the topic or question and that you show you have looked at it from different points of view. The third most important is that you show you have read about the topic and have used your reading in your answer.



How you say it

Here the most important aim is for the reader to be able to understand the information and your thoughts on it. This means writing in clear sentences and well organized paragraphs. It also means checking your English very carefully to make sure you have used the right words to say what you mean and your grammar and spelling are correct so as not to cause misunderstandings.

The structure of an essay

An essay is structured into an introduction, a series of paragraphs covering the main points of the essay and a conclusion.

The *introduction* (usually 7 or 8% of the whole essay) should:

- ◆ comment on the title of the essay;
- ◆ explain the meaning of any key terms in the title; and
- ◆ explain how you are going to approach the topic.

Each *paragraph* in an essay follows its own plan, including:

- ◆ a topic sentence which introduces the main idea;
- ◆ an explanation of the topic sentence;
- ◆ evidence to support what is said in the topic sentence;
- ◆ a comment on the evidence; and
- ◆ a conclusion which explains the implications of the evidence and links the paragraph to the next one.

Signpost



See also the section 'Argument' later in this chapter.

The *conclusion* (12–15% of the whole essay) should:

- ◆ give a short summary of the main ideas in the essay;
- ◆ refer back to the title and answer any question that was asked; and
- ◆ make some general concluding remarks (you might give your own views here or discuss how the topic relates to wider issues, but you should not introduce any new information).

In an essay the paragraphs are not numbered. Headings may be used but these are not underlined.

Example: essay titles

Here are some examples of essay titles:

- ◆ Compare and contrast the capital asset pricing model and the weighted average cost of capital as alternative ways of estimating the discount rate to be applied in investment appraisal (financial management).
- ◆ Give a brief account of the importance of the concept of equality and the difference in the thought of radical and liberal feminists (women's studies).
- ◆ Outline the similarities and differences between the organization of leisure and tourism policies of different states within Europe (leisure and tourism management).

REPORTS

Whereas an essay is something you only write at university or college, the report is a form of document which is used in many situations, particularly at work and in government. It is a practical document designed to achieve a task rather than a discussion to explore ideas, and it can be very short, just a few lines, or many volumes long. At university most reports will be between 1,500 and 5,000 words. A report is structured in short, numbered sections. This is so that if a report is being discussed in a meeting people can be directed easily to a particular section (for example, 'point 3.2, page 4'). A long report will start with a separate title page and contents page. A report may also include an appendix or appendices. This is information which is not written by you but which you think will be useful to the reader (for example, a table of statistics to back up your argument, a map or diagram or a section of a text written by another author). Appendices should always be referred to in the main body of the report. Below is an example pro forma for a report – that is, a model you can follow – but remember that different reports will have different layouts.



Example: report pro forma

TITLE

AUTHOR

DATE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE

This report is the result of an investigation into

1.2 PROCEDURE/METHODOLOGY

In order to investigate the ... the following procedures were adopted ...

1.2.1

1.2.2

1.2.3

2. FINDINGS

2.1

2.2

2.3

3. CONCLUSIONS

The principal conclusions drawn are as follows:

3.1

3.2

3.3

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed:

4.1

4.2

4.3

5. REFERENCES

6. APPENDICES

As you can see a report includes an introduction and a conclusion, like an essay, as well as references. However it also includes 'Terms of reference', which means the reason why the report is being written, and may include 'Recommendations' at the end, which means points for further action. The important skill with a report is to divide the information into short numbered sections in a logical way so that it is easy to understand. The headings of each section are numbered and in capital letters (as in the example) or underlined and, within each section, are subsections, also numbered, as can be seen in the pro forma.

Example: report title

Here is an example of a report title:

Read the case study 'An unmotivated building inspector' and, assuming you are the organization's human resource manager, write a report summarizing how motivation theories and practices could help to analyse, manage and improve the situation (business studies).

Task 9.2



What is the difference between a report and an essay? What do they look like? How are they structured? What kind of information do they contain? Fill in your answers below:

Essay	Report



Key



For suggested answers, see 'Key to tasks' at the end of this chapter.

LABORATORY (LAB) REPORTS

Science students and researchers have to write regular reports on their lab work. There is a format for these and they are written using the past tense and passive voice (e.g. 'The mixture was heated'). A lab report usually includes the following:

- 1 *A title.*
- 2 *An abstract*, summarizing the aim, method and result.
- 3 *An aim* – the reason for carrying out the experiment.
- 4 *An introduction* in which the theoretical background is explained.
- 5 *The method*, where you describe the equipment and materials used. This may include diagrams.
- 6 *The procedure*, where you describe the steps you followed in carrying out the experiment, usually written in the past passive.
- 7 *The results* – these are usually presented in the form of tables and graphs, clearly labelled.
- 8 *A discussion* – here is the place to comment on the results and identify any questions not resolved by the experiment.
- 9 *A conclusion*, which describes any conclusions you can draw from the results, being cautious by using phrases such as 'This evidence suggests that ...' or 'One interpretation could be that ...'
- 10 *References* – these will take the same form as references in any other written work.

SUMMARIES

A summary is an exercise where the student is required to read a text, such as an article or a chapter, and write down the information from the text in a much shorter form, picking out the main points. The following rules apply when writing a summary:

- ◆ It is written in the student's words, not words copied from the text, although you may include a few short quotations.
- ◆ It includes only the most important information from the text.
- ◆ No information which is not in the text can be added.

- ◆ It does not include the student's opinion on anything.
- ◆ It should be within the word limit asked for.

This is quite a hard piece of writing to do as it is necessary to understand the text very well in order to pick out the important parts and write them in your own words.

Signpost



For an example of a summary, see Chapter 8, Task 8.4.

BOOK REVIEWS

This activity may be used on humanities courses, particularly literature, but students may also be asked to review books or articles on other courses. In a review you are usually asked to comment on a range of aspects of the text you have been asked to read, including the following:

The *content*: what does it say? Is it interesting? Is it new information?

The *style*: is it easy to understand? Is the structure logical?

The *reader*: for whom is it intended?

You may be asked to give your opinion in a review.

Task 9.3



Write 'yes', 'no' or 'perhaps' in the boxes below, as appropriate:

	Essay	Report	Summary	Book review
You should give your opinion				
You should write an introduction				
You should include some quotation				
You should write a conclusion				
You should include references				



Key



For suggested answers, see 'Key to tasks' at the end of this chapter.

How to approach a piece of writing

With all pieces of writing it is a good idea to have a plan of action. One way to approach a task is as follows:

- 1 Analyse the title – you must be sure what you have to write about before you begin.
- 2 Brainstorm – this will help you to get ideas about the topic.
- 3 Make a plan – this will help you to find out what information you need.
- 4 Collect information.
- 5 Write a draft – you will always need to rewrite parts of your work at university.
- 6 Revise what you have written as many times as necessary.

The first priority is to be sure you understand the topic or question in the title, and the form in which it has to be presented (e.g. essay, report, case study, etc.) and the criteria for marking. Once you are sure of this try brainstorming ideas – that is, take a large sheet of paper, write your title in the middle, then write down all the ideas that come into your head, all over the sheet. This will help you to get some ideas and to work out how to respond to the topics.

Signpost



For an example of brainstorming, see Chapter 8 page 216 'Making notes'.

Task 9.4



Choose a title you have been given on one of your courses or use one from the examples above, and brainstorm ideas for it. Write the title in the middle of a blank piece of paper and then write all your thoughts on it all over the paper.

The next stage is to use the notes you have made of your ideas to work out a plan – that is, the order in which you are going to write your ideas, what you are going to include and what you will leave out.

Example: plan

The following is an example of a plan:

Title: 'The differences between still and moving images'

Question: 'Do you need skill to understand an image?'

Introduction

Main body:

Introduce images (visual information)

Images as language (the medium for communication)

Why is the information in images important?

- 1 Recording information without a human point of view*
- 2 Makes it easy to understand different experiences*

Still images and moving images as typical information

What kind of information can you get from still and moving images?

Understanding the information

Comparing newspaper pictures and TV news

The difference between watching and seeing

How effective are they:

In conveying knowledge?

Quality and quantity?

Different types of expectation?

How to interpret information

Conclusion



Task 9.5



Make a plan for your piece of writing, using your ideas from Task 9.4.

After the plan, the next stage is to do the reading for your piece of writing. The plan will help you to know what you need to read and how much information you need. Only read what you need and make careful notes on your reading, making sure to write down the author, date, title, place of publication and publisher for your references, and page numbers as if you are planning to make a quotation.

Signpost



See Chapter 8 for more information on making notes.

When you have finished reading, write the first draft of your work. Then put it aside for at least 24 hours, longer if you can, to rest your brain so that when you reread it you can judge whether it meets the criteria and is relevant to the topic. Finally edit and proofread (see below) your work carefully before submitting it. It is often necessary to reread and edit a piece of work several times.

Writing styles

If you have not studied at university before, you will be learning the writing styles that are used at higher education level. Of course, styles vary from subject to subject, and if you have already studied at university in another country you may find that the English style is different from what you are used to in some general ways, too. There are certain ways of writing that all students writing at university are expected to use, and some basic features of these are as follows.

ACADEMIC STYLE

There are five points to note about style in academic writing:

- 1 Do not use contractions (use 'it is' instead of 'it's' and 'was not' instead of 'wasn't') or abbreviations (use 'for example' instead of 'e.g.' and 'that is' instead of 'i.e.').

- 2 Do not use colloquial expressions such as 'As I was saying', 'As a matter of fact', 'By the way' or 'Anyway'.
- 3 Use formal vocabulary.
- 4 Try to avoid using personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we', 'you'.
- 5 Be careful not to make categorical statements.

These points are explained in more detail below.

Contractions

This is a simple rule but one which many students have difficulty remembering. Always use the full form of a word, not a shortened form, in your academic writing.

Colloquial language

It will probably be difficult for you to know which expressions are colloquial and which are formal when you first start using formal English. This is something you will learn with practice, but it would be a good idea to ask a tutor, a language teacher or a friend who has experience of academic English if you are in doubt about an expression.

Formal language

The use of more formal vocabulary is something you will gradually get used to while you are at university. You can use a dictionary to help you learn more formal words and expressions, but you should also practise using terminology from your lectures and from your reading, first making sure you understand it.

Signpost



See Chapter 4, 'Building vocabulary', for ways to extend your vocabulary.

Personal pronouns

The general rule about using 'I', 'we' or 'you' does not always apply but you should always check with the tutor before using them. If you have been asked specifically to give your opinion, in a book review for example, it may be appropriate to use 'I'. Otherwise it can be avoided by using forms such as:

- ◆ 'It seems that ...'
- ◆ 'There is evidence that ...'
- ◆ 'It can be said that ...'



Categorical statements

It is not considered appropriate to say without doubt that something is right or wrong, true or false, in academic writing. The convention is to phrase sentences using verbs such as 'may' or 'might' or adverbs such as 'perhaps' or 'possibly'. For example:

- ◆ Do not say: 'The Blair government is the best one since after the Second World War.' Say: 'The Blair government *may* be considered to be the most successful Labour government since Attlee's post-war administration.'
- ◆ Do not say: AIDS came from monkeys. Say: 'There is a view that AIDS *could possibly* have been transmitted to humans from apes.'

Task 9.6



Look at the following sentences and indicate by circling either the F or the I whether they are written in formal or informal style:

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| 1 We didn't finish the experiment because we ran out of time | F | I |
| 2 Such a proposal would need careful consideration before any funding could be awarded | F | I |
| 3 Infection by pathogenic parasites may be a symptom of ill-health | F | I |
| 4 If you think globalization is always a good thing then you're wrong | F | I |
| 5 In the mid-nineteenth century the average worker clocked up 75 hours of work a week | F | I |

Key



For suggested answers, see 'Key to tasks' at the end of this chapter.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN WRITING

Different countries have different conventions. For example, Yamuna Kachru (1996) explains that in India it is appropriate to give much broader introductions to a topic and also to discuss more than one topic in a paragraph. The use of language can also be more ornate or flowery.

Cultural differences: example 1

Below is an example of an introduction to an essay on the 'Dowry system in India':

Growing up is a discarding of dreams and a realization of the various facts of life. A general awareness creeps in. It is a process of drinking deep the spring of knowledge and perceiving the different facets of life. Life is a panorama of events, moments of joys and sorrows. The world around us is manifested by both good and evil.

Dowry system is one of the prevalent evils of today. Like a diabolic adder it stings the life of many innocent people and is the burning topic of discussion. (Cited in Kachru, 1996)

In a British university the first paragraph would not be considered relevant to the topic, and the last sentence comparing the dowry system to an adder would be considered too poetic for an academic essay.

Another difference may be when a student adopts a very personal tone, which is almost never considered appropriate in academic writing in the UK.

Cultural differences: example 2

In the following example a Colombian student is writing a book review of *Jane Eyre*, a famous English novel:

This chapter almost overwhelmed me, but I liked it very much because, although it is fiction, during the time I spent reading it I was transported into another world. The image of Jane Eyre was vivid in my mind. I even nurtured a maternal love for her. Likewise, I created in my imagination the appearance of the other characters in the chapter, their facial expressions, gesticulations and so on.

Although it is sometimes acceptable to use 'I' in a book review, expressions such as 'overwhelmed', 'transported into another world' and 'nurtured a maternal love for



her' would be considered much too dramatic and involved with personal feelings for this context. It is generally not good to try to look for very unusual words in your writing, but to use words that are often used in writing and discussion about the topic.

Hinds (1987) says that, whereas in English writing it is the responsibility of the writer to be clear, in Japan the reader has more responsibility for understanding and therefore writers may use more roundabout or circumlocutory ways of expressing their ideas.

Cultural differences: example 3

Here is an example of a Japanese student's writing:

It is sometimes said that art works, especially modern art, have several interpretations. If the only correct way of interpreting is the one done by the artist, this is going to be a reason for ordinary people to hesitate about appreciating art, because this idea gives ordinary people the threatening concept that they must study about art works in text books before they go to a gallery to see them. It is more delightful for us to find an interpretation by ourselves. Encountering two or more different works brings about new interpretations just like a chemical reaction.

This paragraph is clear but it takes more effort to understand than English people are used to having to make. We would probably use simpler, more straightforward sentences such as: 'It is possible to interpret a work of art in several ways.'

As one Japanese student said (cited in Fox, 1994: 8):

Japanese is more vague than English. It's supposed to be that way. You don't say what you mean right away. You don't criticize directly.

Kachru (1996) observes that, in many countries, including China and India, it may be considered polite to give a lot of background information which is not related to the topic, because this gives the reader more choices. In writing in Britain it is usual for the writer to argue their point of view rather than leaving the reader a choice.

It is considered important in Britain to be clear about what you are saying and to build up to your conclusion point by point, presenting your arguments (see below) and backing them up with evidence:

Style surely can be imitated but the more you imitate the more you lose your own style or your identity. At university I think our writing needs to be accurate, simplified and formal. Hence I should get used to writing this style of English.

(Chinese student)

Style is also important in other types of writing, such as letters, email messages and notes. Each type of writing has its own appropriate style. It is important to choose the right level of formality in order to communicate effectively and to make the right impression. Sometimes students are unsure of how formal they should be when communicating with their teachers.

Task 9.7



Look at this extract from an email sent by a student to his or her tutor. There are some problems with the style. Can you find them and think how you could change the language used?

Dear Michael,

Once again, I admit my gratitude to you for your valuable advice and co-operation. Your enthusiasm towards solving my problems and effort to helping me out to get this grant has really enthralled me and therefore I salute your endeavour.

So, I entreat you to write few lines from memory. I don't mind if you dash off a passage in the light of my undergraduate study. If you can, then please provide me with your postal address so that I can post the envelope with all documents within to you.

Key



For comments on this task, see 'Key to tasks' at the end of this chapter.



Argument

The way a writer convinces the reader of his or her view is through using argument. When we use this word informally it means to disagree. However, in writing at university it means to build up your ideas point by point, considering points which prove the opposite as well as those which support your views, in order to convince the reader to think like you. It may not be necessary to build an argument in all pieces of writing: a report may just be reporting findings or giving explanations; a summary will only be giving a shorter version of an original text. Can you distinguish between an argument and an explanation?

In an explanation the writer is giving some information and the reasons behind it but is not trying to convince the reader of anything. For example:

Foreign direct investment means a company from one country invests in another. This brings finance into the country which is receiving the investment and expands the business of the investing company.

In an argument the writer wants the reader to believe his or her conclusion. This means giving reasons and often evidence. These are called premises. For example:

Foreign direct investment creates jobs in the host country and also contributes expertise to the host economy. Therefore countries which are seeking economic growth should welcome it.

In the example above the first sentence contains two premises and the second one is a conclusion. This is what the writer wants the reader to believe. Conclusions often start with words or phrases such as 'therefore', 'so' or 'as a result', which indicate that the writer is about to say what he or she wants the reader to believe. They may also contain verbs such as 'must', 'should' or 'have to'.

Task 9.8



Can you think of two premises you could use to make someone believe the following conclusion?

As a result, in the future we will live in a more and more globalized world.

Key



For suggested answers, see 'Key to tasks' at the end of this chapter.

When putting forward an argument you will have more chance of convincing the reader of your point of view if you show you have thought about the opposite point of view and any arguments that might be put forward to support it. These are called counter-arguments. For example:

Countries wishing to expand their economies will welcome foreign direct investment; however, investing companies may provide their own staff, limiting the number of jobs available to local people, and a large proportion of profits may be taken out of the host country. However the contribution of expertise by the investor and their investment in property and other local facilities will still make foreign direct investment advantageous for the host country.

The writer here shows that some points against foreign direct investment have been considered but also more points in favour are given so that the conclusion is still that it is a good thing.

It is important to give convincing reasons for the premises in an argument. You should ask yourself why your reader should believe you. If you are using someone else's ideas to support your argument, check that that person is reputable and what you have said is true and represents accurately what he or she has said.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a concept based on the Western idea that, when somebody writes something, it belongs to him or her and not to anyone else. So if you write an essay it is yours and, although other people can read it, they must not copy it. In the same way if you read a book, newspaper article, web page or any other text you cannot use the exact same words in your writing unless you say where you copied them from and use quotation marks. This is why we use references and bibliographies.

The rule in all UK universities is that students must use their own words in their writing. You may use short (maximum 8–10 lines) quotation from books, websites and



other sources and you can use the ideas from these sources written in your own words but you must always give a reference in your text and list all details of the source at the end.

Signpost



How to do this is explained later in this chapter, in the section 'Referencing and bibliography'.

In other cultures plagiarism is not viewed in this way. For example:

Actually, the concept of plagiarism is not very familiar to us Chinese students due to the different teaching method and education attitude to an extent. We were encouraged in high school and in college to use more what famous people said before and what we learnt on the textbooks but we were not asked to note the name of the person and from which book we copied the words.

(Chinese student)

I never knew how strict the UK is about plagiarism until we spoke about this in class. This would be a major adjustment for me with writing essays, dissertations and projects for I have to keep in mind what I write. In the Philippines, rules on plagiarism are not that tough. I usually write long essays without giving references.

(Filipino student)

Task 9.9



In your country, how were you taught to use information from books and other sources? Did you learn to use quotations and references or did you do it differently? Write down what you did.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU PLAGIARIZE?

There are quite severe punishments for plagiarism. This means that if the lecturer marking your work thinks that substantial sections of it are copied from books, the web or other sources and you have not given references, you may be given a mark of zero and fail your course. If you do this more than once, you may be suspended from the university.

HOW CAN THE TUTOR KNOW IF A STUDENT HAS PLAGIARIZED?

Students from other countries usually use a different variety of English. In addition, if they are learning English, they often make mistakes of a particular kind, such as verb tenses and prepositions. Because of this, it is sometimes easy for the reader to tell that some parts of a piece of writing have been written by the student and some parts have been copied.

Example: plagiarism

Look at the example below, which shows two paragraphs in a student's essay:

Go shopping is one part of people's life; the majority of people is still following the traditional way to go to the department store. Nowadays the variety of technology is developed rapidly, there are so many ways to shopping and the most popular one is shopping online.

Online shopping offers consumers a vast array of goods and services from companies around the world. You may be able to get things that are not available locally and you may even pay less than you normally would in conventional shops.

The first part of the writing has some English mistakes (italicized) and, from the sentence structure, it seems that it has been written by a person who is learning English. In the second paragraph the English is perfect and the style is that of an English textbook. It looks as if the writer has copied the second paragraph from a textbook. As there is no reference given, this piece of work looks like an example of plagiarism.

When students download essays or parts of essays from the web, the tutor can easily find out by entering one or two sentences from the essay on a search engine like Google. Google will find the original text and the tutor will be able to see how much the student has copied.

If a student copies a piece of work or part of a piece of work belonging to another student and the tutor finds out, both students will be punished equally.



HOW TO AVOID PLAGIARISM

The best way to avoid plagiarism is to plan your writing, read the material you need to get the information from and make notes as you read. Then write your essay or report using your notes and without looking at the original texts you read. Of course, this is more difficult if you are learning English but it will help you develop your own ideas and arguments and your writing skills. Using books or other sources by copying bits of text and just changing a few words is not acceptable.

Example: avoiding plagiarism

Look at the text below, from a newspaper, and how two students used it. The first one has plagiarized because he or she used too many of the same phrases; the second has expressed the ideas in his or her own words:

Original text

The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution told the Transport Secretary, Alistair Darling, that his expansion policy was 'deeply flawed'. A scathing report said ministers showed 'little sign of having recognised' the atmospheric damage caused by aircraft.

It recommended a freeze on airport expansion, together with a tax of between £40 and £100 on every ticket, which would double the price of many journeys. Sir Tom Blundell, the commission's chairman, said: 'We believe we should restrict airport development, rather than just expand in response to demand.' (*Guardian Unlimited*, Guardian Newspapers Ltd 2002, accessed December 2002)

Student 1

A scathing report believes ministers think *the atmospheric damage* is not *mostly caused by aircraft*, and *recommended* a slow down *on airport expansion* and *a tax of between £40 and £100 on every* single ticket.

Student 2

In the excerpts from the *Guardian* newspaper article (December 2002) there are different views on putting tax on flights. According to Sir Tom

Blundell, the commission's chairman, we must stop responding to the airport authorities about their developing programs. At the same time the commission also announced 'a tax of between £40 and £100 on every ticket', which means passengers will have to pay double the amount of money for their flights.

If we compare the original text from the *Guardian* newspaper, we can see that student 1 has taken a lot of phrases from the original text (italicized) and used them without quotation marks. This is plagiarism. Student 2's summary, which uses his or her own words together with one quotation, signalled by quotation marks, is not plagiarism.

Task 9.10



Now read part of an article in a newspaper, journal or on the web, or a chapter in a book, make notes on it, put it away and then write a short paragraph on it without looking at the original. Make sure you use mainly your own words and put quotation marks round any phrases you use from the original text. If you can, ask a teacher to look at it.

Referencing and bibliography

This is a very important part of writing at university in the UK and it is difficult to get it right. Many English students find it hard to learn correct referencing. Referencing is important because it is the way you show that you have read enough material about your topic and have related your reading to the title of your work. Normally for an essay or report, you should have read four or five book chapters or articles in journals or on the web and all these should be referred to in your writing.

The method of referencing we are going to describe here is widely used and is called the Harvard system. Some lecturers like students to use different methods. When you are given instructions for an assignment you will normally be told what method of referencing to use, but it is always a good idea to clarify with the lecturer what is expected.



REFERENCING WITHIN YOUR TEXT

In the Harvard method there are four ways of referring to an author or text: The following examples use information taken from an article in the *Daily Telegraph* newspaper on 2 April 1989, written by April Robinson, a policewoman:

- 1 Describe the idea or point that you are using from the source, without mentioning the author in your sentence, then put the author's name and the date of publication in brackets at the end of the sentence: 'Nowadays nobody is surprised when police officers are attacked (Robinson, 1989).'
- 2 Use the author's name, followed by the date of publication in brackets in your sentence, when describing his or her ideas in your own words: 'Robinson (1989) believes that there is more and more violence in our society.' This can be done in a number of other ways, for example: 'As Robinson (1989) points out ... ', 'According to Robinson (1989) ... ', 'To quote from Robinson (1989) ... ', 'Writing in the *Daily Telegraph*, Robinson (1989) explains that ... ' or 'Writing in 1989, Robinson argues that ... '
- 3 Use some of the author's own words in your sentence, putting these in quotation marks (also called inverted commas) ' ... ' including the author's name and the date of publication in one of the two ways above: 'Robinson (1989) says that she really objects to " ... people using the street as a rubbish bin".'
- 4 Use a long quotation from the source, but not more than 6–8 lines maximum, indenting this and using the author's name in one of the ways described in (1) and (2) above. When a quotation is indented it is not necessary to use quotation marks:

Another thing that seems to have changed is people's attitudes to the things they own or want to own:

They seem to put more emphasis on material possessions than they do on human values. Material things have become too important. (Robinson, 1989)

If you are quoting from a source on the web, you should give the author's name and date as above if they are given on the site. If no author is given, you should give the title of the article and the date.

Task 9.11



Read a short article in a newspaper or on the web and then write sentences using information from the article in the four different ways shown above.

All the authors and websites mentioned in your writing have to be listed with full details in your references at the end of your work. We call this list 'references' when it only includes texts you have mentioned. If you make a list including other texts you have read in connection with the work but have not mentioned, the list is called 'bibliography'.

REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Harvard system for listing references and bibliography is as follows.

For a book

Author's surname, initial(s), date of publication in brackets, title in italics, place of publication, publisher. For example:

Fanon, F. (1986) *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press.

For a chapter in an edited book

Chapter author's surname, initial(s), date in brackets, title of the chapter in quotation marks ' ', book editor's initial(s) and surname, (ed.) or (eds), title of book in italics, place of publication, publisher. For example:

Castells, M. (2000) 'Information technology and global capitalism', in W. Hutton and A. Giddens, (eds) *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*. London: Jonathan Cape.

For a paper in a journal

Paper author's surname, initial(s), date in brackets, title of the paper in quotation marks ' ', name of journal (in italics), volume and issue numbers, pages of paper. For example:

Fang, Y. (2001) 'Reporting the same events? A critical analysis of Chinese print news media texts,' *Discourse and Society*, Vol. 12, no. 5, pp. 585–613.



For a book, article or any other document on the web

The same rules as above apply but the web address and date the page was accessed are added. For example:

Gilligan, E. (1998) *Local Heroes* [online], Friends of the Earth, <http://www.foe.co.uk/local/rest.pdf> (accessed 24 November 1998).

If there is no author given write the title of the article, date and web address. For example:

Media in Romania (1998) <http://www.dds.nl/pressnow/dossier/romania.html>

The full address of the page where the information was found should always be given. The list of references must be in alphabetical order by surname of the authors or title where there is no author.

Task 9.12



Using the books and articles you have collected to write an essay or report, write a list of references following the examples above, and making sure they are in alphabetical order. Try to include different kinds of references (for example, a book, a paper in a journal, an article from a website).

EDITING AND PROOFREADING

Editing and proofreading are the tasks you have to do when you have written your assignment and are ready to examine it again to make sure it is as good as possible before you hand it in. A good strategy is to write your essay, report or chapter, put it away for at least 24 hours, or a few days if possible, then read it again when you are rested and your brain is fresh. In this way you will be able to see if any changes are needed.

EDITING

Editing means checking your work to be sure that you have said what you wanted to say, including all the important information, and have done what you were asked to do. You can ask yourself the following questions:

- ◆ Is all the necessary information included?
- ◆ Is it all relevant to the title?
- ◆ Have I made my arguments clear?
- ◆ Have I given evidence by using examples and/or references to my sources?
- ◆ Do my paragraphs follow each other in a logical order?
- ◆ Have I explained what I am discussing in the introduction?
- ◆ Have I summed up and commented on the whole in the conclusion?
- ◆ Is my work too long or too short?

If you do not feel confident about your work you may be able to get help from tutors who specialize in writing at your university, but mainly your writing will improve with practice. However, even very experienced writers spend a lot of time editing and usually write several drafts of their work, so be prepared to rewrite your work as often as necessary.

Task 9.13

Reread a piece of writing you have done recently asking yourself the questions listed above.

PROOFREADING

When you have finished editing, you need to start proofreading. This is where you read each sentence carefully to check the details such as grammar, spelling, punctuation and vocabulary.

Spelling

You will probably be using a computer to write your assignments and will be using spell check. However, you must remember that the computer will only tell you if the word as you have spelt it does not exist. It will not tell you if you have used the wrong word for that sentence. For example 'to', 'too' and 'two' are all correct words but only one is right in this sentence:



It is possible to place *too* much importance on testing in primary schools (not '*to*' or '*two*').

Grammar

You will need to check whether you have used the right tense (past, present, future) and whether your verb and subject agree. If you have used a singular subject have you matched it with a singular verb? For example:

The drops of water were collected in a filter dish (not: The drops of water *was* collected ... because the subject is '*the drops*' not '*water*').

You will also need to check that you have used articles ('the', 'a' and 'an') and prepositions ('of', 'to', 'from', etc.) correctly.

A word of warning: do not rely on the grammar check tool that comes as part of some popular wordprocessing packages. Frequently the advice it gives is totally wrong! It will tell you that a perfectly well formed sentence should be changed and offer an alternative which is incorrect English!

Punctuation

Are your sentences very long, or are they only half sentences? Have you used full stops, capital letters and commas where necessary? Have you put question marks after questions and quotation marks where you have used someone else's words?

Vocabulary

Have you used the right word for what you want to say? Does it have the right meaning in this context? Is the word formal enough or is it colloquial?

Signpost



See Chapter 4, 'Building vocabulary', for help with this.

Paragraphing

Paragraphs should be between about 10 lines and three quarters of a page and should have one main topic.

Proofreading can be difficult if you are not sure about some aspects of English. A good learner's dictionary of English can be a great help.

Signpost



See Chapter 4, 'Building vocabulary' for more information on using dictionaries.

Proofreading is more difficult, especially for we foreign students, because it is hard for us to proofread our writing in terms of the language of English. Correcting is achievable but perfection is unreachable.

(Chinese student).

A useful strategy is to be aware of your own particular weaknesses and to concentrate on them especially. For example, if you know you usually write very long sentences, check your sentences carefully and make them shorter if they are too long. If verb tenses are difficult for you, double check the verb forms you have used in your work. You could use a checklist like the one below to go through your work and to help you find out where you are making the most errors. Fill in a column for each piece of work you do, and add any extra categories of error in the empty spaces on the left:

CHECKLIST: proofreading

Type of error	Coursework 1	Coursework 2	Coursework 3	Coursework 4
Sentence length				
Commas				
Capital letters				
Verb tenses				
Agreement				
Articles				
Prepositions				
Spelling				
Paragraphs				



Task 9.14



Try proofreading this paragraph, written by a Business Studies undergraduate. You should find 20 mistakes:

The effect of tariffs on consumers

When a government of an importing nation imposes a tariff on imported goods, the consumer in the domestic market will reduce their consumption of that goods, as a result of the increases in the price of that goods (because tariff charges is passed into consumer), and in the case of the good been essential for the consumer, the consumption would not change very much, but the price will raise to include the tariff. In order to avoid demand collapsing altogether, suppliers have to absorb part of the tariff themselves, only if demand is totally inelastic will supplier be able to pass the entire Tariff on to the consumer.

Therefore the extend to which the Tariff is successful in reducing demand for The imported products depend largely on the elasticity of demand for that product. When Tariff imposed by a government on their imported product tariff tends to make the customer worse off.

Key



For suggested answers, see 'Key to tasks' at the end of this chapter.

Feedback

After all your hard work in preparing and writing a piece of work, once you hand it in, you may feel the work is finished. However, perhaps the most important learning can be done when you receive your work back and receive feedback from your teacher.

Always hand in your work on time, otherwise it may not be marked, and when it is returned to you, read the tutor's comments carefully. If you are lucky enough to have a tutor who gives you detailed feedback, you can learn a lot about your strengths and weaknesses in writing and about how far you manage to meet the requirements of your university. If your tutor has not given you enough information for you to understand why you got the mark you did, contact him or her and ask for more feedback. Remember, it is as important to understand what you did well as it is to understand anything you may have done less well. This is one of the most important ways for you to improve, because it has been shown that good quality feedback, which is then acted upon by the learner, leads to exceptional progress. Your tutors are a valuable source of information about the standards you need to reach and they are there to help you.

Conclusion

Writing is something we continue to develop throughout our lives, at university, at work and perhaps in our hobbies. It can be hard work writing in a language which is not your first language or the language you learnt at school, but the only answer is to read and write as much as possible and keep revising and improving. As one Taiwanese student said:

I not only write daily but also make notes and remember what is important and what I have learned. Meanwhile I can improve my writing by reading. I have to think what kind of book will help me and be relevant to my subject. I have to do it and encourage myself immediately.

With practice and persistence, you will find you can make great progress and you will discover that what you learn by writing will help you in many other aspects of your studies.

REFERENCES

- Fox, H. (1994) *Listening to the World: Cultural Issues in Academic Writing*. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).
- Hinds, J. (1987) 'Reader versus writer responsibility: a new typology', in U. Connor and R. Kaplan (eds) *Writing Across Languages: Analysis of L2 Text*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Kachru, Y. (1996) 'Culture in rhetorical styles: contrastive rhetoric and world Englishes,' in N. Mercer and J. Swan (eds) *Learning English: Development and Diversity*. London: Routledge.

USEFUL RESOURCES

<http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>

A good website on English for academic purposes.

http://www.macmillandictionary.com/MED.../08-language_awareness-academic-UK.htm

This site is a magazine, and numbers 08 and 09 look at aspects of academic writing.

<http://www.ipl.org/div/aplus/linkswritingstyle.htm#logic>

This site covers writing style and techniques.

<http://www.urich.edu/~writing/argument/html>

This site discusses how you can make effective arguments.

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/aa/handbook/section2/plagiarismanddishonesty.html>

A very clear site about plagiarism.

<http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/AvoidingPlagiarism.html>

A site which tells you how to avoid plagiarism.

Crème, P. and Lea, M. (1997) *Writing at University: A Guide for students*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Fairbairn, G. and Winch, C. (1996) *Reading, Writing and Reasoning*. Buckingham: SRHE and Open University Press.

Jordan, R.R. (1998) *Academic Writing Course*. Harlow: Longman.

McCarter, S. (1997) *A Book on Writing*. Ford, Midlothian: IntelliGene.

Rees, A. 'Guide to assignment writing for international students', available at www.bowbridgepublishing.com.

Swales, J.M. and Feak, C.B. (1994) *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: Essential Tasks and Skills*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Williams, K. (1995) *Writing Essays*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

Williams, K. (1995) *Writing Reports*. Oxford: Oxford Centre for Staff Development.

KEY TO TASKS

Task 9.2

Essay

- ◆ Discusses a topic.
- ◆ Gives different points of view.
- ◆ Puts forward arguments.
- ◆ Is divided into paragraphs but does not include headings, numbers, underlining or bold.

Report

- ◆ Gives an account of a situation.
- ◆ Makes recommendations.
- ◆ Seeks to inform rather than discuss.
- ◆ Is divided into numbered sections with headings, underlining, capitals and bold.

Task 9.3

	Essay	Report	Summary	Book review
You should give your opinion	Yes	Perhaps	No	Perhaps
You should write an introduction	Yes	Yes	Perhaps	Yes
You should include some quotations	Yes	Perhaps	Perhaps	Perhaps
You should write a conclusion	Yes	Yes	Perhaps	Yes
You should include references	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Task 9.6

- 1 Informal – use of 'we didn't', 'we ran out of time'.
- 2 Formal – use of 'Such a proposal', 'would', 'funding', 'could be'.
- 3 Formal – vocabulary, use of 'may be'.
- 4 Informal – use of 'If you', 'then you're wrong'.
- 5 Formal but not entirely, the expression 'clocked up' is informal.

**Task 9.7**

Dear Michael,

Once again, *I admit my gratitude to you* for your valuable advice and co-operation. *Your enthusiasm towards solving my problems and effort to helping me out to get this grant has really enthralled me and therefore I salute your endeavour.* So, *I entreat you* to write few lines from memory. I don't mind if *you dash off a passage in the light of* my undergraduate study. If you can, then please *provide me* with your postal address so that I can post the envelope with all documents *within* to you.

The problem with this email is that, although the student intends to be friendly and quite informal, much of the language is rather formal and old fashioned and so the tone is odd. Only the phrase *dash off* is quite informal and in fact is not really suitable when talking about a reference, as it implies carelessness.

The phrases highlighted in italics do not work well. More suitable phrases are suggested below:

Dear Michael,

Once again, *thanks so much* for your valuable advice and co-operation. *I really appreciate your willingness to help me out.* So, *could you* write a few lines from memory? I don't mind if *you just write a short reference based on my* undergraduate study. If you can, then please *email me* your postal address so that I can post the envelope with all documents to you.

Task 9.8

Some possible premises:

- ◆ Communication over long distances is becoming easier all the time.
- ◆ Trade agreements are facilitating business between different countries.
- ◆ The spread of information is very rapid nowadays.
- ◆ More and more people around the world are speaking English.
- ◆ Multinationals dominate the market in many sectors.

Task 9.14

The effect of tariffs on consumers

When a government of an importing nation imposes a tariff on imported goods, the

consumer in the domestic market will reduce their consumption of **that** goods, as a result of the increases in the price **of that goods** (because tariff charges **is** passed **into** consumer), and in the case of the **good been** essential for the consumer, the consumption would not change very much, but the price will **raise** to include the tariff. In order to avoid demand collapsing altogether, suppliers have to absorb part of the tariff themselves, only if demand is totally inelastic will \wedge supplier be able to pass the entire **Tariff** on to the consumer. Therefore the **extend** to which the **Tariff** is successful in reducing demand for **The** imported products **depend** largely on the elasticity of demand for that product. When \wedge tariff \wedge imposed by a government on their imported product \wedge tariff tends to make the consumer worse off.

The mistakes have been marked in **bold**. The insertion mark \wedge indicates where something is missing:

- 1 'those' not 'that' – goods is plural
- 2 full stop, new sentence
- 3 no 's' – singular
- 4 not necessary – delete
- 5 delete brackets and put commas instead
- 6 'are' not 'is' – plural
- 7 'on to' not 'into'
- 8 'the' needed
- 9 'goods'
- 10 'being' not 'been'
- 11 'rise' not 'raise'
- 12 full stop, new sentence
- 13 'the' needed
- 14 no capital letter
- 15 'extent' (noun) not 'extend' (verb)
- 16 no capital letters
- 17 'depends' singular subject
- 18 'a' needed
- 19 'is' needed
- 20 'the' needed



Below is a correct version of the text:

The effect of tariffs on consumers

When a government of an importing nation imposes a tariff on imported goods, the consumer in the domestic market will reduce their consumption of those goods. As a result of the increase in the price, because tariff charges are passed on to the consumer, and in the case of the goods being essential for the consumer, the consumption would not change very much, but the price will rise to include the tariff. In order to avoid demand collapsing altogether, suppliers have to absorb part of the tariff themselves. Only if demand is totally inelastic will the supplier be able to pass the entire tariff on to the consumer.

Therefore the extent to which the tariff is successful in reducing demand for the imported products depends largely on the elasticity of demand for that product. When a tariff is imposed by a government on their imported product, the tariff tends to make the consumer worse off.

