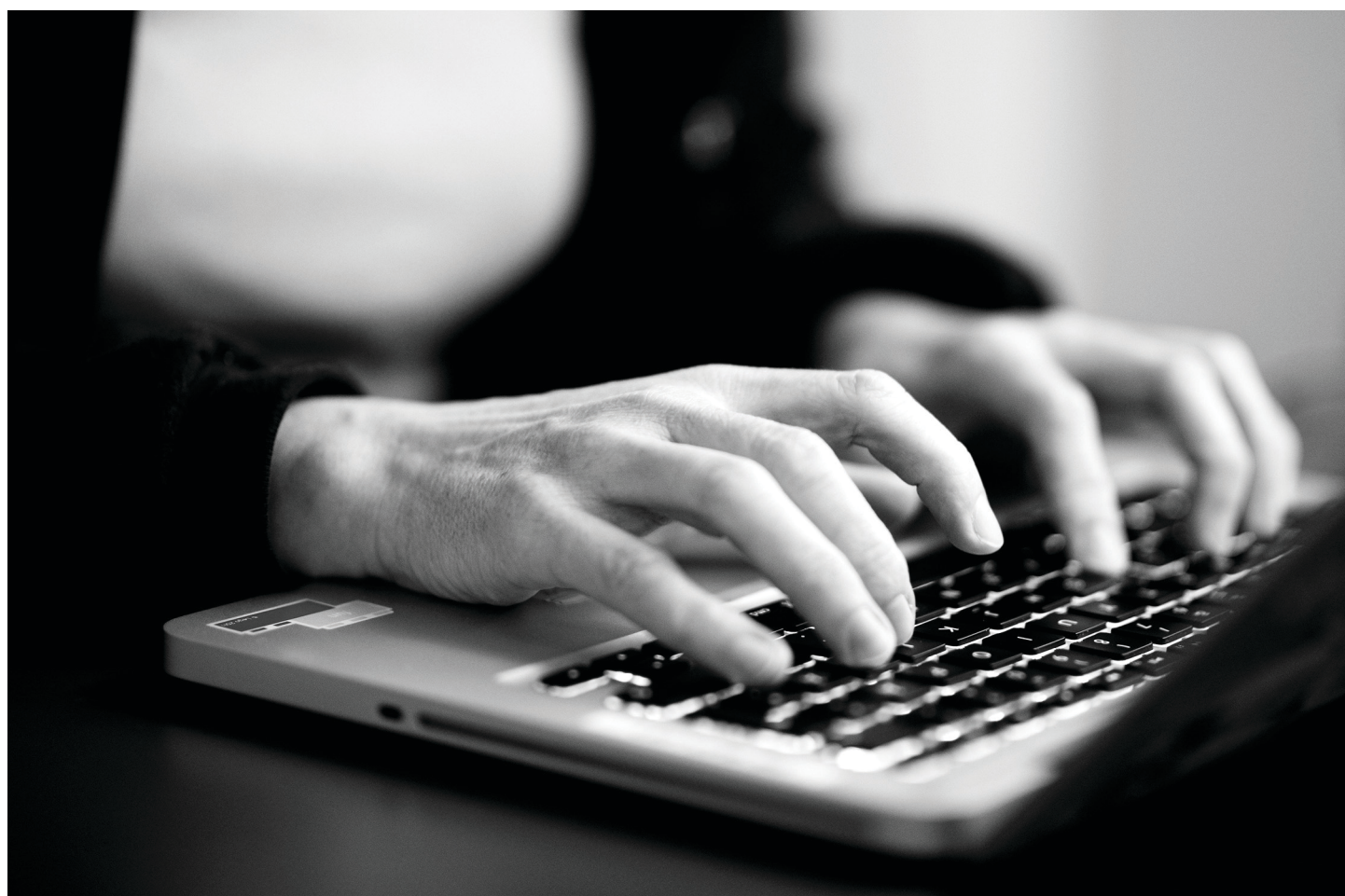


English: skills for learning



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Introduction and guidance

Introduction and guidance

English: skills for learning is a free badged course which lasts 8 weeks, with approximately 3 hours' study time each week. You can work through the course at your own pace, so if you have more time one week there is no problem with pushing on to complete another week's study.

This course is for anybody who is thinking of studying for a university degree and would like to develop the English reading and writing skills needed to succeed. During the first two weeks you will be introduced to academic reading and some effective reading and note-making strategies. In the following three weeks, you will develop your essay writing skills. You will then spend two weeks on academic style and vocabulary building strategies. Finally, in the last week, you will focus on sentence structure and punctuation. You'll use plenty of real-life examples to help with this and get plenty of opportunities to practise your new understanding and skills.

Part of this practice will be the weekly interactive quizzes, of which Weeks 4 and 8 will provide you an opportunity to earn a badge to demonstrate your new skills. You can read more on how to study the course and about badges in the next sections.

After completing this course you will be able to:

- follow an active reading method to help you read academic texts and make notes
- critically read source texts and appropriately use the information they contain in your writing
- link ideas in your writing so that your readers can easily understand your ideas
- make use of vocabulary and grammatical structures to express yourself more formally
- make the most of online dictionaries and look at ways to record new words for future use
- understand how to organise and punctuate sentences to increase clarity.

Moving around the course

The easiest way to navigate around the course is through the 'My course progress' page. You can get back there at any time by clicking on 'Go to course progress' in the menu bar. From the quizzes click on 'Return to English: skills for learning'.

It's also good practice, if you access a link from within a course page, including links to the quizzes, to open it in new window or tab. That way you can easily return to where you've come from without having to use the back button on your browser.

What is a badged course?

While studying *English: skills for learning* you have the option to work towards gaining a digital badge.

Badged courses are a key part of The Open University's mission *to promote the educational well-being of the community*. The courses also provide another way of helping you to progress from informal to formal learning.

To complete a course you need to be able to find about 24 hours of study time, over a period of about 8 weeks. However, it is possible to study them at any time, and at a pace to suit you.

Badged courses are all available on The Open University's [OpenLearn](#) website and do not cost anything to study. They differ from Open University courses because you do not receive support from a tutor. But you do get useful feedback from the interactive quizzes. What is a badge?

What is a badge?

Digital badges are a new way of demonstrating online that you have gained a skill. Schools, colleges and universities are working with employers and other organisations to develop open badges that help learners gain recognition for their skills, and support employers to identify the right candidate for a job.

Badges demonstrate your work and achievement on the course. You can share your achievement with friends, family and employers, and on social media. Badges are a great motivation, helping you to reach the end of the course. Gaining a badge often boosts confidence in the skills and abilities that underpin successful study. So, completing this course should encourage you to think about taking other courses.



How to get a badge

Getting a badge is straightforward! Here's what you have to do:

- read each week of the course
- score 50% or more in the two badge quizzes in Week 4 and Week 8.

For all the quizzes, you can have three attempts at most of the questions (for true or false type questions you usually only get one attempt). If you get the answer right first time you will get more marks than for a correct answer the second or third time. Therefore, please be aware that for the two badge quizzes it is possible to get all the questions right but not score 50% and be eligible for the badge on that attempt. If one of your answers is incorrect you will often receive helpful feedback and suggestions about how to work out the correct answer.

For the badge quizzes, if you're not successful in getting 50% the first time, after 24 hours you can attempt the whole quiz, and come back as many times as you like.

We hope that as many people as possible will gain an Open University badge – so you should see getting a badge as an opportunity to reflect on what you have learned rather than as a test.

If you need more guidance on getting a badge and what you can do with it, take a look at the [OpenLearn FAQs](#). When you gain your badge you will receive an email to notify you and you will be able to view and manage all your badges in [My OpenLearn](#) !Warning! **Tahoma not supported** within 24 hours of completing the criteria to gain a badge..

Get started with Week 1.

Week 1: Reading skills for university study

Introduction

A good deal of a student's time is spent reading textbooks, academic books, journals, encyclopaedias, newspapers, magazines and websites. These are the sources of information and ideas that are needed to understand a subject.

Watch the introductory video from the author, Anna Calvi, as she introduces the course and this week:

Video content is not available in this format.



If you decide to go to university, you will have to prepare for exams and **research** essays. In order to do this, you will need to be able to read the most appropriate **sources** and use some of the theories and information they contain in your essays. You will learn to do this during the first two weeks of this course.

This week you start by looking at the different texts that university students read. You will then learn to follow an active reading method that will help you read academic texts and make notes in the most effective way. For some activities this week, and throughout the course, you will need access to a printer.

By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- identify different texts university students read
- understand the most effective reading strategies
- actively read an academic text
- make useful notes.

Before you start, The Open University would really appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us about yourself and your expectations of the course. Your input will help to further improve the online learning experience. If you'd like to help, and if you haven't done so already, please fill in this [optional survey](#).

1 Getting started: looking at academic and specialist sources



Figure 1 University students read print and online texts

In this section, you will consider first the texts you are already familiar with and then the key resources university students need to read when studying.

These resources provide the information, data, theories and **evidence** necessary to explore and write about your subject. For this reason, they are commonly referred to as 'sources'. These may include written or audio-visual materials, but in this section you will focus specifically on written sources.

In order to read and use these sources effectively, it is important to know which types of source they are, what they look like and where they can be found.

1.1 What do you read?

Reading is an activity many of us are familiar with both at home and at work. Reading is fundamental to modern life and this means that we are surrounded by texts; that is, pieces of writing such as magazines, text messages and advertisements. The next activity helps you to consider the different texts people read every day.

Activity 1

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Shown below are various people's reading habits (Figure 2). Which of these reading habits are similar to your own? Make some notes in the box and then read my comment.

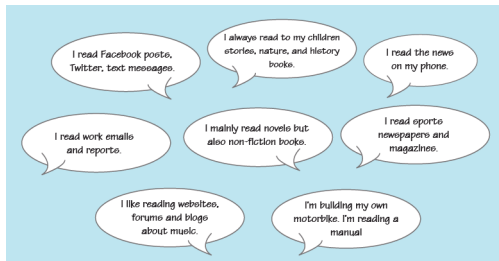


Figure 2 People's reading habits

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The answer is personal to you, but you are likely to read one or more of the text types mentioned above. Reading is likely to already be part of your life and you already know strategies that help you to read a variety of texts. This week you will learn that many of these strategies can be exploited to read university texts and help you to become a more effective reader in general.

1.2 What do university students have to read?

University students read textbooks as well as other printed or online material. The type of material they read depends on the subject they are studying.

Below are five examples of texts a university student is likely to read. They are often available both in print and online.

- **Academic journal:** [Journal of Political Ecology](#)
- **Academic book:** '[Democracy and Moral Development](#)' by David L. Norton
- **Newspapers and magazines:** [The Guardian](#), [Financial Times](#) and [The Economist](#)
- **Reference material:** [Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) and the [Oxford English Dictionary](#)
- **Specialist organisations' websites:** OECD ([Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development](#)), the UK government's [Environment Agency](#) and the UK [Food Standards Agency](#)

You may already be familiar with some or all of these types of text. Test your knowledge in the next activity.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Match each source to the description of its content.

Reference material

Academic journals

Newspapers and magazines

Specialist organisations' websites

Academic books

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Facts and figures, addresses, statistics, definitions

The most specialised and up-to-date research, theories and debates in your subject area, written by academics

Up-to-date developments, current issues and events, written by journalists

Online specialist information on a **topic**

Key principles, facts and theories about a topic

1.3 What academic sources look like

Academic and specialist sources, such as the ones you have just considered, may have different purposes and contain different kinds of information but they all aim to present content in a clear way. This is why they all follow a clear and predictable structure.

The structure of each type of source depends on its purpose. For example, to help readers to find a specific term easily and quickly, dictionaries arrange words and their definitions in alphabetical order. Once readers understand the way the words are listed, looking up a word is not difficult.

Academic articles or book chapters also follow a clear and predictable structure. They normally contain an introduction, several paragraphs and a conclusion. Paragraphs may also be grouped into sections. This is their typical structure:

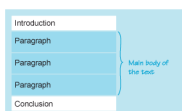


Figure 3 The typical structure of a journal article or a book chapter

Activity 3

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The components of a typical article or book chapter are listed below. Match each component to its definition.

Paragraph

Conclusion

Introduction

Main body of the text

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Discusses one specific topic.

Summarises the content of the main body of the text.

Mentions the text's content and organisation.

Contains paragraphs and sections.

In this section you have seen how dictionaries, chapters and journal articles are organised. Other texts such as newspaper articles, web pages and fact sheets are organised differently. If you enrol on a university course, you will gradually learn to recognise the specific structure of different texts and this knowledge will help you when you read academic texts.

1.4 Where information sources are located

So far in this section you have looked at different types of information. If you go on to study at university, in your first year you will generally be provided with the required books and articles and other resources. Later on, you may be required to search for more information or you may simply be interested in finding out more about a specific topic.

To be able to do this, you need to know where to find sources that are relevant to you. In the next activity, you are shown different types of information source and asked to decide where they are most likely to be found.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Shown below are images of books, journal articles, references to chapters in books or journals, and daily news. Where would you be most likely to find these items? Choose between:

- libraries
- databases
- internet
- booksellers
- the media.

Drag each item into the appropriate box. When you drop an item into a box you will receive onscreen **feedback** letting you know whether your choice is correct or whether to try again.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

If you prefer, you can make a note, either in the box below or on a piece of paper, of where you think each item can be found before looking at the answers and comment below.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Table 1

	Libraries	Databases	Internet	Booksellers	The media
Books	Yes, and also in booksellers and maybe on the internet	No	Possibly but usually not.	Yes, and also in libraries and possibly on the internet	Not usually
Journal articles	Yes, particularly university and college libraries	Yes, journal articles make up most database content	Yes, sometimes, but check if the journal articles are refereed or not	Not usually	Possibly, but the journal articles may not be refereed
References to chapters in books or journals	Yes, in indexes	Yes	Possibly	No	No
Daily news	Yes, libraries usually have daily news items	No	Yes, lots of news sites and e-newspapers	Not likely unless the bookseller sells newspapers too	Yes, also electronic news sites on the internet

Discussion

As you can see from this activity, depending on their type, these sources can normally be accessed online, through a library or from a newsagent. Some of these are freely available, but unless you are enrolled in a university degree, you will have to pay or purchase a subscription to view the full version of most specialised books, newspapers, magazines and online journals. These sources are readily available to current students through their university library.

2 Challenges and strategies

Finding the most appropriate texts is very important, but even more important is to make the most of them by reading them in an efficient and effective way.

In this section you will consider the main challenges that reading can pose and you will be introduced to some effective strategies.

2.1 The main challenges

Reading textbooks and other academic and specialist sources can be difficult for a range of reasons. In the following activity, you will consider the main challenges.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Think back to any long or complex texts you have read in the past. Your experiences may be from your school years or you may have read non-fiction books or long newspaper articles. What difficulties did you encounter? Did you develop any strategies to help you read such texts? Make some notes in the box below and then compare your experiences with those reported below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Below is a list of some common reading difficulties experienced by some people when reading academic texts.

1. I'm used to reading short pieces of writing. When I read long texts, I fall asleep.
2. I read textbooks over and over to retain the information. It takes a lot of time and I still find it very difficult to remember what I read.
3. I find reading difficult and I often lose concentration.
4. I'm used to reading newspapers, but academic texts are harder to read. They are organised differently and contain many difficult words.
5. English is not my first language, so I have to spend a long time looking up many words in the dictionary.
6. Even if I understand every word, I sometimes don't understand the **concepts** explained in the books I read.
7. I try to take notes but I'm really lazy at 'proper' note taking – I don't find it works for me as I never go back and read them.
8. There is so much to read. I get lost and don't know where to start.

You may have experienced similar difficulties. You may also have found ways to help you cope.

Academic and specialist texts may take longer to read than the texts you read every day and may contain a great deal of information about unfamiliar topics. They may also be structured differently from the texts you normally read. Therefore engaging with pieces of extended writing can be challenging unless you employ useful strategies. The next few activities will help you discover strategies to make reading easier.

2.2 Effective reading strategies

You are likely to already use some effective reading strategies in your day-to-day life. In this section you will read what some students say about their reading strategies and then compare them to your own.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 15 minutes

It is useful to learn some strategies from people who are already reading academic texts.

Read what some current university students say about the way they read textbooks and other academic texts. Then answer the questions that follow.

- A. For my module, I have to read many chapters and articles. To keep concentrated, I always try to find a good reason for reading. One good reason is to read in order to find answers to the **assignment** question, but I often think of my own questions. So before I start reading about a topic, I think about what I already know about it and what else I would like to know. Sometimes the materials give you some questions to consider while reading.
- B. I think it also helps to read the introduction very carefully. It tells you what the chapter will be about and what you will be able to do after reading it. I find that it gives me the motivation to read.
- C. A good way to concentrate and remember what I read is to keep looking for ideas and examples that are relevant to me. So while I read, I ask myself: Does this happen to me or to people I know? Have I ever seen this? Do I agree? ... It also helps to discuss what I have read with other students.
- D. I think it's important to read actively. I read the key texts more than once. First I just check how long a chapter is, its headings, sections, images, and then I read it quickly to get a general idea, the **gist**. When I know what the text is about, I read the key parts more carefully making notes. I find that making notes is a really good way to remember the content of the texts. I like using diagrams and tables and lots of colour. It helps me organise my ideas and remember what I read.
- E. I don't read all the texts in the same way. Sometimes, I just need to find a specific piece of information, for example a date or a particular topic, so I just read it quickly to find this information. But if, for example, I have to read about a complex theory, I will read very carefully and more than once.

Question 1

The students mentioned a variety of strategies but there were other useful ones they overlooked. Read the list below and try to identify which strategies weren't mentioned. List them in the box with a note about why you think the strategy could be useful. Then compare your list with mine.

1. Always read for a purpose.
2. Before reading, ask yourself what you already know and what you want to learn about the topic.
3. Write down some questions you hope the text will answer.
4. Before reading a textbook chapter, check the learning outcomes.
5. While reading, try to find information and theories that are relevant to you.
6. While reading, keep asking yourself questions.
7. As you read, record your thoughts in the margin or in a notebook.
8. Read the same text two or three times. More may be necessary.
9. Check the structure of the text before reading.
10. When you read for the first time, look up only the words that are essential for understanding the text.
11. When you read the second time, make notes.
12. Try to use other information in the text to make sense of difficult words.
13. Read differently depending on the purpose for reading.

Provide your answer...

Answer

The following strategies were not mentioned:

3. **Write down some questions you hope the text will answer.** The student said they just think of some questions, but writing down those questions will help you to focus and structure your notes.
7. **As you read, record your thoughts in the margin or in a notebook.** This is a good way to concentrate while reading. Sometimes your thoughts could be simple questions, such as 'Why?' or 'How?', which may make you want to reread certain parts or look for answers further in the text.
10. **When you read for the first time, look up only the words that are essential for understanding the text.** This is sound advice: if you look up every word, you will probably lose track of what you are reading. It might be better to read whole paragraphs again to understand the general meaning before looking up words in the dictionary.
12. **Try to use other information in the text to make sense of difficult words.** Sometimes the text in which these words are used can help you to understand their meaning.

Question 2

Read the list of reading strategies again.

- a. Which of the strategies do you already follow?
- b. Which of them is new to you?
- c. Which would you like to try?

Make some notes in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You may already be following many of the strategies mentioned by the students. For example, many of us look at the length and structure of a text before reading it and it is normal to have to reread longer documents. The strategies mentioned by the students can help you to extend the skills you already have.

Making use of reading strategies can help to overcome the challenges faced when reading long and complex texts and, in particular, academic and specialist sources. They can also help you to read more actively. Through the next few activities you will learn and practise an active learning method.

3 Reading actively

Being active as a reader is a good way to become more proficient and be able to take on more demanding texts.

In this section you will learn how to follow an active reading method consisting of five steps:

1. **Skimming** the text.
2. Recalling your background knowledge about its topic.
3. Scanning for specific information.
4. In-depth reading to find the key points.
5. Making sense of texts containing difficult words.

These steps are outlined in the next five subsections and each has an activity associated with it. Some of these activities are based on the same piece of text. You will need access to a printer to print out that text in order to work on it.

3.1 Skimming the text

This reading strategy consists of reading the text quickly in order to find out what it is about and how it is organised. This can be done by reading its introduction as this is likely to briefly say what the text will be about. Titles, headings and subheadings also need to be read because they introduce the text and its sections and subsections. Visual representations of the content, such as images, diagrams and tables, can be used for the same purpose.

Finally, it is also very useful to read the first sentence of each paragraph. This sentence, which is called the topic sentence, is normally the first sentence of each paragraph and announces its topic.

Therefore, to quickly obtain information about the text, you can:

- read the title, the introduction, any headings and subheadings, and the conclusion
- read the first sentence of each paragraph (the topic sentence)
- read the concluding sentence of each paragraph
- read the words highlighted in bold
- look at illustrations (pictures, diagrams, tables).

As texts differ, you may not be able to follow all these strategies all of the time when skimming a text. For example, not all texts have illustrations or headings, and some short texts and extracts may not end with a conclusion.

To practise skim reading you are going to read a text taken from the Open University course KG004 *Improving health and wellbeing*. [Download](#) the text now.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read **only** the introductory paragraph, the headings and the topic sentence of each paragraph. Then answer the questions that follow. I recommend printing out this text as you will refer to it again while working through the next few activities.

Question 1

Having skim read the text you should now have an overview of the information it contains. To see if you have, try to match the following statements to the paragraphs in which they were mentioned.

Paragraph 5

Paragraph 2

Paragraph 6

Paragraph 7

Paragraph 3

Paragraph 4

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Over-nutrition in rich and poor countries

Under-nutrition in rich and poor countries

Negative effects of eating highly nutritious foods

Definition of type 2 diabetes

Effects of low calorie diets in children

Causes of under-nutrition

Question 2

Having skim read the text, which of the following headings best describes the topic of the whole text?

1. Health issues in developing countries
2. Forms of malnutrition
3. Solutions to malnutrition

Answer

The correct answer is 2. Forms of malnutrition. The text is about the two forms of malnutrition: under-nutrition and over-nutrition.

Incorrect answers

1. Health issues in developing countries.

The text is not about health issues in general, but more specifically about nutrition. It considers malnutrition in both developing and developed countries.

3. Solutions to malnutrition.

None of the headings or the topic sentences mentions solutions. The introduction mentions the two forms of malnutrition and their effects.

Through skim reading you have learned a quick way to discover what the text is about and how it is organised. This information will help you decide **what** to read: all the text or only some sections. You will also be able to decide **how** you want to read the text.

3.2 Recalling your background knowledge about its topic

So far, you have gained information about the overall topic and organisation of the text. If your aim is to study this text in depth, you will now be able to recall your personal knowledge about its topic and think of questions you hope the text will answer for you.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Now spend a few minutes thinking about the text you read in Activity 7. Think about:

- what you already know about its topic
- any questions you think the text might answer.

Write a list of facts, ideas or questions below each of the following headings. I have started the lists for you.

Under-nutrition

Provide your answer...
Poor countries

Over-nutrition

Provide your answer...
Obesity

Answer

The answer is personal to you, but here are some notes:

Under-nutrition

Not eating enough
Which nutrients are essential to avoid under-nutrition?
Industrialised countries? — Causes?

Over-nutrition

Eating too much

Obesity

More effects?

Discussion

Depending on your previous knowledge of the topic of this text, you may have listed facts, ideas and questions or simply questions. Even if you listed only questions, you now have a purpose for reading the text: you are likely to want to compare your previous knowledge with the findings reported by the text and to find answers to your questions. University students may also want to read this text before writing an **essay** on nutrition. If you were writing an essay on nutrition, notes like this would be a vital preparation.

3.3 Scanning for specific information

Having learned what the text is about and how it is organised, you may decide not to read it in depth but to just record some of the very specific information it contains. One reason for doing this may be because you are already familiar with the theme of the text and just need some details. In order to find this specific information, you need to **scan** the text.

Scanning consists of letting your eyes move quickly through the text until you find what you are looking for. As long as you know how the text is organised, this can be done quickly and without reading every word.

This is a technique many of us use every day. For example, I may scan the telephone directory to find a name. Or when I go to a restaurant, I scan the menu to find the vegetarian options.

Scanning texts is easy if you are familiar with their organisation. For example, I know that the menu of my favourite restaurant lists the main course under the heading 'Mains', so I scan this list looking for the word 'vegetarian', 'vegetable' or simply 'V'.

In academic texts information is often grouped under headings, so to find a specific detail, you need to first locate the appropriate heading. If there are no headings, remember that the topic sentence of each paragraph is like a heading, as it tells you what the paragraph is about. In a paragraph, details can usually be found in the sentences that follow the topic sentence so this is where you need to look.

When you think you have found the relevant section or paragraph, look for key words or figures.

You will practise this skill in the following activity.

Activity 9

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Using the understandings you gained from skim reading the [text in Activity 7](#), quickly scan the text again to answer the following questions. Make your notes in the box below before looking at the answer.

1. How many children are underweight?
2. What percentage of children die because of under-nutrition?
3. What diseases are caused by over-nutrition?
4. Who develops type 2 diabetes – adults or children?

You will need to first select the relevant section. To answer questions 1 and 2, look for numbers and percentages. To answer questions 3 and 4 look for specific words.

Provide your answer...

Answer

To answer these questions successfully you needed to look for numbers and percentages as well as words describing diseases and the words adult and child.

1. 100 million [P3].
2. 35% [P3].
3. Coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, gallstones, arthritis, high blood pressure and some types of cancer [P6].
4. Both adults and children [P7].

Discussion

This activity has shown that having gained an overview of a text, it is often possible to search for specific information by scanning it. This technique is very useful when you don't need to read the text in depth. As you will see in the following section, if you wish to gain a full understanding of the text, you will need to read it again in depth while focusing on the main points.

3.4 In-depth reading to find the key points

If, after skimming the text, you decide to read it more closely and gain an in-depth understanding of its topic, the next step consists of reading the full text and identifying the key points. An effective way to identify key ideas is to highlight important parts of the text by underlining or using a highlighter pen.

This approach is designed to select and focus only on the core meanings of an extract. Highlighting involves making judgements about what is important. It is not about capturing every detail but getting a general overview of the key ideas.

Therefore, it is important to highlight only very few words and phrases in each paragraph. Paragraphs usually focus on one key point and, while they may include an illustrative example that may be useful, it is the main point that you need to identify first and foremost. To illustrate this technique, I have highlighted the first two paragraphs of the text on malnutrition. (To be readable on screen, they are shown in bold rather than actually 'highlighted'.)

[P1] To stay healthy, the body's needs for energy and nutrients must be met. This is particularly important in growing children as damage inflicted may not be reversible and can affect normal development. People whose **diet lacks the necessary nutrients** suffer from **malnutrition**, a condition that includes both **over-nutrition** and **under-nutrition** and is considered a **risk factor for health**.

Under-nutrition

[P2] **Under-nutrition** is in news reports of famines in **poor countries**, but it can also be found in developed countries. **In industrialised countries**, under-nutrition can be seen in **young people who have eating disorders** such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia, where the amount of **energy they consume in food is less than the needs of their body**.

As you can see, in the first paragraph I have only highlighted the word 'malnutrition' and words that help to define it. In the second paragraph, I have highlighted words that refer to the location of under-nutrition (poor countries, industrialised countries), information about under-nutrition in industrialised countries (young people, eating disorders) and a definition of under-nutrition. I have not highlighted the examples.

You will find that more words and phrases need to be highlighted if a paragraph contains a great deal of core information. This is why several words and phrases are highlighted in paragraph 2.

The next activity gives you the opportunity to practise highlighting a text. You will need to print out the text and have a pen or highlighter pen handy.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 15 minutes

If you haven't already done so, download the [text on malnutrition](#) you skim read in Activity 7 and print it out. Read Paragraphs 3 to 7 and underline or highlight the key points they make. If you find new words, at this stage only look them up if they are essential to understand the overall meaning of a sentence. When you have finished, compare your highlighted text with mine.

Note: You will return to this text in a later activity so please keep your highlighted copy.

Answer

The key points are highlighted (in bold).

[P1] To stay healthy, the body's needs for energy and nutrients must be met. This is particularly important in growing children as damage inflicted may not be reversible and can affect normal development. People whose **diet lacks the necessary nutrients** suffer from **malnutrition**, a condition that includes both **over-nutrition** and **under-nutrition** and is considered a **risk factor for health**.

Under-nutrition

[P2] **Under-nutrition** is in news reports of famines in **poor countries**, but it can also be found in developed countries. **In industrialised countries**, under-nutrition can be seen in **young people who have eating disorders** such as anorexia nervosa or bulimia, where the amount of **energy they consume in food is less than the needs of their body**.

[P3] If **children's diets** are **too low in energy**, **they will stop growing and gaining weight**. They will become **lethargic, less active and be unable to concentrate**. If the situation continues, they may develop **life-threatening diseases**. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2012) reports that 100 million children under the age of five are underweight **and 35% of all deaths of children** under five are caused by malnutrition.

[P4] When people suffer from **under-nutrition**, they are **often deficient in vitamins and minerals** needed by the body. For example, they may not have enough Vitamin A. If this deficiency is not tackled, eyesight may be permanently damaged. **Lack of iron** is another very common form of deficiency. This helps to explain why about 50% of women in India suffer from some degree of anaemia.

Over-nutrition

[P5] **Over-nutrition** is usually **associated with industrialised countries**, although it is **now also a problem** among affluent people in **developing countries**. The main problem is that the **amount of energy consumed in food is greater than the needs of the body** and this can result in people becoming **overweight or obese**. As with under-nutrition, this may lead them to become **lethargic, less active and less able to concentrate**.

[P6] Further **health problems** will arise over time, particularly **if the diet is high in saturated fat**. Saturated fat is solid at room temperature; examples include animal fats, dairy products and coconut and palm oil. Eating a diet high in saturated fat **raises blood cholesterol** and the risk of **heart disease**. People who are overweight or obese are more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, gallstones, arthritis, high blood pressure and some types of cancer.

[P7] **Type 2 diabetes** is a **metabolic disorder** in which the body has trouble making its own insulin to control the level of sugar in the blood. Because it tends to develop **in adults**, it is also known as adult-onset diabetes. However, **growing numbers of young adults and children** are now **developing it**.

Discussion

The number of words and phrases that you chose to highlight may differ from mine because we may have different perceptions regarding what is important in this text. However, we probably agree that the core information includes the types of people affected as well as the definitions, location, causes and effects of under-nutrition and over-nutrition.

What you highlight also depends on your purpose for reading. For example, if I were only interested in details about the likely effects of malnutrition, I would underline the examples as well.

3.5 Making sense of texts containing difficult words

An academic text may contain many words you don't know, but it may still be possible to understand its content by following a range of strategies. You may already be familiar with these strategies as it is quite common, when coming across new words in everyday life, to try to work out their meaning from the context in which they are used. This context may include, for example, the pictures and other words that surround the text.

The advert shown in Figure 5, for example, contains terms I don't fully understand, such as emphysema, but the other words in the list, the picture and my general knowledge about smoking help me understand that it must be a deadly disease. This contributes to my overall understanding of the message conveyed by the advert.

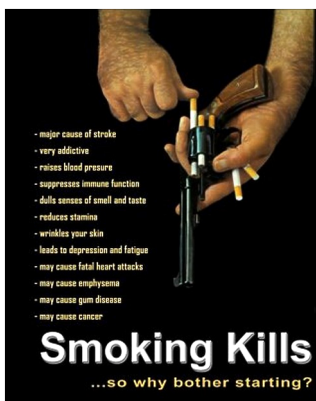


Figure 5 Anti-smoking advert

Rather than looking up every word in the dictionary, experienced readers make sense of new words by drawing on the following strategies:

- their background knowledge about the topic
- the context in which a word is used: the words, sentences and examples that follow it
- their understanding about the way in which words are constructed in English
- their knowledge of other languages. Many academic words will be familiar if you have some knowledge of French or another language derived from Latin.

You will practise these strategies in the following activity.

Activity 11

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the scenario below. What strategies could you use to help the student? Make some notes in the box below before looking at the answer.

Scenario

A fellow student is struggling to fully understand the following extract because it contains some words that are new to him. How might you help him use both his general knowledge about language and the context to understand the meaning of the words in bold?

Extract

When people suffer from under-nutrition, they are often **deficient** in vitamins and minerals needed by the body. For example, they may not have enough Vitamin A. They will become **lethargic**, less active and be unable to concentrate. If the situation continues, they may develop **life-threatening** diseases. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2012) reports that 100 million children under the age of five are **underweight** and 35% of all deaths of children under five are caused by malnutrition. People who are overweight or obese are more likely to suffer from coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes, **gallstones**, arthritis, high blood pressure and some types of cancer.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Deficient

To understand this word you could use two strategies: context and knowledge of other languages. The word deficient becomes clear if you read the text around it. In other words, read the context in which deficient is used – in this case the example that follows. An example of a person who is deficient in vitamins is a person who doesn't have Vitamin A. So deficient means 'doesn't have' or 'lacks'.

You could also draw on any knowledge you have of other languages. Deficient has very similar French, Spanish or Italian equivalents, so speaking these languages may help.

Lethargic

Lethargic is included in a list of other words so context again would be a useful strategy. Even if you don't understand its meaning, from the context you will probably understand that lethargic describes one of the effects of malnutrition. This may be sufficient unless you want to read the text in more depth.

Life-threatening

Two strategies could be used to understand this word: context and separating the word into its two parts. The sentence that follows the one in which life-threatening is used

provides more information as it explains that these children die. This means that life-threatening diseases are diseases that can cause loss of life.

You may also consider using your knowledge of other English words. Life-threatening is two words that can be understood separately – life and threatening.

Underweight

The strategy here is to recognise that underweight is made up of two words: under and weight. If you understand them separately, you may be able to understand that this word means less than the normal weight. Words such as under, over, mid- (as in midday), sub- (as in submarine) and un- (as in unfriendly) are called affixes and are often added to other words to change their meaning.

Gallstones

Again, context would be a useful strategy. From the context in which this word is used, it is possible to understand that this is a disease as it is part of a list of diseases from which obese people may suffer. Depending on the purpose for reading this text, you may decide that it is not essential to understand the word in order to gain a full understanding of this text.

The ability to use these strategies comes with practice. You may want to read regularly and use a paper or an online dictionary to look up only essential and key terms. If English is not your first language, it is also useful to read online news and good quality English language newspapers regularly. For example, you could try reading the news from one of the following websites:

- [BBC News](#)
- [The Guardian](#)
- [The Telegraph](#)
- [The Independent](#)
- [EuroNews](#)

In this section you have looked at an active reading method consisting of five steps. If your purpose for reading is to identify useful information that can be used in an essay or revised before an exam, you will also need to make notes. Note-making techniques are explained in the next section.

4 Making notes

Once you have identified the key ideas in a piece of text you are in a position to make some brief notes or jottings to prepare for an essay or to remember what you have learned from the article. Indeed, you may find that highlighting on its own may not help you to remember the ideas that you identified. Rather than returning to the highlighted text every time you want to revisit these ideas, only to find that what you have marked does not make sense to you any more, it is useful to develop a form of note taking.

The next activities give you an opportunity to practise note taking by:

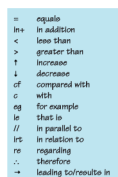
- adding short notes into the margins of the highlighted text
- making notes in a notebook.

4.1 Adding short notes in the margins of highlighted texts

This type of note making can be used while reading and underlining the text. However, to gain a better understanding of the text, you may want to read it again and use this opportunity to add notes in the margin. These notes can consist of:

- key words
- definitions
- translations of new words
- comments
- reference to related resources
- questions.

When making short notes you need to be concise. Trying to get everything down is very time consuming and can result in notes as long as the article itself. One way to save time and keep your notes as short as possible is to make use of symbols, shorthand and abbreviations. You probably already know some short forms and you can add any others that you make up. A whole range of symbols and abbreviations can be used, some of which are reproduced below (Figure 6).



=	equals
in+	in addition
<	less than
>	greater than
↑	increase
↓	decrease
cf	compared with
with	with
eg	for example
ie	that is
//	in parallel to
in	in relation to
re	regarding
∴	therefore
→	leading to/resulting in

Figure 6 Examples of symbols and abbreviations that can be used for note making

In addition, you can use your own form of shorthand, which sometimes entails leaving out vowels or cutting off the ends of words. This method is particularly effective where longer words are concerned. For example, concentrated becomes conc., advantage and disadvantage become adv. and disadv. respectively, and consequently becomes consq.

Developing your own shorthand that makes sense to you can be extremely time efficient and after a while it becomes a language of your own that flows easily from the pen.

Figure 7 shows an annotated paragraph. The annotations reproduce the highlighted text using abbreviations. For example, NRG has been used to abbreviate energy and cntry to abbreviate countries.

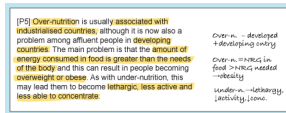


Figure 7 Example of an annotated paragraph

As you read, you may also want to add annotations that help to define new words, ask questions or refer to specific pages in other sources. In addition, while making sense of the text, some readers may add annotations that help to explain ideas and relationships, or add an example that they may not highlight but that still needs to be understood or may be useful at a later date. This is illustrated in Figure 8.

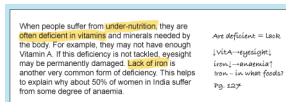


Figure 8 Example of an annotated text

If you don't mind writing on hard copy or in books, this method of note making can be effective. As space is limited, this technique encourages you to be selective and reduce the key information to just a few words and/or symbols. Thinking of and recording questions helps you to predict and prepare for the content of the following paragraphs and therefore process the information they contain.

4.2 Making notes in a notebook

Getting key ideas down in shorthand form is also useful when making notes in a notebook. You will practise this technique in the following activity.

Activity 12

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the '[Improving health and wellbeing](#)' text again and make some brief notes. Try to write as concisely as you can. For example, these are the notes I made after reading the first paragraph (Figure 9).

Malnutrition: under-nutrition → over-nutrition → health risks

Figure 9 Author's notes against paragraph 1 of practice text

After you finish making your notes compare them with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Figure 10 shows the notes I made on the text.

Malnutrition: under-nutrition - over-nutrition -> health risks

Under-nutrition

Mainly poor countries + ind. c.
Indust. countries: young people eating disorders -> food energy < body needs
Low energy diets -> weight -> activity / concentration -> death
under-n. -> vit + miner
Fe -> anaemia eg India
Vit A -> sight

Over-nutrition

Rich (mainly) + poor countries
food energy > body needs -> obesity -> lethargy / activity / concentration
diet + saturated fats -> cholesterol -> heart disease
obesity -> heart disease + diseases + cancer
Type 2 diabetes = metabolic disorder insulin / sugar adults + children
insulin / sugar

Figure 10 Author's notes on the practice text

This strategy is effective because it forces you to select the most important information and, in particular, the information that will help you to write your essay or prepare for an exam.

The drawback with this strategy is that these notes just reproduce the key ideas in the order followed by the original text. To gain a deeper understanding of the text and to remember the key information it contains, you need to reorganise your notes in a way that is meaningful and memorable to you.

5 Reorganising notes

To remember the content of your notes, it is useful to process and reorganise the ideas they contain. This is particularly useful for those notes that you will be drawing upon for planning and writing assignments. They can be reworked and key concepts and ideas can be applied to different types of question and issue.

Ways of processing and regrouping ideas include:

- organising information into subtopics
- using a **mind map**
- using a table.

Each person finds the ways that are most useful for them and that best fit each text they read. You may need to experiment with different methods to find the ones that suit you. The activities contained in the next three sections provide opportunities to do this. If you have time attempt all three; otherwise try the method you are least familiar with and simply look at my answers to the other two activities.

5.1 Organising information into subtopics

Rather than writing notes that list the information in the order followed by the source text, you may decide to use your own organisation. You will practise this in the following activity.

Activity 13

Allow approximately 10 minutes

As you saw in previous activities, the practice text provides information about causes, effects and location of over-nutrition and under-nutrition. Focusing on these topics can help you to reorganise your notes.

Go over the practice text and your previous notes again and organise the information using the headings below. Where useful, you may want to include some examples. To increase the effectiveness of these notes, try to use very concise expressions.

When you finish compare your work with my answer. You can make your notes either in the boxes provided below or on paper if you prefer.

Under-nutrition

Causes:

Effects:

Where?

Over-nutrition

Causes:

Effects:

Where?

Answer

My answer contains information I felt would be useful when discussing the topic of malnutrition. You may have chosen slightly different information.

As you see, I have used very concise expressions. Reducing information to concise expressions is a skill you will practise in Week 8.

Under-nutrition

Causes:

Eating disorders (in developed countries): anorexia, bulimia

Low energy diet

Scarcity of food (famine)

Effects:

Lethargy, low activity levels, low concentration

Stunted growth, weight loss

Long term/in children: diseases leading to death

Vitamin (e.g. Vit A→sight loss) and mineral (e.g. iron→anaemia) deficiency

Where?

Developing countries – mostly

Developed countries

Over-nutrition

Causes:

Excessive food intake

Saturated fats-rich diets (dairy products, animal fats, coconut/palm oil)

Effects:

Lethargy, low activity levels, low concentration

Weight gain, obesity

Effects of obesity: coronary heart disease, gallstones, arthritis, cancer, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure

Type 2 diabetes: metabolic problems, mostly adults+children

Where?

Developing countries – mostly

Developed countries

5.2 Using a mind map

If you prefer to create a visual representation of the key ideas contained in the texts you read, you can use a mind map. A mind map is a diagram showing a key idea and other associated ideas and information. The key idea is at the centre of the diagram and the other concepts stem from it.

Activity 14

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Below is a mind map whose branches show the main topics dealt with by the 'Improving health and wellbeing' text. As you can see, there are two main branches that relate to the two main topics: over-nutrition and under-nutrition. From each of these branches stem three sub-branches that relate to the three main subtopics: causes, effects and location.

[Download](#) a PDF of this mind map then print it out. Populate this mind map by adding more branches to the three sub-branches. You can reuse the same words used in the answer to Activity 13 or your own words. However, as space is limited, you will need to be very concise and you may want to omit some less essential information.

When you have finished, compare your mind map with mine.

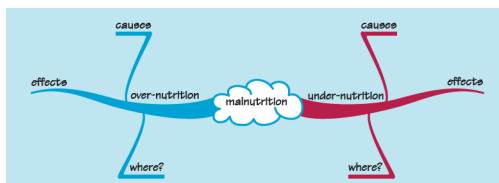


Figure 11 Partially filled in mind map

Answer

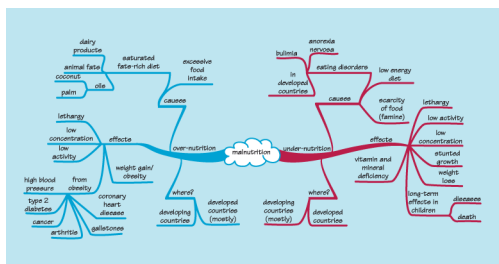


Figure 12 Completed mind map

Some people find diagrammatic representations, such as mind maps, can be more memorable, particularly when revising for exams. However, due to lack of space, it is not always possible to enter every detail in a mind map. For example, my mind map does not contain details about type 2 diabetes. I left it out because space was limited and I felt that this detail was not essential.

5.3 Using a table

Information taken from the texts you read can also be reorganised using a table. A table is particularly useful in reorganising the 'Improving health and wellbeing' text, because it allows you to easily compare the causes, the effects and the location of the two forms of malnutrition. Compared to a mind map, a table allows you to include more information.

Activity 15

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Make a copy of the table below and use it to enter information contained in the 'Improving health and wellbeing' text. You may want to reuse the same words used in the answer to Activity 13 or your own words.

Table 2

	Under-nutrition	Over-nutrition
Causes		
Effects		
Where?		

Answer

These are the points I felt would be useful when planning and writing an essay. You may have chosen different ones.

Table 3

	Under-nutrition		Over-nutrition
Causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating disorders (in developed countries): anorexia, bulimia Low energy diet Scarcity of food (famine) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Excessive food intake Saturated fat-rich diet
Effects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lethargy, low activity levels, low concentration Stunted growth, weight loss Long term/in children: diseases leading to death Vitamin (e.g. Vit A→sight loss) and mineral (e.g. iron→anaemia) deficiency 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lethargy, low activity levels Weight gain, obesity Effects of obesity: diabetes, high blood pressure
Where?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly developing countries Developed countries 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mostly developed countries Developing countries

This section has introduced you to three ways to reorganise information taken from the texts you read. The way you reorganise ideas depends on the content of the text. For example, the organisation and content of the practice text about malnutrition lent itself to all three methods.

Additional questions, ideas and examples can be added at a later date. For example, if you become a university student, you will want to make links to ideas presented elsewhere in your course materials, or something you have read in a newspaper might provide you with a useful illustration. It is a good idea, then, to get into the habit of revisiting your notes at intervals throughout your studies to develop links, introduce new questions and examples, and thus continually reprocess key ideas.

6 This week's quiz

Well done, you've just completed the last of the activities for this week's study before the weekly quiz.

Go to:

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

[Week 1 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

7 Summary

This week you have looked at the types of text that university students need to read and at the most effective reading and note-making strategies.

These are the most important learning points:

- University students need to read books, journals, specialised websites and reference texts.
- Reading academic texts can be difficult and requires a strategic approach.
- It is important to have a reason for reading.
- The most effective strategy consists in reading actively.
- Skimming, scanning and predicting the content of the text are active reading techniques.
- Skimming helps to decide how you want to read a text.
- Underlining words and/or phrases helps you to select and focus on the key points in a text.
- Difficult words can sometimes be guessed from the context.
- Adding notes in the margin and writing brief jottings are useful note-making techniques.
- To remember the content of your readings, it is useful to reorganise your notes using headings, mind maps and tables.

You can now go to [Week 2](#).

Week 2: Using ideas and information from your readings in your writing

Introduction

During Week 1 you learned a range of reading strategies and practised recording the ideas and information taken from your reading. This week you will consider ways to critically read source texts and appropriately use the information they contain in your writing.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- start to critically process what you read
- recognise how to reproduce information from sources
- understand the importance of acknowledging your sources.

1 Critically processing what you read

In Week 1 you learned that it is important to read actively. As part of this strategy you learned that it is useful to ask yourself some questions about the text (Figure 1). This section will help you to look at these questions in detail in order to learn how to critically process information from anything you read.

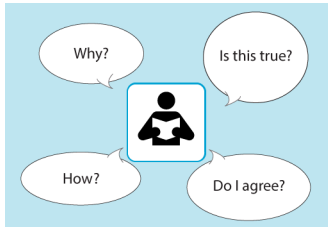


Figure 1 Asking yourself questions about the text

Processing information is a very important skill for university students to develop. They should not read simply to 'find out facts' and absorb the ideas and theories in books. They need to think for themselves and question what they read, as well as weigh up ideas and viewpoints as they read them.

1.1 How to read critically

Reading critically consists of constantly asking yourself questions.

- You may consider your own reactions to the content of the text and its **relevance** to you personally. Analyse the way in which you plan to use the text and ask yourself:
 - Do I agree with this viewpoint?
 - How does it relate to what I already know?
 - Is this text relevant to my needs? Does it help to answer my questions?
- You may also wonder how far the content of the text can be trusted, in other words if it is **reliable**, and ask:
 - Does this text provide facts or opinions?
 - If the text contains facts, has any data been obtained from research? How has the data been gathered?
 - If the text contains opinions, are these supported with evidence and relevant reasons?
 - Is the argument convincing or is it unclear and not completely logical?
- The issue of objectivity is also important:
 - Could the author be influenced by personal feelings or the context in which he or she writes? In other words, is the author objective?
 - Has the author considered other contrasting viewpoints?
 - What other perspectives or points of view could there be?
- Finally, it is also very important to find out when the text was written:
 - When was this information produced?

- Is the data still useful or are more current statistics available?
- Are the theories in the text still valid or have researchers moved on?

Activity 1

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Below is a paragraph taken from Richard Layard's article, 'The secrets of happiness'. This article was first published in 2003 in the magazine *New Statesman*. If you did the Week 1 quiz you will already have read an extract from this article.

To see how critical reading skills are useful at university, imagine you have to write an essay about the causes of happiness and that you have found Layard's article in the course materials. Read the paragraph below and critically look at some of the information it contains. Ask yourself the four sets of questions listed above.

It is true that, within any particular society at any particular moment, rich people are on average happier than poorer ones. For example, 41 per cent of people in the top quarter of incomes are 'very happy', compared with only 26 per cent of those in the bottom quarter of incomes. The problem is that, over the years, the proportions in each group who are very happy have not changed at all although the real incomes in each group have risen hugely. This is true of all the main western countries.

(Layard, 2003)

Make your notes in the box below before comparing your answers with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Part of this answer is personal to you, but you might like to read the answer given by Jade, a university student who read Layard's text when preparing for an essay about the causes of happiness:

This paragraph is definitely relevant to the essay as it looks at income as a cause of happiness.

The content partially related to my experience as I know some wealthy people who are also happy. On the other hand I have also met people who have very little but are extremely happy and I have read of very wealthy cinema and pop stars who are or have been very unhappy.

On a closer look, the text uses the phrase 'on average', therefore the author acknowledges that there may be unhappy rich people and happy poor people. The first sentence doesn't say that all rich people are happy but that they are on average happier than poorer people.

The author's main point is supported by evidence and this makes it stronger. However, the text does not say which groups of people and which societies were surveyed and who carried out the survey. Would rich people in any society feel happier than poor people? And would all the interviewees define happiness in the same way? The final point seems to relate only to western countries. How about other countries?

Despite these reservations, I think it would be interesting to read the rest of the article, but also think I also need to look for texts reporting different viewpoints. I wonder if happiness could be brought about by other factors because this is what my experience suggests. I have also noticed that Layard wrote this article in 2003 so I would like to read texts reporting more up-to-date research and theories. The course materials are very likely to provide them.

2 Using information from source texts

In this section you will consider ways in which you and other people use information and ideas from sources in day-to-day activities and then look at why and how this is done at university.

2.1 Your current use of information from sources

People often share the information they have read or heard. For example, today I looked at the train timetables on the National Rail website and used this information to let my friend know about my travel plans.

The screenshot shows the National Rail website interface for a journey from Coventry [COV] to London Euston [EUS]. The page displays train options, including a 17:40 train for £27.50 and a 17:51 train for £45.90. A yellow highlight is placed on the 17:40 train option. Overlaid on the bottom half of the website is an email draft addressed to Julie. The email text reads: 'Dear Julie, I've checked the National Rail website. There's a train that leaves Coventry at 5:31 pm and arrives at London Euston Station at 6:34 but the 5:40 train is cheaper. Can you meet at the station at about 7.30? See you tomorrow! Anna'.

Dep.	From	To	Arr.	Dur.	Chg.	Status	Price	Buttons
17:31	Coventry [COV]	London Euston [EUS]	18:34	1h 03m	0	on time	£45.90	Buy now
17:40	Coventry [COV]	London Euston [EUS]	19:29	1h 49m	0	on time	£27.50	Buy now
17:51	Coventry [COV]	London Euston [EUS]	18:56	1h 05m	0	on time	£45.90	Buy now

Dear Julie

I've checked the National Rail website. There's a train that leaves Coventry at 5:31 pm and arrives at London Euston Station at 6:34 but the 5:40 train is cheaper. Can you meet at the station at about 7.30?

See you tomorrow!

Anna

Figure 2 An example of sharing information

In order to pass on information, the choice is between repeating the exact words used by a source and rephrasing the content using your own words. You might, for example, summarise the information if you were telling someone about the content of a conversation. Information from other sources is often used to justify a decision or to support or illustrate a key point, in which case you may want to use the exact words.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 5 minutes

How do you, and other people you know, use information and ideas you have read or heard? Spend a few minutes making a short list in the box below before comparing your answer with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Your answer is personal to you, but it is useful to compare it to mine. Today I told my husband what my friends and colleagues had told me during the day. We also exchanged and commented on information we had read in the newspaper. Since we both read several newspapers, it's interesting to compare notes. My daughter told me about an attraction near her home in Cornwall and used information from the internet to explain what can be done there and to quote the entry fee.

2.2 Reasons for using sources at university

Students, just like everybody else, share information they have read. They share it with other students during tutorials or in the course of online discussions, and they share it with their tutors by including it in their assignments.

Understanding why and how sources are used in assignments will help you gain an understanding of the type of work done by university students.

When they write their assignments, students use information and ideas from their readings to:

- demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the subject
- **evaluate** or compare ideas and information from readings
- show how ideas from other writers have helped them develop their own views
- support the points they make and justify their decisions.

However, in order to achieve these purposes, students do not simply transfer information from a source to an assignment. They process this information and reproduce it by paraphrasing, quoting or summarising it. You will learn about this in the next section.

2.3 Distinguishing between summaries, paraphrases and quotations

In an assignment, it may be necessary to:

- include a summary of a text you have read
- include the paraphrased version of a sentence taken from a text
- quote a word or a sentence taken from a text.

The next activity helps to distinguish between these three ways in which information from sources is normally presented in a written assignment.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Match the following definitions to the three ways in which texts can be used in an assignment:

A very concise and reworded version of a source text that reproduces all the key concepts but leaves out details and examples.

One word, or a group of words, taken directly from a source text and included, within inverted commas, in the assignment.

The reworded version of a short section of the source text.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Summary

Quotation

Paraphrase

In the next activity you will look at some examples of summaries, paraphrasing and quotations.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read this short text taken from the Open University Access course Y032 *People, work and society*.

Musical connections are particularly significant for migrants. The music they bring with them provides an important way of remembering home culture. But it can also be a form of connection to the culture they are coming to. For instance in Britain people arriving from the Caribbean between the 1940s and the 1960s brought music, notably reggae, which was enthusiastically taken up by young people already living in the UK. Today the descendants of these migrants maintain links with the Caribbean, and this continues to have a major impact on British musical culture.

(The Open University, 2014a, p. 82)

Now decide which of the following pieces of text is a summary, a quotation or a paraphrased sentence of the original text. Type the letter corresponding to the piece of text that matches the headings in the answer box below. Then compare your answers with mine.

- a. To migrants, music can 'be a form of connection to the culture they are coming to' (The Open University, 2014).

- b. Music is of fundamental importance to migrants as it allows them to retain and extend connections to their country of origin while at the same time culturally influencing their new country (The Open University, 2014).
- c. Reggae, a type of Caribbean music which was brought to the UK by immigrants in the period from the 1940s to the 1960s, became very popular among the British youth (The Open University, 2014).

- 1. Paraphrase of one sentence ____
- 2. Summary of the whole paragraph ____
- 3. Quotation ____

Answer

1. Paraphrase of one sentence

c. Reggae, a type of Caribbean music which was brought to the UK by immigrants in the period from the 1940s to the 1960s, became very popular among the British youth (The Open University, 2014).

2. Summary of the whole paragraph

b. Music is of fundamental importance to migrants as it allows them to retain connections to their country of origin while at the same time culturally influencing their new country (The Open University, 2014).

3. Quotation

a. To migrants, music can 'be a form of connection to the culture they are coming to' (The Open University, 2014).

3 Reproducing information from sources

In the previous activity you practised identifying a summary, a paraphrase and a quotation. In particular, you have seen how they can transform the original text into different texts.

The diagram below (Figure 3) illustrates this transformation process:

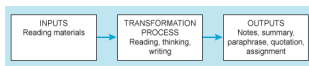


Figure 3 Transformation process

In the following activity you will look at this transformation process in more detail.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the original text, the summary, the paraphrase and the quoted phrase again and then answer the questions that follow.

Original text

Musical connections are particularly significant for migrants. The music they bring with them provides an important way of remembering home culture. But it can also be a form of connection to the culture they are coming to. For instance in Britain people arriving from the Caribbean between the 1940s and the 1960s brought music, notably reggae, which was enthusiastically taken up by young people already living in the UK. Today the descendants of these migrants maintain links with the Caribbean, and this continues to have a major impact on British musical culture.

(The Open University, 2014, p. 82).

Paraphrase

Reggae, a type of Caribbean music which was brought to the UK by immigrants in the period from the 1940s to the 1960s, became very popular among the British youth (The Open University, 2014).

Summary

Music is of fundamental importance to migrants as it allows them to retain connections to their country of origin while at the same time culturally influencing their new country (The Open University, 2014).

Quotation

To migrants, music can 'be a form of connection to the culture they are coming to' (The Open University, 2014).

- In what ways has the writer transformed the original text in each case?
- How much content has been taken from the original text?
- What type of language has the author used?

- How has each text been structured? Do they differ from the original? If yes, in what ways?
- Does each text acknowledge the author of the original text?

Make some notes in the box before comparing your answers with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Paraphrase

The writer has chosen to use only the example. This text conveys the same meaning as the original but has been reworded and structured differently. They have placed the name of the author of the original text in brackets at the end of the summary.

Summary

The summary is shorter than the original text. It contains the key points but not the examples. The writer has organised the text differently and chosen different words. They have placed the name of the author of the original text in brackets at the end of the summary.

Quotation

The writer has extracted just part of one sentence from the original text and included it in their own sentence without making any changes and within inverted commas. They have acknowledged the name of the author by placing it in brackets at the end of the quotation.

The transformation process normally involves choosing the amount of the original text that will be reused. The content (the ideas, theories and data) is never changed but it is usually reported in the writer's own words. The only exception is the quotation but, in this case, the writer uses the inverted commas to indicate that the quoted word or sentence has been written by somebody else. The name of the person or organisation who wrote the original text is always acknowledged in brackets in the written text, together with the date when the original text was published.

The next three sections explain in more detail how to paraphrase, summarise and quote texts.

4 Paraphrasing text

In this section you will look at the paraphrasing process in more detail and practise paraphrasing strategies.

In order to paraphrase a sentence it is necessary to express its content in your own words. This is done by:

- replacing the words in the original text with synonyms
- reorganising the text.

4.1 Using synonyms

A synonym is a word that has a very similar meaning to another word. For example, the words *intelligent* and *smart* are synonyms. In order to paraphrase a sentence, it is necessary to replace most of its words with synonyms.

The only words that should not be replaced are the technical terms contained in the text. For example, in a text about the environment, the words *species* and *biological diversity* are considered technical terms.

In the next activity you will practise choosing synonyms using the following text taken from the Open University course *Introducing environment*.

As Fortey (2008) notes, the species is the fundamental unit of biological diversity.

Scientists use two approaches to identify a species:

1. Members of the same species normally resemble each other.
2. Male and female members of the same species can produce offspring that are also able to reproduce.

(Adapted from Peasgood and Goodwin, 2011, p. 38)

Activity 6

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Below are some sentences taken from the *Introducing environment* text shown above. Choose the correct synonyms of the words in italics. You may want to look up each word in an online dictionary such as the [Oxford English Dictionary](#). However, bear in mind that when you are working with a text, the synonym you choose will depend on the context. Just looking up words in a dictionary might not work.

1. As Fortey (2008) *notes*, the species is the fundamental unit of biological diversity.
 - ☐ feels
 - ☐ reveals
 - ☐ states

Answer

states

Another way to express the same meaning is: 'According to Fortey (2008), ...'

2. ... the species is the *fundamental* unit of biological diversity.

- ☐ basic
- ☐ serious
- ☐ natural

Answer

basic

3. the species is the fundamental *unit* of biological diversity.

- ☐ piece
- ☐ department
- ☐ element

Answer

element

4. Scientists use two *approaches* to identify a species.

- ☐ methods
- ☐ means
- ☐ systems

Answer

methods

5. Members of the same species *normally* resemble each other.

- ☐ traditionally
- ☐ generally
- ☐ regularly

Answer

generally

6. Members of the same species normally *resemble each other*.

- ☐ echo
- ☐ look similar
- ☐ correspond

Answer

look similar

7. Male and female members of the same species can *produce offspring*.

- generate
- make
- create

Answer

generate

8. ... can produce offspring that are also able *to reproduce*.

- breed
- copy
- duplicate

Answer

breed

Here you can see the complete text with the correct synonyms inserted.

As Fortey (2008) **states**, the species is the **basic element** of biological diversity. Scientists use two **methods** to identify a species:

1. Members of the same species **generally look similar**.
2. Male and female members of the same species can **generate** offspring that are also able to **breed**.

When you look up a word to find a synonym, you will be given a choice of possible words. In order to choose the most appropriate one, you need to look at its definition and make sure the word fits the specific context in which you want to use it.

Replacing some words of the original text is a useful strategy. However, it is not sufficient on its own as following only this strategy leads to writing a paraphrase that is very similar to the original text. If students change only a few words they will miss the opportunity to show that they have fully understood the original text and may also be accused of plagiarising – in other words, presenting other people's work as their own.

4.2 Using another word of the same word family

In some cases, it is possible to paraphrase a text by replacing the original word with a word that is part of the same *word family*. Words are members of the same family if their form is very similar and their meanings are related.

If you look up the word *able* in the dictionary, for example in [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com), you will find that the following words are part of the family of the word *able*:

able, ability, enable, unable

An important difference between these words is the role they play in a sentence. For example, *ability* describes a thing and *enable* describes an action. *Able* can be used to describe something or somebody (an able student) while *unable* is mostly used to describe a person or a thing that cannot do something (unable to move).

Knowing all the words that are part of the word family of *able* allows you to replace the phrase:

are able to reproduce

with:

ability to reproduce

Similarly, *resemble* can be replaced with *resemblance*, *identify* with *identification* and *reproduce* with *reproduction*.

When you use a word of the same family, you will need to reorganise the original text.

4.3 Reorganising the original text

To correctly paraphrase a text it is necessary to replace as many words as possible with your own words and also to reorganise the information in the sentences while still keeping the original meaning.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Reread the original text and compare it with the paraphrase below. How does the organisation of the two texts differ? Make your notes in the box before comparing your answer with mine.

Original text

As Fortey (2008) notes, the species is the fundamental unit of biological diversity. Scientists use two approaches to identify a species:

1. Members of the same species normally resemble each other.
2. Male and female members of the same species can produce offspring that are also able to reproduce.

Paraphrase

Fortey (2008) defines the species as the basic element of biological diversity. In identifying a species, scientists follow two methods. They consider the resemblance between members of the same species and the ability of males and females of this species to generate offspring that can also breed (Peasgood and Goodwin, 2011, p. 38).

Provide your answer...

Answer

1. The paraphrase has eliminated the bullet points. It uses a sentence to introduce two methods and places these two methods in the following sentence.

2. The structure of the definition has been changed. It is useful to know different ways in which to define a technical term. Therefore the definition, 'As Fortey (2008) notes, the species is the fundamental unit of biological diversity', can also be rephrased in the following ways:

As Fortey (2008) states, the species **is defined** as the basic element of biological diversity.

According to Fortey (2008), the basic element of biological diversity **is** the species. Fortey (2008) **defines** the species *as* the basic element of biological diversity.

3. The paraphrase uses the words *resemblance* and *ability* instead of *resemble* and *are able*. For this reason the writer has had to change the organisation of the sentence. In order to do this it has been necessary to include the word *consider*.

Changing the organisation of a sentence while keeping the meaning of the original text can be difficult at first and most people learn to do this with practice and over a period of time. University students tend to start by simply using synonyms and, with practice and the help of their tutors, gradually develop the ability to also reorganise the original text.

5 Summarising text

In this section you will practise writing a summary. Summarising is part of writing assignments. Sometimes in an assignment students are specifically asked to write a summary of something they have read. However, they will need to include summaries of information taken from their readings in most assignments. Therefore, summarising is a very important skill to develop if you are thinking of enrolling on a university course.

5.1 What is a summary?

A summary can be a few words or many pages long. One of the main reasons for summarising is to give a reader your understanding of what you have read. In the next activity you are asked to think about what a summary is.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Summarising is an active process. Which of the following actions are involved?

When you summarise, you should:

- ☐ Make the summary shorter than the original.
You **reduce** the length.
- ☐ Miss out some of the details contained in the original text.
You **reject** information in the original: you include key points but reject some of the detail.
- ☐ Write in your own words.
You **reword** to show that you have understood, and to avoid plagiarism.
- ☐ Express the original writer's facts and opinions accurately.
You **reproduce** the original writer's facts and opinions.
- ☐ Give an opinion about the original writer's views.
If you give your own opinion, you are no longer summarising. You may go on to give your opinion but, first, you must reproduce the original information accurately.
- ☐ Compress the same meaning into fewer words.
You **repackage** the information into a lower number of words.

5.2 The 5Rs of summarising: reduce, reject, reword, reproduce, repackage

In this section, you will practise recognising the 5Rs in a summary.

Activity 9

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read the following example summary which uses all of the 5Rs. Then look at each of the four summaries below and select which of the 5Rs you can see in them.

Original text: Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) tackle health issues around the world, for example the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which often step in following earthquakes and other disasters.

Summary: The involvement of NGOs in health problems

The 5Rs

Reduce: the summary is shorter.

Reject: it misses out the example.

Reword: it uses *problems* instead of *issues*.

Reproduce: it is accurate.

Repackage: it compresses *Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) tackle health issues* into *The involvement of NGOs in health problems*.

1 As an international government, the UN is **involved** in many different areas.

Summary: Involvement of UN in many different areas.

- ☐ reduce
- ☐ reject
- ☐ reword
- ☐ reproduce
- ☐ repackage

Answer

Reduce, reject, reproduce, repackage.

2 In 2001, UNAIDS **launched** the '3 by 5' initiative with the goal of providing anti-retroviral drugs to 3 million people with HIV/AIDS living in developing countries by 2005.

Summary: Launch of '3 by 5' initiative

- ☐ reduce
- ☐ reject
- ☐ reword
- ☐ reproduce
- ☐ repackage

Answer

Reduce, reject, reproduce, repackage.

3 It emphasises the need to get anti-retroviral drugs to people in Africa, Asia and other poorer parts of the world.

Summary: Emphasis on need to deliver anti-retroviral drugs to poorer parts of world

- ☐ reduce

- ☐ reject
- ☐ reword
- ☐ reproduce
- ☐ repackage

Answer

Reduce, reject, reproduce, repackage.

4 For the '3 by 5' initiative to succeed, UNAIDS **needs** support from governments around the world and from NGOs like Oxfam and the Red Cross and Red Crescent. It also needs the support of big business, including the big pharmaceutical companies – big pharma.

Summary: Need for support from governments, NGOs and big business

- ☐ reduce
- ☐ reject
- ☐ reword
- ☐ reproduce
- ☐ repackage

Answer

Reduce, reject, reproduce, repackage.

Discussion

None of the four summaries **reword** the original text enough yet. However, they do use the other four Rs. Too little rewording in a longer summary is regarded as plagiarism.

5.3 Writing a longer summary

When writing a longer summary, it is still necessary to use the 5Rs. However, because the summary is longer, it is also important to change the organisation. Academic texts are usually well organised, but when you write a summary you have to decide whether your summary will have the same organisation as the original text or not. This depends on your purpose.

While focusing on the way the summary is written, there is a risk of missing out or misinterpreting key information. When summarising a text, it is therefore important to follow the following process:

1. Read the original.
2. Make some notes.
3. Summarise following the 5Rs.

The notes must correctly report the content of the original text as, if they contain errors, the summary will be incorrect too.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Look at the text below about HIV/AIDS, the two sets of notes on it and the two summaries. Compare the summaries with the original text. Which summary is the better one? Say why, bearing in mind the 5Rs and summary organisation.

Original paragraph

The HIV/AIDS epidemic threatens people in every part of the world. For example, it destroys the health, and lives, of millions of people. It also shatters families and communities and leaves millions of children orphaned. It undermines whole countries by robbing them of the young, able-bodied people needed to work in industry and agriculture. It ravages entire continents. While sub-Saharan Africa (the area of Africa south of the Sahara desert) has about ten per cent of the world's population, it has almost two-thirds of all people living with HIV (UNAIDS, 2004). (91 words)

Notes 1

HIV/AIDS threat to people everywhere
health and life destroyed
families and communities destroyed
children orphaned
countries robbed of young workers for industry and agriculture
continents ravaged, e.g. sub-Saharan Africa, where the population is more heavily affected by HIV/AIDS

Summary 1

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a threat to people everywhere, destroying the lives of families and communities. Young children lose their parents, and there is a lack of healthy young workers for industry and agriculture, which affects economies. In some parts of the world, such as sub-Saharan Africa, a higher proportion of the population is affected by HIV/AIDS. (58 words)

Notes 2

HIV/AIDS tragedy
young people are robbed
two-thirds of African people have AIDS

Summary 2

The HIV/AIDS virus is causing terrible tragedies throughout Africa where two-thirds of the population are suffering from this dreadful disease. Young people are being robbed of their futures, and it is up to the rest of the world to help them. (42 words)

Provide your answer...

Answer

Summary 1 is the better summary because:

- it **reproduces** all the main points of the original text, without leaving out any of the key points;
- it **rewords** the original text in the student's own words, e.g. *a higher proportion of the population* rather than *two-thirds*;
- it is **well organised**.

Summary 2 is a poor summary because:

- it does not **reject** the right information from the original – it mentions only Africa, not the rest of the world – and fails to make the relevant point about young people, i.e. their connection to the labour market;
- it does not **reproduce** the original text but gives the student's own opinion – *it is up to the rest of the world to help them*.

Comment

There is a connection between good note making and good summary writing. If your notes are clear, brief and accurate, your summary is likely to be well organised.

5.4 Organising a summary: order of information

Sometimes, a summary writer changes the order of the original material to make it fit with their own text. This is acceptable, provided that the meaning of the original text is kept the same.

Activity 11

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the following two texts and compare the original with the summary.

How has the student changed the order in the summary? Does the summary still make sense, and does it include all the relevant points made in the original text?

Type your answers in the box below before comparing your answer with mine.

Original text

The global nature of the HIV/AIDS crisis means that it needs to be tackled at a global level. In other words, international action is required. A key organisation at the international level is the United Nations (UN). This is a form of global government. It is funded by contributions from governments around the world and has its own parliament, the General Assembly, in which practically every country in the world has a seat. The General Assembly meets regularly to discuss and vote on important issues.

Summary

The United Nations (UN) is a key organisation in the fight against AIDS because of its international nature. The UN is funded by several countries and has a General Assembly at which most nations are represented, so it is in an ideal position to tackle global issues.

Provide your answer...

Answer

The numbers and bold text below show how the information in the original paragraph has been reordered in the summary. The parts which have been omitted from the summary are not in bold. Nevertheless, the summary flows logically and still contains the key points.

Original text

[1]**The global nature of the HIV/AIDS crisis means that it needs to be tackled at a global level.** [2] In other words, international action is required. [3]**A key organisation at the international level is the United Nations (UN).** [4] This is a form of global government. [5] It is **funded by contributions from governments around the world** and has its own parliament, **the General Assembly, in which practically every country in the world has a seat.** [6] The General Assembly meets regularly to discuss and vote on important issues.

Summary

[3]**The United Nations (UN) is a key organisation in the fight against AIDS because of its international nature.** [5] **The UN is funded by several countries** and [6] **has a General Assembly at which most nations are represented,** so [1] **it is in an ideal position to tackle global issues.**

6 Quoting

Quoting another author's exact words is particularly appropriate when they express an idea or give a description in a particularly powerful and unique way. Quotations can be used to:

- provide evidence that supports your point
- add an important detail to your text
- help highlight a point you have made
- give authority to your point.

However, it is inappropriate to include a large number of quotations in assignments. This is because tutors are mainly interested in seeing how students talk about the things they have learned and how they apply theories and interpret information. If students do so by mainly using somebody else's words, they will not be able to display their understanding very effectively.

When writing quotations, make sure you follow these guidelines:

- the quotation contains the exact words used by the author
- the quoted text is placed within inverted commas
- the quoted text fits grammatically in the text
- the meanings expressed by the original author are not changed
- the author of the quoted text is acknowledged.

Activity 12

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the following short text.

It is true that, within any particular society at any particular moment, rich people are on average happier than poorer ones.

Now decide which of the following sentences quotes the text correctly and why this is so. You may also find it helpful to make some notes about why you think the other sentences are incorrect. Then compare your answers with mine.

1. It is well known that 'rich people are on average happier than poorer ones'.
2. In the western world, rich people are happier than poorer ones (Layard, 2005).
3. Layard (2005) states that 'rich people are normally happier than poorer ones'.
4. Layard (2005) argues that 'rich people are on average happier than poorer ones'.
5. According to Layard (2005) in some countries 'rich people are on average happier than poorer ones'.
6. Another important point 'rich people are on average happier than poorer ones'(Layard, 2005).

Provide your answer...

Answer

The correct answer is:

4 Layard (2005) argues that 'rich people are on average happier than poorer ones'.

This quotation is correct because it follows the guidelines outlined above.

Incorrect answers

1. The author has not been acknowledged.
2. The author has been correctly acknowledged but, as there are no inverted commas, the reader cannot tell if these are all Layard's own words or a paraphrase. Another problem is that the sentence changes the point made in the original text by adding the words 'in the western world'.
3. The quoted phrase is different from the original as it uses 'normally' instead of 'on average'.
5. The original text is correctly quoted, but the sentence that contains it changes the point made by Layard. Layard stated that rich people are happier in any society while this sentence states that this happens only in some countries.
6. The quotation does not fit grammatically into the sentence. The sentence should start like this: Another important point is that ...

7 Referencing

Referencing is a way to acknowledge the authors of the ideas and words you use in your own writing. Therefore you need to include a reference every time you:

- summarise other people's ideas, theories or works
- paraphrase their work
- quote their words.

In this section you will learn why referencing is important and how it is done.

7.1 Referencing in everyday life

Referencing is not simply an academic convention: people often acknowledge their sources when they report information. For example, when I reminded my son to take the umbrella this morning, I also said that I had listened to the BBC weather report, which forecast heavy showers.

If you read newspapers, listen to the radio or watch the news on TV, you will know that journalists regularly report information they have gathered from their sources and normally acknowledge these sources. They do this to justify and add authority to the points they make and to allow readers to locate their sources should they wish to find out more.

Activity 13

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the extract below in which Guardian journalist Andrew Sparrow uses information from his sources to discuss child poverty in the UK. Identify the ways in which he acknowledges his sources and note them in the box before comparing your answer with mine.

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission said the absolute child poverty goal was 'simply unattainable' and that this was on course to be the first decade since records began in 1961 not to see a fall in absolute child poverty.[...]

Iain Duncan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, argues that addressing poverty by just increasing benefits is flawed and the root causes must be addressed by getting more parents into jobs. But the commission says 'ending poverty mainly through the labour market does not look remotely realistic by 2020'. In too many cases it simply moves children from low income workless households to low income working households.

(Sparrow, 2014)

Provide your answer...

Answer

Andrew Sparrow acknowledges both the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission and Iain Duncan Smith. He explains the current situation by reporting the Commission's findings through a quotation and a paraphrase. He goes on to discuss a possible strategy by summarising the view expressed by the work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith. He then reports the exact words used by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission. Sparrow finishes by paraphrasing a point made by the Commission.

Comment

As you can see, journalists use their sources of information all the time. They sometimes simply report this information, but they often compare and contrast it or use it to make a specific point. They normally acknowledge their sources or inform readers of serious reasons why this cannot be done. The acknowledgement in this case would allow interested readers to look for the Commission's report and read it in full. Referencing in newspapers, however, is not as precise as the referencing required in university assignments. For example, in this extract there is no date of publication.

7.2 Why should sources be cited in students' assignments?

When producing an assignment, any other assessed piece of work or something that is going to be viewed and/or used by others, it is important to include complete and accurate references because:

- references show the student has read around the subject
- the points the student makes will appear stronger to their reader if it is clear that the points are supported by evidence from other people's research
- others will be able to find and use the same sources that informed the student's work, which in turn allows them to check the validity and authenticity of the student's work, as well as develop and enhance their own understanding of the subject
- by doing so the student acknowledges the author or authors of the ideas and words they used in their text.

If the student uses other people's work to construct their answers and does not include references, then it will look as if they are passing off other people's work as their own, and they will be guilty of **plagiarism**. This term is used to indicate that a writer has stolen both the ideas and the words of another author.

To avoid plagiarism, it is therefore necessary for a student to:

- acknowledge the authors whose ideas and words are used in their text
- report these ideas either by using their own words (paraphrase) or by including a quotation.

There are several styles in which references can be presented in an assignment and they vary depending on the subject area. One suggested convention for citing references is the Harvard referencing system. This is the system used by The Open University.

The Harvard referencing system requires students to acknowledge their sources by including:

- an *in-text* citation in the body of their texts – this provides the author's name and the date the work was published
- an *end-of-text* reference at the end of their assignment – this is detailed information not only about the author and their work but also about the publisher.

In-text citations provide the reader with very concise information regarding the source being used in the text. This is because a longer reference placed in the text would make reading difficult. Should the reader wish to know more about the source or where to find it, complete information is available at the end of the assignment.

7.3 In-text citation

An in-text citation of a book consists of:

- the surname of the author
- the date when the work was published
- the page number where the information and ideas can be found.

This information should be placed within brackets at an appropriate place within a sentence that contains information taken from the book. It can be included in different ways, as shown in the following examples:

According to Vygotsky (1978, p. 96) 'the influence of play on a child's development is enormous'.

The same point made by Vygotsky could be conveyed by paraphrasing his words:

Vygotsky (1978, p. 96) argued that the way children develop is significantly affected by play.

Alternatively, the acknowledgement can be added after paraphrased or quoted text:

'The influence of play on a child's development is enormous' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 96).

The way children develop is significantly affected by play (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 96).

7.4 End-of-text-referencing

Having placed an in-text citation in the body of the text, at the end of the text it is necessary to provide all the information readers will need if they wish to find the book. This information should be presented in the following order:

Surname of the author, initial. (date of publication) title (in italics and using initial capital letters), place of publication, publisher.

The Vygotsky example would be presented as:

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978) *Mind in Society*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Activity 14

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Write an end-of-text reference using the following information:

Title: Advanced grammar in use
Year of publication: 2005
Publisher: Cambridge University Press
Place of publication: Cambridge
Author: Martin Hewings

When you finish compare your answer with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Hewings, M. (2005) *Advanced Grammar in Use*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

The references list

End-of-text references should be included in a references list. According to the Harvard system, the references list should be placed at the end of the assignment under the heading 'References'. The authors' names should be listed in alphabetical order. If an author appears twice in the list, the references should be ordered according to the date of publication, as in the example below.

References

Crystal, D. (2003) *English as a Global Language* (2nd edn), Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Crystal, D. (2004) *Stories of English*, London, Penguin.

Swan, M. and Walker, C. (2007) *How Grammar Works*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Willis, J. (1996) *A Framework for Task-based Learning*, Harlow, Longman.

8 This week's quiz

Well done, you've just completed the last of the activities for this week's study before the weekly quiz.

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

Go to:

[Week 2 practice quiz](#).

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

9 Summary

This week you have looked at critical reading and have been introduced to ways in which students can use the ideas and the information they found in their readings when writing essays.

These are the key learning points:

- Reading critically consists in asking yourself questions about the content of the text, its reliability and objectivity.
- In everyday life, it is common to report information from various sources.
- University students use information and ideas from their readings in their assignments.
- Information from sources can be summarised, paraphrased and quoted.
- Referencing is a way to acknowledge the authors of the ideas and words students use in their own text.
- Plagiarism is passing off other people's work as your own.
- To avoid plagiarism it is necessary to reword the original text and to acknowledge its author with an in-text citation and an end-of-text reference.

You can now go to Week 3.

Week 3: Writing university assignments

Introduction

This week you will start to look at university writing, a very important student activity. You will first consider which aspects of your current writing will be useful when it comes to university-level writing and which might need a bit more work. Then you will move on to look at university assignments, their purposes and structure and the strategies students follow when approaching them.

Watch Anna describing what you will study this week:

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week you will be able to understand:

- the purpose and structure of your everyday writing
- the purpose and overall structure of university texts
- the main stages of the writing process
- the essay and report planning stages.

1 Everyday writing

For many of us writing is a daily activity. In a morning, for example, I might write a text message to a friend, make a 'to do' list and email a colleague.



Figure 1 Examples of writing

Activity 1

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Think about the types of text, that is any piece of writing, you have written in the past few days. These can be as short as a few words scribbled on a Post-it note or as long as a letter or a workplace report. Note your thoughts in the box below.

Provide your answer...

Answer

The answer is personal to you. Here are some of the texts I have written lately:

- professional emails
- a shopping list
- comments on my friends' Facebook pages
- a birthday card
- feedback on my students' assignments
- a page of my personal diary
- a cheque
- a note to my neighbour
- a workplace report
- a recipe I heard on the radio

Most people do not consider themselves to be writers, yet they write something every day. There are many types of text. Some texts may appear easy but others seem more complex to write. In the next activity you will compare some texts to understand how they differ and why some are harder to write than others.

1.1 Types and structure of everyday writing

When we write, we communicate with other people. Birthday cards, Post-it notes and text messages are all ways to send other people messages containing information. Even a personal diary and a to-do list may be read initially only by the writer, but may be shared or read in the future by other people.

Communication is therefore the main reason why people write. The particular purpose of each piece of writing depends on the situation and the people we communicate with. For example, many of us leave little notes on the fridge to remind ourselves and others to do important chores or to wish them well.

The way our texts are organised varies depending on our reason for writing and our relationship with the person or persons who will read our messages.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 10 minutes

In this activity you will look at the purpose and structure of three texts (Figure 2).



Figure 2 A to-do list, a thank-you letter and a CV

Part 1

Look at the three texts below and match them to their typical purpose.

A to-do list

A curriculum vitae (CV)

A thank-you card

Match each of the items above to an item below.

To briefly remind ourselves and others what needs to be done

To show an employer our skills and experiences in the hope of being invited to an interview

To tell somebody how much we appreciate what they have done for us

Part 2

Have you ever written any of these three types of text? How easy or difficult do you or would you find writing them? Note your thoughts in the box below before comparing them with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Here is my answer:

I'm one of those people who often write to-do lists. They are simple and informal, and contain just isolated words describing activities. I normally cross off each activity as soon as it is done.

I find thank-you cards and cards in general less easy to write. This is in part because in Italy, my country, people tend to phone or thank other people in person so cards are rarely written. In the UK, handwritten cards tend to follow a specific structure but I am never sure which one I should use, in which order to different people in different situations. I therefore tend to avoid cards or buy ready-made cards and just add my signature.

A curriculum vitae is generally difficult to write. My first CV was untidy, quite long and contained too much information so I had to ask a more experienced friend to help me.

All texts, even the simplest everyday ones, are written for a purpose. When we write, we have this purpose and our readers in mind and this helps us to structure our texts.

Some texts are easy to write because we understand their purpose, they are part of our culture and we are familiar with their typical structure. However, approaching unfamiliar text types may be challenging unless we know why we are writing them and how they should be organised. In many cases a model of a particular type of text or a more experienced person can help.

The next sections introduce some texts you may not be familiar with. You will look at texts written by university students, the reasons why they are written and the ways in which they are organised.

2 University assignments

At British universities, students are asked to carry out written tasks called assignments and submit them to their tutors by a set date. Assignments are part of the assessment process and, while most assignments are completed at home, some will take the form of a formal examination.

Like any other piece of writing you have written so far, assignments are written for a reason and follow a specific structure. The key is to understand these reasons and learn which structure you are expected to follow.

Students are asked to write assignments for a number of reasons:

- to demonstrate that they understand the subject matter they are being taught
- to show that they can explain key ideas and information in their own words
- to show that they can use what they have learned to solve real life problems
- to demonstrate that they can evaluate, compare and contrast different views
- to gain feedback from their tutors on their understanding and use of course content.

Depending on the specific purpose of each assignment, university students are asked to write a range of assignment types. For example, they use summaries and definitions to simply describe what they have learned from their readings. They use essays to discuss what they have learned and to show that they can use their learning to make sense of real world situations. Finally, they use reports to describe or analyse a situation and provide recommendations.

The next section looks more closely at assignment types, their purpose and structure.

2.1 Types of assignment

There is a wide range of assignment types that students may be asked to produce during their university studies. Some assignments might require them to write single-sentence responses, while others might ask them to write an extended response of 600, 800 or even 2000 words.

In this video three Open University tutors talk about the assignments students are required to complete for the courses they teach:

Video content is not available in this format.



2.2 Distinguishing between different types of assignment

It may be more common to find one kind of assignment type in a particular subject than in others. For example, science assignments may consist of short questions that require short answers, while a social sciences assignment might consist of short answers explaining a definition or essays explaining a theory. Regardless of the subject they are studying, students will probably have to write a variety of assignment types during their studies.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 10 minutes

You are now going to gain an overview of some of the assignment types that you are likely to encounter in your university studies. Look at the list below of descriptions of various types of assignment. Match each assignment type with its appropriate description.

- Report
- Short definition and explanation
- Essay
- Short-answer exercise
- Summary

Match each of the items above to an item below.

An assignment that gives detailed information and analysis about a topic; it will often have different sections, with headings that have different functions; there is an introduction, different sections and a conclusion with recommendations

A word or concept is briefly defined and explained

An assignment that focuses on one topic; it has an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion

Brief answers in response to questions; the contents of one answer is not necessarily directly connected with the next

A short account of the content of something you have read, heard or viewed without details

Discussion

During your university studies, you will be asked to complete a variety of assignment tasks to demonstrate what you have learned. Having a good understanding of what is required in the various assignments that you are asked to produce for your university modules will help you fulfil the task and get better marks.

2.3 Typical challenges

Writing a university assignment can be difficult. The following activity identifies the main challenges.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Below is a list of challenges typically experienced by students who are new to assignment writing. Think of your experience of writing longer and possibly formal texts. For example, you may have had to write a job application or a formal email. If you haven't had such experiences, you may want to think back to your school experiences. Have you ever experienced any of the challenges listed below?

- It's a very long time since I've done anything like this. I've forgotten how to do it.
- I'm not familiar with the British educational system. What is done in my country is quite different from what is expected here.
- I'm not clever enough to write an assignment.
- How do I organise essays and reports?
- I don't understand the assignment title. What am I expected to do?
- I look at the blank page. I don't know where to start or what to write.
- I can write short informal pieces but I have never written a long formal essay.
- I write too many words.
- I make too many errors and don't know how to choose the right words.

Type your comments in the box before comparing them with mine.

Provide your answer...

Discussion

The main problems students experience are caused by lack of experience and, in particular, difficulty in getting started. These difficulties arise when students have problems understanding the question and the way in which essays and reports should be organised. Some see assignment writing as daunting as it is a completely new experience.

The next section will address these challenges by focusing on the writing process.

3 The essay-writing process

Writing a successful assignment is less daunting if it is seen as a process consisting of several manageable steps. You will probably be familiar with some of these steps already: for example writing notes, putting ideas in order, selecting ideas to include, reviewing and rewriting what you have already written in order to improve it.

Another key point is that anyone writing an essay has to give themselves enough time. Generally the best assignments result from doing a little at a time over a period of days, rather than attempting to complete an assignment in one evening.

In this section you will look at this step-by-step process.

3.1 Some useful strategies

In the next activity you will look in more detail at the challenges often faced by students and the strategies they can use to complete an essay.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 15 minutes

In the videos below, three students describe their writing process. They also mention the challenges they face and some of the strategies they use. Watch the videos and identify the challenges and strategies each student uses. Note them in the boxes below before comparing your answers with mine.

Diane

Video content is not available in this format.



Challenges:
Strategies:

Answer

Challenges

- Writing too many words
- Risk of not answering the question

Strategies

- Reading the question
- Reading in order to find answers to the question
- First writing everything you know, then revising it

Hugh

Video content is not available in this format.



Challenges:
Strategies:

Answer

Challenges

- Not enjoying essay writing

Strategies

- Using the structure given by the assignment
- Writing thoughts about each section
- Revising the answer many times
- Circular revision process: rereading, rewriting, reviewing, rereading ...
- Stopping when the answer has been answered properly and completely

Christophe

Video content is not available in this format.



Challenges:
Strategies:

Answer

Challenges

- Becoming too used to his answer

Strategies

- First, making a list of key points
- Then, carefully arranging these points
- Writing the first draft
- Asking someone else to read this draft

Discussion

Coping with university writing is about developing strategies that help to meet a range of challenges. These students seem to have been successful in essay writing despite the various challenges they mention. They have dealt with those challenges by adopting strategies for planning what they are going to write, structuring the content of their essays and reviewing the text over and over again.

3.2 A step-by-step process

The next activity introduces you to a method that exploits all the strategies described by the three students.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 10 minutes

In this activity you are introduced to the different stages of the essay-writing process. This process starts with activities that include reading (understanding the ideas of others), brainstorming (thinking of all you know about the topic) and note making, and proceeds through one or more cycles until you feel you have produced a full and correct answer.

The boxes show the eight stages in the process of completing an assignment. Drag each stage into the relevant blank box in the diagram.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Assignment development process (Source: adapted from Lillis, T. and North, S. 2006)

Discussion

Writing a university assignment involves going through a series of stages. It is quite normal for all writers to want to go through the cycle more than once. This may happen for many reasons. For example they may feel that they haven't quite answered the question or they may want to go back to their readings and notes to find additional relevant material.

Many students find that the habit of breaking their writing process into manageable steps helps them not only to write university assignments but also other pieces of writing such as workplace documents.

In the next two sections you will learn how to plan an essay and a report.

4 Planning an essay: the pre-writing steps

Before writing an essay, it is important to take the time to understand its structure as this provides a useful starting point. A typical essay includes an introduction, the main body of the text, a conclusion and a list of references (Figure 3).

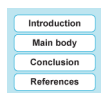


Figure 3 The structure of an essay

While this is a simple structure, students often wonder what should be included in the main body of the essay. In this section you will learn how carefully reading the assignment question and carrying out some simple tasks can help you to plan the content of the main body of the essay.

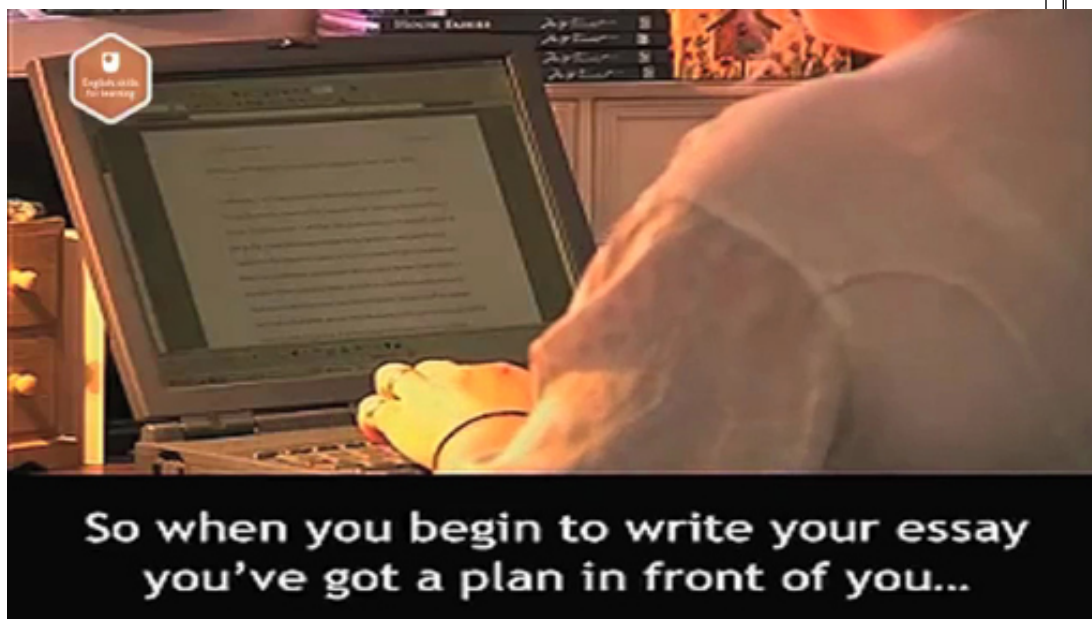
4.1 Reading the essay question

Answering an essay question is only possible if a student knows and understands it. Reading the essay question is therefore a very important step that must be completed before starting the writing process.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Video content is not available in this format.



Now answer the following question:

What is the first thing students should do after reading the assignment question?

- ☐ Write a plan of their essay using tables or diagrams
- ☐ Find the words that explain what they are required to do
- ☐ Start looking for the information they can use in the essay

Discussion

It is important to carefully study the key words contained in the assignment question to find out what it is asking the student to do. These key words are known as instruction words and content words.

4.2 Identifying the instruction words

Having a good understanding of instruction words will help you to identify what type of task you are being asked to do, which, in turn, makes it more likely that an assignment answer will be relevant. These words may seem complex but they are very often used in assignment questions. Understanding instruction words makes it easier to understand the requirements of most assignments.

In the next activity you will learn some of the key words used in assignment questions.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Listed below are eight of the most common instruction words. Match each one with its definition.

Compare and contrast

Discuss/to what extent

Illustrate

Summarise

Describe

Evaluate

Analyse

Explain

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Look for differences and similarities between two or more concepts or things in an organised way

Give reasons for and against an idea

Make an idea clear by giving an example

Give a shortened version of a written or spoken item, stating only the key points

Give a detailed account of something such as characteristics, a reading or an experience

Examine something to judge its value, importance, quality, or effectiveness

Take apart an idea and examine it in great detail in order to understand it
Give details, clarify meaning or give reasons

4.3 Identifying key content words

Having understood what type of task is required, you need to find out what content you have to focus on. This is done by identifying the content words.

The content words are words that express key ideas that you are expected to write about. In the following example of an essay title, the content words are highlighted:

Using examples from Chapter 3, describe some **biological factors** that **influence** the **health of the individual** (approximately 600 words).

Once the content words and the instruction words (in this case, **using examples** and **describe**) are clear, you should be able to rephrase the title to clarify it:

What are the biological factors that influence people's health? I need to identify and give details about a few biological factors, and explain how each can affect health. I need to give some examples from Chapter 3 of my module materials to illustrate my **explanations**.

4.4 Practice understanding the essay question

In the next activity you will practise identifying instruction and content words, and rephrasing questions into a simpler format.

Activity 9

Allow approximately 20 minutes

Below are four essay questions. For each one complete the following tasks:

- Find the instruction words.
- Find the content words.
- Rewrite the task in your own words.

At this stage, you are not expected to know the content or the authors mentioned in these questions. Your purpose for reading them is to understand what each question asks you to do. Type your notes in the boxes before comparing your answers with mine.

1. Compare and contrast our own education to date with that of one of your parents. Which points of comparison seem important to you and why?

The instruction words are:
The content words are:
Can be reworded as:

Answer

The instruction words are:

- compare and contrast
- which important points of comparison ...
- why?

The content words are:

- your own education
- one of your parents' education
- points of comparison
- important

This question can be reworded as:

Find similarities and differences between your education and either your mother's or your father's education. Decide which of these similarities and differences are the most important and explain why this is the case.

2. Decide which **primate species** you would prioritise for conservation action and explain how you came to this conclusion.

The instruction words are:

The instruction words are:
The content words are:
Can be reworded as:

Answer

The instruction words are:

- decide which ...
- explain

The content words are:

- primate species
- prioritise
- conservation action

This question can be reworded as:

Which primate species is it essential to protect from extinction as soon as possible?
Why should each of these species be prioritised?

3. Why do people codeswitch?

The instruction words are:
The content words are:
Can be reworded as:

Answer

The instruction word is:

- Why?

The content word is:

- codeswitch

Codeswitching describes the habit bi-lingual people have of using more than one language when they talk to each other.

This question can be reworded as:

Give many reasons why people codeswitch

4. Describe the causes of **deforestation**, explain its negative effects and evaluate the solutions that have been implemented to date.

The instruction words are:
The content words are:
Can be reworded as:

Answer

The instruction words are:

- describe
- explain
- evaluate

The content words are:

- causes
- deforestation
- negative effects
- solutions

This question can be rewording as:

What are the causes of deforestation? Write about the negative effects of deforestation. Write down your ideas about how good the solutions to the problems are.

4.5 Producing a draft outline

The next stage is to write a draft outline. This can only be written on the basis of a full understanding of the question. The first draft outline helps to decide what to look for in any readings. However, after reading, it is normal to update the draft outline to reflect your improved understanding of the subject.

Look at this task:

Describe **government interventions** which may **help people to tackle obesity**. To what extent do you think these **interventions** can be **effective**?
(800 words)

As this task asks the student to describe government interventions, each section of the essay will need to provide details about one type of intervention. It is also important to consider situations and reasons why an intervention is likely to be effective as well as situations and reasons why it may fail. Each point should be illustrated with examples.

This is a possible outline:

Introduction

Intervention type 1 – description – examples – why it can be effective?/not effective? + examples

Intervention type 2 – description – examples – why it can be effective?/not effective? + examples

Intervention type 3 – description – examples – why it can be effective?/not effective? + examples

Conclusion

Having written this plan it will be necessary to read the course materials to find:

- a definition of the term 'government intervention'
- a definition of the term 'obesity' and some general information about its causes and effects
- examples of ineffective and effective government interventions
- theories about types of government intervention in the health sector.

4.6 Practice producing draft outlines

You will now look again at the essay questions you analysed in Activity 9 and evaluate different outlines that can be used to answer them.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Below is a list of assignment tasks. For each assignment look at the outlines provided and make notes in response to these two questions:

1. Which outline best answers the question?
2. What kind of information are you likely to need in order to write this essay?

Table 1 Assignment 1: Why do people codeswitch?

Outline 1	Outline 2
Introduction	Introduction
1st codeswitching technique + example	1st reason for codeswitching + typical techniques + examples
2nd codeswitching technique + example	2nd reason for codeswitching + typical techniques + examples
3rd codeswitching technique + example	3rd reason for codeswitching + typical techniques + examples
Conclusion	Conclusion

Provide your answer...

Answer

1. Outline 2 is the most appropriate because it provides a range of reasons why people codeswitch. It also explains the codeswitching techniques used and some examples that help to explain these reasons. Outline 1 is incorrect because it describes the techniques but doesn't answer the question.
2. To write this essay, it would be useful to find the following information in the course materials:
 - definition of codeswitching
 - theories about codeswitching, particularly reasons for doing so
 - codeswitching techniques
 - examples.

Table 2 Assignment 2: Deciding which primate species you would prioritise for conservation action and explain how you came to this conclusion.

Outline 1	Outline 2
Introduction	Introduction
Why conservation is important	Primate species that should be prioritised – brief description
Types of primate species	Reason to prioritise 1 + evidence + acknowledge reasons against
Primate species becoming extinct	Reason to prioritise 2 + evidence + acknowledge reasons against
The most important primate species	Reason to prioritise 3 + evidence + acknowledge reasons against
Conclusion	Conclusion

Provide your answer...

Answer

1. Outline 2 is the most appropriate because it directly answers the question by selecting one species and using each paragraph or section to clearly give reasons for this selection. For each reason, the writer also shows that they have considered and dismissed a contrasting viewpoint (e.g. a reason for not selecting this species). This adds strength to the points they make.

The themes covered by Outline 1 provide background information but fail to directly address the question. As the requirement is to write only 800 words there is no space to provide much background information. Some of this (e.g. reasons why conservation is necessary) could be included very concisely in the introduction.
2. To write this essay, it would be useful to find the following information in the course materials:
 - definition of primate species

- list of species that risk extinction and their characteristics
- how important a species is to the environment: is it likely to benefit or damage it?
- theories of conservation
- examples.

Table 3 Assignment 3: Compare and contrast your own education to date with that of one of your parents. Which points of comparison seem important to you and why?

Outline 1	Outline 2	Outline 3
Introduction	Introduction	Introduction
Point of comparison 1 (e.g. subjects studied) – similarities and differences – examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My own education – why it was effective – examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarity 1 – explanation – examples
Point of comparison 2 (e.g. teaching quality) – similarities and differences – examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My parents' education – why it was effective – examples 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similarity 2 – explanation – examples
Point of comparison 3 – similarities and differences – examples	Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference 1 – explanation – examples
The most important points of comparison + reason		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference 2 – explanation – examples
Conclusion		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most important points of comparison
		Conclusion

Provide your answer...

Answer

1. Outline 1 answers the question because it identifies and develops several points of comparison and clearly compares and contrasts the two experiences. It also uses the last paragraph to indicate which one is the most important and why.

Outline 2 provides information about the two educational experiences but does not compare them. Therefore, this outline does not help to answer the question. Outline 3 is also appropriate because it compares and contrasts the two experiences. However, the points of contrast need to be clearly mentioned when looking at similarities and differences. The last paragraph clearly indicates which points of contrast are the most important and why.

2. To write this essay, it would be useful to draw from your own experience and to find the following information in the course materials:
 - information about my own education
 - education theories; in particular, factors that have an effect on people's education as these help to explain the choice of points of contrast
 - examples.

Table 4 Assignment 4: Describe the causes of deforestation, explain its negative effects and evaluate the solutions that have been implemented to date.

Outline 1	Outline 2
Introduction	Introduction
Deforestation technique 1	Cause 1 – description + example
Deforestation technique 2	Cause 2 – description + example
Effect 1 – examples	Effect 1 – description + example
Effect 2 – examples	Effect 2 – description + example
Solution 1 – examples	Solution 1 – description + example + pros/cons
Solution 2 – examples	Solution 2 – description + example + pros/cons
Conclusion	Conclusion

Provide your answer...

Answer

1. Outline 1 is inappropriate because it develops two paragraphs about deforestation techniques, which are not required. It does provide examples of possible effects and solutions but does not describe them. The solutions are neither described nor evaluated.
Outline 2 is appropriate because it clearly focuses on the three key content words included in the question: causes, effects and solutions. For each of these, it provides a description and some examples. When looking at solutions, it looks at reasons in favour of and against choosing them.
2. To write this essay, it would be useful to find the following information in the course materials:
 - information about deforestation: causes, effects, solutions
 - theories about how forest management affects people's lives and the planet
 - examples.

This section has highlighted the importance of fully understanding the essay question as this helps to produce an appropriate outline. In the next section you will look at ways to represent outlines visually through a diagram.

4.7 Using diagrams to plan an assignment

Many students find that diagrams can be useful when planning their essays. This is because diagrams help them to think in a visual way about their essays and the ideas they need to include in them.

Look again at this assignment question:

Describe the causes of deforestation, explain its negative effects and evaluate the solutions that have been implemented to date.

This assignment can be outlined using a mind map as shown in Figure 4.

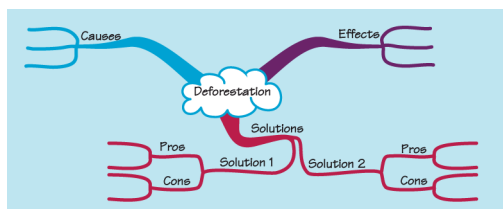


Figure 4 Partial mind map for an assignment question on deforestation

The mind map can be used while reading about deforestation to add information that could be included in the essay.

Activity 11

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Draw a mind map that can be used to plan the following essay and to record the most relevant information from readings.

Decide which primate species you would prioritise for conservation action and explain how you came to this conclusion.

Before designing your mind map, look again at the suggested outline for this question. When you have finished, compare your mind map with mine and read the comments.

Answer

While reading about this topic and using this mind map (Figure 5), it is possible to enter each of the three reasons, details about explanations, evidence and alternative views and more branches.

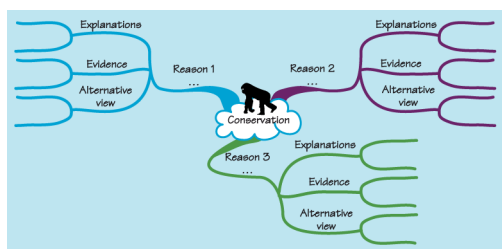


Figure 5 Partial mind map for an assignment question on primate conservation

4.8 Using diagrams to plan a science assignment

Sometimes just reading an assignment question is not sufficient to write a draft plan. You will now look at a science assignment that requires students to describe and explain but provides no information that could help them to write a plan.

The assignment title is:

Describe and explain the greenhouse effect.

Just reading this title is insufficient to outline a text easily because the title does not contain helpful key words such as cause, effect or similarities. Before planning it is therefore necessary to read about this effect. Having done this, information needs to be arranged into steps as this will help to plan the text.

The following activity provides a useful visual technique for planning the essay.

Activity 12

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Watch the following video in which Open University science tutor Phil explains to Zorica how to plan the assignment by using a diagram to visualise the information she needs to include.

Video content is not available in this format.



Now put the following steps into order described by Phil and Zorica.

Infrared radiation emitted from the Sun.

Absorption of infrared by the Earth.

Re-emission of infrared to the atmosphere.

Infrared absorbed by CO₂ and H₂O.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Step 1

Step 2

Step 3

Step 4

Discussion

This activity shows the how diagrams can be used to both identify and present the steps of a process at the pre-writing stage. Depending on the number of words the student is required to write, they can then write either a paragraph or a longer text outlining each of the stages of the process.

5 Planning a report

Reports differ from essays because they normally follow a more detailed standard structure. Knowing this standard structure makes planning easier as it is only necessary to decide what specific content to place in each of its parts and for what reason.

This structure depends on the subject. The next two sections illustrate the structure of a science or technology report, and of a business report.

5.1 Planning a science or a technology report

Table 5 highlights the elements of a science or technology report, though the same general principles apply in other disciplines too.

Table 5 The main elements of a science or a technology report

Element	Purpose	Description
title	attracts the reader's attention	concise phrase or sentence introducing the content
abstract	gives a brief summary	short paragraph clarifying the scope of the report and the main findings
introduction	gives the purpose of the investigation being reported	explains why the investigation was undertaken and gives essential background information
main text	describes how the study was conducted describes how the study was conducted interprets results	the 'meat' of the report containing, for example (depending on the discipline): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• method of investigation/approach taken and why• record of observations or measurements• references to appropriate theories• discussion• analysis of the key facts
conclusions	describes what the study has shown	includes the meaning of the results of the investigation, what has been demonstrated and any recommendations for action

When writing a report, it is necessary to assemble and order the material, perhaps under a set of headings (which can be added to or subdivided). The plan will help to include material that is relevant and to the point.

5.2 Planning a business report

Business studies reports follow a structure that is very similar to those normally written to help management to make decisions. The main purpose of these reports is to describe a real life business situation and to provide a list of recommendations.

While the overall structure is similar to that of a science or a technology report, the main text is usually structured using a 'business model', i.e. a framework that helps the writer to analyse a situation by looking at its specific features.

The following assignment task is structured using a SWOT model. SWOT stands for:

Strengths
Weaknesses
Opportunities
Threats.

In other words, it is a framework that analyses a business by looking at its strengths and weaknesses as well as at any opportunities it can exploit and the threats it faces.

Below is a business studies assignment question:

Use a SWOT model to analyse the multinational company Coca-Cola.

Table 6 shows how this report should be structured.

Table 6 The main elements of a business report

Element	Purpose	Description
Title	Attracts the reader's attention	Concise phrase or sentence introducing the content
Executive summary	Gives a brief summary	Section or paragraph explaining the purpose of the report, the main findings and the recommendations
Introduction	Gives the purpose of the investigation being reported	Paragraph providing background information and explaining why the investigation was required
Method	Explains how the investigation was conducted	Explains why a particular model has been used and how the data was collected
Analysis	Examines the situation in great detail using the SWOT categories	Four sections or paragraphs under the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• strengths• weaknesses• opportunities• threats
Conclusion	Describes what the study has shown	Paragraph briefly summarising the findings, i.e. the content of the analysis and highlighting the key factors
Recommendations	Suggests future action	Paragraph or bullet point list of recommendations based on the findings

6 This week's quiz

Well done, you've just completed the last of the activities for this week's study before the weekly quiz.

Remember the quizzes will let you check your understanding of what you have learned while also helping to prepare you for the badge quiz at the end of Week 4. By completing the weekly quiz you'll also know how the quizzes work before you complete the badge quiz. So, it is a good idea to make time for them if you can.

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

Go to:

[Week 3 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

7 Summary

This week you looked at everyday writing, at different types of university assignments and at useful ways to break the writing process into manageable steps.

These are this week's key learning points:

1. Writing is a daily activity for most people.
2. Writing is easier if you know why you are writing and how to organise ideas and information.
3. Assignments are written to show a tutor that the student has understood and can use the ideas and information learned from the course materials.
4. Essays and reports are two common types of assignment.
5. A range of strategies can be used to deal with the challenges of assignment writing.
6. A useful way to approach assignment writing is to follow a process that consists of several manageable steps.
7. The first step involves understanding the instruction words and key ideas contained in the question.
8. The second step consists in producing a draft plan and deciding what kind of information will be necessary to answer the question.
9. Mind maps and other diagrams can help to plan essays and organise notes.

You can now go to Week 4.

Week 4: Writing well-organised essays

1 How to successfully communicate with other people

The main reason for speaking or writing is to communicate with other people. This consists of giving them a written or spoken message they can understand and respond to. As illustrated by Figure 1, communication takes place when a sender, who could act as a speaker or a writer, sends a message to a receiver, who can be a listener or a reader. The receiver often responds to the sender by speaking or in writing.



Figure 1 The communication process

In this section you will look at the challenges of everyday communication and learn how essays can be a form of communication between students and tutors.

1.1 Communicating in everyday life

It is important that listeners and readers understand the message sent by a person and that they interpret it correctly. In the next activity you will focus on the importance of giving your listeners and readers a clear message.

Activity 1

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Figure 2 shows two colleagues who have just left the office and are queuing at the bus stop. Read their conversation and answer the following questions in the box below:

1. Why doesn't the woman on the left understand what the woman on the right is talking about?
2. What could the woman on the left do to make sense of the other woman's message?
3. Could the same message be expressed more clearly? How?



Figure 2 Ineffective communication

Provide your answer...

Answer

1. The three statements seem unrelated. The meaning of each statement is easy to see but the statements do not work together to provide a clear message. In particular, what is the topic of the woman's message? Why is the woman mentioning information about her garden, her insurance company and her baby? The other woman only knows her as a colleague and may know very little about her situation at home, so they cannot use any background information to make sense of her words.
2. The woman on the left would probably try to make a link between the letter from the insurance company and the baby's toothache. Perhaps the toothache is an injury and the insurance company will pay for treatment. This interpretation, however, does not explain why the woman on the right also talks about cutting the grass. In addition, these are not issues one expects to hear about when queuing at the bus stop. The woman on the left could also look at the expression on the other woman's face and consider the immediate context. Her worried expression and the fact that the bus is delayed could help her to make sense of her words. After trying to interpret the woman's message, the woman on the left would probably conclude that her colleague does not know what she is talking about.
3. Perhaps the woman on the right is worried because the bus is late and she needs to get home soon and deal with the three issues she mentions. To make this clear to her listener, she could have started by introducing the topic of her message: 'I have got so much to do when I get home!' This introductory statement helps to explain what the following statements are about, but the listener may also need more information. For example, they may wonder why the letter needs to be dealt with and why the woman is talking about her busy day at this time. A concluding sentence would help to clarify her message: 'So I really hope the bus arrives soon!'

In everyday conversation, if what other people say is unclear to us, we can use the immediate context to clarify their message. We generally also have the possibility of asking them for an explanation and thus gaining some useful background information.

However, if communication takes place in writing, and the message is unclear or contains unexpected information, these options are not immediately available. This is because the writer is not usually present, and it may not be possible to communicate with them or gain information about the context unless they describe it. Therefore writers need to:

- clearly introduce the theme of their piece of writing

- explain and illustrate their ideas in detail
- clearly connect these ideas and information
- conclude.

As you can see, successful written communication proceeds from general to specific. It first introduces a theme in general terms and then it develops it in more detail through explanations, evidence and examples.

In the next sections you will learn how to communicate clearly through essays, a particular type of writing.

1.2 Communicating with tutors through essays

A university essay is a form of communication written by students for their tutors. The tutors respond by writing comments explaining what the student did well and how he or she can improve. This is called feedback (Figure 3).

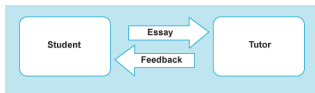


Figure 3 Communication between students and their tutors

To communicate their knowledge successfully to their tutor, students must write in a clear and well-organised way. The next activity will help you to focus on what tutors expect.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Read what some Open University tutors say about the main characteristics they expect to find in a successful essay.

- I teach sociology. In this subject students have to write assignments of about 1,000 words in the first year. I expect an assignment to address the topics mentioned by the assignment question. A good assignment directly and clearly addresses that question and doesn't deal with anything else.
- When I read an essay, I need to be able to follow what the student is saying. So ideas must be linked clearly. If the ideas are just presented as lists, I may have to stop and read certain sentences and paragraphs again to try to understand how they are related. I find it easier to read texts that flow.
- For me, to be successful, essays must be well organised. The first paragraph should introduce the theme of the essay and the main point the student wants to make, the next paragraphs must develop that theme by adding more information such as explanations and evidence which help to answer the question. It is also important to use the last paragraph to conclude.
- I tutor on a science module. For me a good assignment should demonstrate that the student has understood the course materials and is able to use them extensively and correctly.
- I expect students to show that they can explain but also illustrate the points they make. Their answer is stronger if they can give examples and if they can include

evidence taken from the course materials. This evidence can be provided by using theories and information that support what they are saying.

- f. I tutor on a psychology module. I would say that a successful essay is easy to understand. The student must use grammar and vocabulary correctly. This means that sentences must be formed correctly and the student must have chosen the right vocabulary and in particular the correct academic and technical words.

Now match each of the characteristics below with the correct letter for the tutor statement.

Well-connected ideas

Correct use of the course ideas and information

Relevant content that answers the assignment questions

Good use of examples and evidence

Clear structure

Clear use of language

Match each of the items above to an item below.

b

d

a

e

c

f

Discussion

This activity has shown that, to successfully communicate with a university tutor, it is important to provide a clear answer (a–c) and support it with examples and evidence (d). It is also essential to produce what the tutor expects, that is, a text that is relevant to the question and makes correct use of the ideas and information contained in the course materials (e, f).

You have already started looking at ways to provide a relevant, clearly structured answer when you learned to read the assignment question and produce a draft plan of an essay. In the next sections you will further develop this skill and learn how to incorporate examples and evidence, and link ideas.

2 From outline to essay

You will now review the techniques that help to prepare a draft plan. You will then look at the subsequent steps that lead to writing a clearly structured essay that responds to the assignment question.

You will do this by looking in detail at an assignment written by Fred, an Open University student who is studying towards a degree in Health and Social Care. The first step is to look at the assignment question.

2.1 Analysing the assignment question and deciding what to read

As you know, the first steps to writing a successful assignment consist of analysing the assignment question and preparing a draft outline. In the next activity you will practise these steps again.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read the assignment question and answer the questions that follow:

Why is it important for carers to recognise the differences between public and private spaces? Your answer should refer to care provided in hospital, residential and domestic care settings.

1. What are the instruction words?
2. What are the content words?
3. What would be a suitable outline?
4. If you had to write this essay, what information would you look for in your readings?

Make some notes in the box below and then compare your answers with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Instruction words

1. Why is it important?: The assignment question asks students to provide a reason.
2. Your answer should refer to ...: this instruction introduces the areas (specific care settings) on which the answer should focus.

Content words

Carers, public spaces, private spaces, differences, hospitals, residential and domestic care settings

Outline

Figure 4 shows the draft outline that Fred produced:



Figure 4 Fred's outline

Information to look for in readings

Fred wrote the following notes and questions to guide his readings:

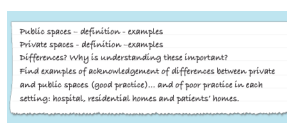


Figure 5 Fred's notes on the assignment

2.2 Using a mind map to identify key themes

Last week you learned that the next step in writing an essay is to use the questions identified when analysing the task to select and take notes from relevant readings.

Fred read about the three care settings and found the answer to the essay question: carers should pay attention to the difference between public and private spaces because this ensures quality of care. This is the reason why private and public spaces should be recognised.

He also found that, due to different priorities, carers sometimes disregard patients' private spaces and individual needs, and this is poor practice that negatively affects quality of care.

Fred jotted some notes in the margin of the course materials and then used the mind map below to reorganise them. The mind map identifies different spaces. It also shows how different priorities lead some carers to either respect or disregard patients' private spaces and indicates where this leads to good or poor practice.

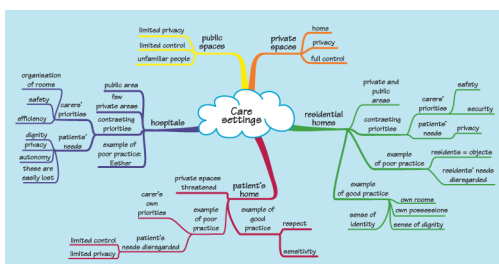


Figure 6 Fred's mind map

2.3 From mind map to revised outline

Drawing a mind map helped Fred to identify the key themes his essay would cover. It also helped to clarify his thinking and include an explanation of why, in each care setting, recognition of and respect for private spaces helps to provide good quality care.

In the next activity you will look at how the mind map helped Fred to choose the key themes of his essay but first look again at his mind map. It should help you to identify the themes and structure Fred decided to use for his final essay plan.

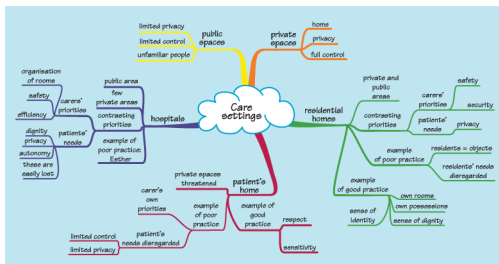


Figure 7 Fred's mind map

Each theme is linked to a coloured line. As you can see from Figure 7, each line relates one of the themes Fred included in his revised essay plan, as shown below.

Private and public places

differences (control/dignity – but presence of unfamiliar people/loss of control/dignity)

Residential homes

example of good practice (private space respected → acceptable level of control and privacy – residents accept compromise)

contrasting priorities – example of poor practice (private place not respected → residents = objects)

Care at home

example of poor practice (private place not respected → loss of control/privacy/dignity)

example of good practice (private space respected → control/privacy)

Hospitals as public spaces

contrasting priorities – limited private spaces → loss of dignity + control

contrasting priorities – mainly treated as public spaces → limited private spaces → loss of dignity + control

Activity 4

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Match each theme Fred intends to use in his essay with the correct branch of his mind map.

Private and public places

Hospitals

Residential homes

Care at home

Match each of the items above to an item below.

Orange and yellow branch

Blue branch

Green branch

Red branch

Fred used the structure themes you have just seen in his final essay outline. In the next activity you will see how he used this outline to write his essay.

2.4 Writing an essay based on an outline

After gathering information and revising the draft essay outline, it is time to write the essay. In the next activity you will see how Fred achieved this.

Activity 5

Allow 15 minutes

Read the essay to identify its main themes.

Fred's essay

1. People consider their home their own private space which they are able to control and keep separate from any public spaces in which they live or work. However, should their circumstances change, and they find themselves in need of care, this private area may be encroached or they may have to spend time in a public space. This can be an uncomfortable experience whether care is delivered in public places such as hospitals or in residential and domestic environments. The ability to determine the differences between public and private spaces is therefore essential for those who wish to be skilled and effective carers as it affects the quality of their work in all care contexts. This essay will consider the differences between public and private spaces and how these can affect the behaviour of both carers and those receiving care in hospital, residential and private homes.
2. Private and public spaces differ greatly. The most familiar and private environment is our home. Here we are in control and can usually determine who will be allowed to enter our private 'space'. Conversely, in public spaces patients have to face the often unsettling experience of losing both privacy and control. They are reduced to living in public and are on view for most of the time. In particular, referring to hospitals, Twigg (1997, p. 22) explains, 'the public nature of the space relates to the access of professionals, of non-kin, non-friends and of relationships that have no private quality to them'.
3. To provide good care in a mostly public space, such as the hospital environment, factors such as safety and the efficiency of the ward should be seen as paramount; however, it is also important to safeguard patients' needs. Staff must be able to observe the patients, and have a certain degree of control over their activities, but this has

the effect of reducing patients' privacy and dignity. For example, Peace (2005) reports the experience of Esther Hurdle, who during her three years spent in hospital, enjoyed little privacy and felt that her needs had to be fitted in with staff routines. Indeed, Gann (1998) explains that 'somehow, when patients enter hospital, it is all too easy for them to experience a loss of **autonomy** and dignity'. The curtains around each bed offer some 'token' privacy, but in reality this is minimal as conversations can be easily overheard, and any discussions between staff, patients or visitors are effectively conducted in public.

4. In the residential care setting too, it is important that staff recognise the differences between public and private spaces. While it is vital to be able to observe the residents, primarily for reasons of safety (Peace, 2005, p. 23), it is equally important to safeguard residents' private spaces. It is generally accepted that the public areas of these buildings are communal lounges, dining rooms and corridors, and the private areas are residents' bedrooms and bathrooms. In some homes however, residents have to share bedrooms, which reduces the privacy level to that of the hospital ward. In homes where residents have little or no privacy, it has been observed that they create their own private spaces in public areas. For example, they will always choose the same chairs in the lounge, which are then unofficially regarded as their own. This illustrates the basic human need for some kind of private space, however small.
5. In a good residential home, the staff will acknowledge the residents' wishes to control their private space. In a carefully designed scheme, the needs of the residents are the prime consideration, although obviously the various fire and health and safety regulations have to be met. For example, at Liberty of Earley House, the residents all have their own rooms and are able to keep many personal possessions (Peace, 2005, p. 71). This enables them to retain their sense of identity and gives them a degree of control over at least part of their lives. They are happy to allow the staff access to their 'territory' and are grateful for the sense of security which they get from knowing that help is always on hand if required. The residents have all had to come to terms with the fact that, for reasons such as age or infirmity, they can no longer lead fully independent lives, but can happily accept this compromise.
6. The story is very different in poorly run residential homes. At Cedar Court Nursing Home, for example, residents' rights to privacy and dignity are totally ignored by staff and residents are treated as objects of care (Peace, 2005, p. 75). As a result, the quality of life experienced by these residents appears to be very low. It is therefore clear that, in residential homes too, when carers fail to distinguish between private and public spaces and disregard residents' wishes and needs, the quality of care suffers.
7. It would seem that those who receive care at home should be in a stronger position to maintain their autonomy, but even here carers must be aware that their behaviour can change this situation considerably. Carers' sensitivity to their clients' private space and needs can therefore make an enormous difference. This is because people in need of care have less choice over who comes into their homes and

what carers do once inside. Even areas such as bedrooms and bathrooms can be 'under threat'. Though the reasons for this invasion of privacy may be fully understood and accepted, it is still difficult to lose control of the home environment. For example, when she was discharged from hospital, Esther Hurdle felt that she had limited control over her day-to-day life as her carer was more concerned with her own routines than with Esther's needs and capabilities (Peace, 2005, p. 73). Esther felt, as suggested by Twigg (1997, p. 22), that 'being and feeling at home means managing as you wish' and not according to some professional 'mode of coping'.

8. A good home carer will always respect the wishes of the client and show them that their right to privacy is valued. A person's home is rightly regarded as the last bastion of privacy and safety. It is all too easy to feel that any remaining control over one's own life is being taken away, if home care is not dealt with sensitively. Therefore, as Bell (1993, p. 40) advises, carers should treat the home care environment as their patients' private space.
9. Conclusion.

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- Peace, S. (2005) K101 *Places for Care*, Milton Keynes, The Open University.
- Twigg, J. (1997) 'Deconstructing the "social bath": help with bathing at home for older and disabled people', *Journal of Social Policy*, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 211–32.

Having read Fred's essay, now think about its content in relationship to the themes listed below.

Match each theme to the corresponding paragraph of Fred's essay. Note that this essay lacks a conclusion. You will look at this later this week.

Paragraph 2

Paragraph 1

Paragraph 6

Paragraph 4

Paragraph 8

Paragraph 5

Paragraph 7

Paragraph 3

Match each of the items above to an item below.

- a. Private and public places
- b. Introduction

- c. Residential homes: example of poor practice
- d. Residential homes – contrasting priorities
- e. Care at home: good practice
- f. Residential homes: example of good practice
- g. Care at home: example of poor practice
- h. Hospitals

Discussion

Fred's text follows his outline and draws on his mind map and readings. He used the typical essay structure consisting of three parts: the introduction, the main body and the conclusion (not included). The main body consists of several paragraphs that work together to answer the assignment question. In the next section you will learn how the first paragraph is used to introduce the essay.

3 Writing an introduction

In this section you will learn how to write a clear introduction. You will look at the purpose and structure of a good introduction.

As you have seen when looking at the bus stop conversation earlier, an introduction helps to give your text direction and introduce its content. The purpose of the introduction is therefore to provide readers with key information that will enable them to understand:

- what the essay will be about
- the main point (or *claim*) it will make
- how the main body will be organised.

This is essential information that attracts the readers' attention, enables them to follow the remaining text easily, and helps them to see that the essay effectively answers the assignment question.

In the next activity you will see how this purpose is achieved by looking at the content and structure of Fred's introduction.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read Fred's introduction and then answer the questions that follow. The numbers in brackets are the sentence numbers. Make your notes in the boxes before comparing your answers with mine.

[1] People consider their home their own private space which they are able to control and keep separate from any public spaces in which they live or work. [2] However, should their circumstances change, and they find themselves in need of care, this private area may be encroached or they may have to spend time in a public space. [3] This can be an uncomfortable experience whether care is delivered in public places such as hospitals or in residential and domestic environments. [4] The ability to determine the differences between public and private spaces is therefore essential for those who wish to be skilled and effective carers as it affects the quality of their work in all care contexts. [5] This essay will consider the differences between public and private spaces and how these can affect the behaviour of both carers and those receiving care in hospitals, residential and private homes.

1 Which sentence explains how the essay will be organised?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Sentence 5

2 Which sentences say what the essay will be about?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Sentences 1, 2 and 3

3 Which sentence states the main claim of the essay?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Sentence 4

Discussion

Sentences 1–3 introduce the themes of the essay: the essay is about private and public spaces and the places where care is provided.

Sentence 4 is about the main point the writer will make. This sentence contains a rephrased version of the assignment question as well as Fred's answer: carers' understanding of the difference between private and public spaces will have an effect on the quality of the care they provide in each of the three care contexts. It is normal for this answer to be quite general at this stage as its content will be fully explained in the following paragraphs. Therefore a general statement, such as this, is sufficient.

Also note that the last sentence starts with the formal and impersonal expression, 'This essay will'. This expression is normally used in academic essays and it is generally preferred to 'I will' or 'We will'.

3.1 From general to specific

Readers can follow an introduction more easily if this first introduces the theme of the essay in general terms and then gradually narrows the focus. You will look at this progression from general to specific points in the next activity.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Listed below are five headings that summarise the first five sentences of Fred's introduction.

- Carers' understanding of differences between spaces.
- Normal situations: private and public spaces are clearly separated.
- Specific care contexts (e.g. hospitals, residential and care situations): difficulties due to reduced private spaces.
- Care situations: living in public spaces, invasion of private spaces.
- Effects of this understanding on quality of care.

Think of them as forming an upside down pyramid (Figure 8) and sort them into the correct order so that they progress from general to specific. Make sure that the most general heading comes first and the rest occupy gradually narrower parts of the pyramid. As you can see, in Figure 8 the last heading has already been entered for you.

Copy and paste or type the headings into the box below in the correct order before looking at the answer.

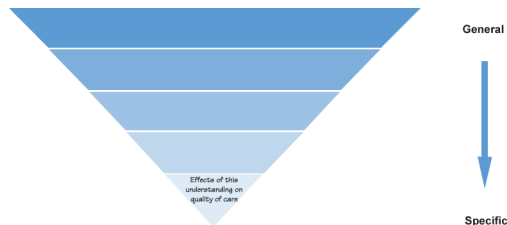


Figure 8 Partly completed pyramid

Provide your answer...

Answer

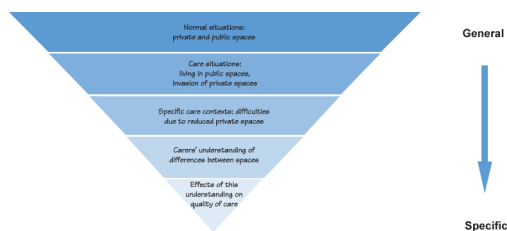


Figure 9 Completed pyramid

As you can see from the diagram, the correct order, reading from the top down (i.e. general to specific) is:

- Normal situations: private and public spaces
- Care situations: living in public spaces, invasion of private spaces
- Specific care contexts: difficulties due to reduced private spaces
- Carers' understanding of differences between spaces
- Effects of this understanding on quality of care

Discussion

Fred's introduction starts by considering all everyday situations, then narrows the focus to care situations before moving on to specific care contexts, e.g. hospitals, residential and private homes. For each situation, it focuses on spaces occupied by people. It starts by looking at private and public spaces in general, moves on to private spaces and the invasion of public spaces in care contexts, before saying that the level of understanding of spaces impacts quality of care.

3.2 Practice writing introductions

You will now look at another introduction, consider its structure and write its final sentence.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Read the following assignment question and the introduction written by Open University student Amina. Again the numbers in brackets refer to the sentence number.

Essay title

Discuss the extent to which a large corporation such as Nike might influence the economic health of a developing country.

Amina's introduction

[1] Wherever a large corporation such as Nike operates, the scale of its activity will have an effect on the locality. [2] In a developing country, this activity will have a significant influence on the whole economy of the area. [3] Economists explain that there is a clear link between large corporations' business activities in Asian countries and the subsequent rise in those countries' standards of living (Sturges, 2000, p. 12). [4] Although multi-national corporations' investment can benefit developing countries, there may also be negative impacts.

Now complete the tasks below. Note your answers in the boxes before comparing them with mine.

Task 1

Answer the following questions:

1. Which content words are contained in the title?
2. Which instruction words are contained in the title?
3. Which sentence states the claim that will be demonstrated by the essay?

Content words:

Claim:

Instruction words:

Answer

1. **Content words:** large corporation; influence; economic health; developing country.
2. **Instruction word:** discuss.
3. **The claim** is stated in sentence 4.

Task 2

Write what you think could be the last sentence of this introduction. This sentence needs to briefly outline Amina's essay. Her essay plan contains the following headings:

- Definition of economy
- Definition of investment
- Effect of large organisations (e.g. Nike) on four areas of economic activity

Provide your answer...

Answer

Amina's introduction ended with this sentence:

This essay will first define the terms 'economy' and 'investment' and then explain how much, and in what way, four areas of economic activity may be affected by the business activities of a large corporation.

Task 3

How does Amina's introduction progress from general points to specific ones?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Amina's introduction starts by mentioning the effects of large corporations on local areas in general. It then narrows down by considering developing countries and Asian developing countries. Finally, it states that the essay will focus only on four areas of activity in these developing countries (Figure 10).

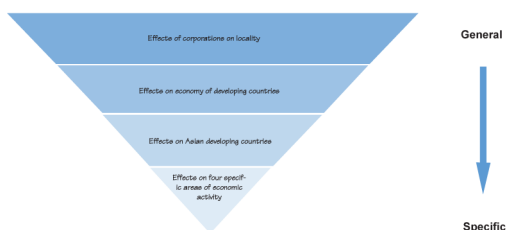


Figure 10 Pyramid showing how Amina's introduction progresses from general information to specific details

4 Organising paragraphs

The purpose of paragraphs is to answer the assignment question by developing the topic and supporting the claim mentioned by the introduction. Each paragraph achieves this by dealing with one key idea or making one point. In Fred's essay, paragraphs are used to develop his main point: carers' sensitivity to differences between private and public spaces in three contexts affects the quality of care.

In this section you will look at the way writers organise their paragraphs so that their readers will find them relevant and easy to read.

4.1 From general to specific

Activity 9

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Reread the second paragraph of Fred's essay, where he has moved from the introduction into the main body of the essay.

[1] Private and public spaces differ greatly. [2] The most familiar and private environment is our home. [3] Here we are in control and can usually determine who will be allowed to enter our private 'space'. [4] Conversely, in public spaces, patients have to face the often unsettling experience of losing both privacy and control. [5] They are reduced to living in public and are on view for most of the time. [6] In particular, referring to hospitals, Twigg (1997, p. 22) explains, 'the public nature of the space relates to the access of professionals, of non-kin, non-friends and of relationships that have no private quality to them'.

Now identify the purpose of each sentence by matching it to one of the following headings. Each heading could be linked to one or two sentences. Make your notes in the boxes before comparing your answers with mine.

1 Introducing differences between private and public spaces

Provide your answer...

Answer

Sentence 1

2 Private spaces: home, control and privacy

Provide your answer...

Answer

Sentence 2 and 3

3 Public spaces: loss of control and privacy

Provide your answer...

Answer

Sentence 4 and 5

4 Details about a public space where care is delivered

Provide your answer...

Answer

Sentence 6

Discussion

An analysis of this paragraph shows that the paragraph starts with a general sentence that introduces its theme; in other words, it explains what the paragraph is about. The supporting sentences develop this theme by providing specific explanations and details.

In this case, the paragraph uses the topic sentence to introduce private and public spaces in care contexts and then deals with each of these spaces in detail. Finally some details about public care spaces are provided.

Readers find paragraphs easy to read if they start with a clear topic sentence. The next activity gives you an opportunity to focus on this.

4.2 Sequencing sentences within a paragraph

In order to be able to order information from general to specific, you need to practise the skills of sequencing sentences and writing a topic sentence. You will practise these skills through the following two activities.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The sentences below come from a paragraph taken from an essay on poverty. These sentences have been mixed up. Reorder the sentences so that they form a paragraph that progresses from general to specific. A good place to start is to find the topic sentence, which is the most general sentence, and then look for any supporting statements.

This context could then impact on the health of the individual and, in turn, affect their ability to work or attend college.

As a result of poverty, an individual may live within an area characterised by poor housing as well as high levels of crime.

Poverty can have a negative effect on people's lives.

Therefore, governments are committed to reducing poverty so that people can live well.

Their income or ambitions will be affected.

Type or copy and paste the sentences in the correct order into the box below. Then compare your answer with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Poverty can have a negative effect on people's lives. As a result of poverty, an individual may live within an area characterised by poor housing as well as high levels of crime. This could then impact on the health of the individual and, in turn, affect their ability to work or attend college. Their income or ambitions will be affected. Therefore, governments are committed to reducing poverty so that people can live well.

Discussion

The topic sentence introduces the theme of the paragraph. The supporting sentences develop this theme by explaining the various effects poverty has on people's lives. This paragraph also includes a concluding sentence.

Activity 11

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read this paragraph from an essay on financial accounting.

Financial accounting, which is required by law, is primarily concerned with providing information to shareholders, creditors, and others who are outside an organization. Financial accountants prepare three financial statements which are used internally by managers: the profit/loss account, the balance sheet and the cash flow statement. Management accounting, on the other hand, is not required by law and is concerned with providing information to managers – that is, people inside an organization who direct and control its operation (Shepherd, 2003, p. 23).

Now choose the most effective topic sentence from those listed below. Remember that this sentence should tell the reader in general terms what the paragraph will be about.

1. Accountants spend a considerable amount of time preparing financial accounts.
2. There are two types of accounting: financial accounting and management accounting.
3. The accounting department employs 30 people.

Type or copy and paste the most effective sentence into the box below. Then compare your answer with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

The correct answer is 2. This topic sentence introduces the two types of accounting that are described in the paragraph.

Answer 1 is an ineffective topic sentence because it introduces only the first of the two types of accounting that are described in the paragraph.

Answer 3 is ineffective because it deals with a topic that is unrelated to the sentences that follow.

4.3 Using a paragraph to make a point

The paragraphs you have considered so far are descriptive as they simply provide details about a particular situation. However, paragraphs are also often used to make a point. In other words, they state and support a particular view convincingly. In the next activity you will look at how Fred makes a point in paragraph 7 of his essay.

Activity 12

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Reread this paragraph from Fred's essay.

[1] It would seem that those who receive care at home should be in a stronger position to maintain their autonomy, but even here carers must be aware that their behaviour can change this situation considerably. [2] Carers' sensitivity to their clients' private space and needs can therefore make an enormous difference.[3] This is because people in need of care have less choice over who comes into their homes and what carers do once inside. [4] Even areas such as bedrooms and bathrooms can be 'under threat'. [5] Though the reasons for this invasion of privacy may be fully understood and accepted, it is still difficult to lose control of the home environment. [6] For example, when she was discharged from hospital, Esther Hurdle felt that she had limited control over her day-to-day life as her carer was more concerned with her own routines than with Esther's needs and capabilities (Peace, 2005, p. 73). [7] Esther felt, as suggested by Twigg (1997, p. 22), that 'being and feeling at home means managing as you wish' and not according to some professional 'mode of coping'.

Now identify the sentences that are used for the following purposes:

- sentence(s) that make a point
- sentence(s) that provide examples or evidence to support the point made
- sentence(s) that provide explanations of the point made.

Note the sentence numbers in the box below before comparing your answers with mine.

Sentence(s) that make a point:
Sentence(s) that provide examples and/or evidence to support the point made:
Sentence(s) that provide explanations of the point made:

Answer

- Sentence(s) that make a point: 1, 2
- Sentence(s) that provide examples and/or evidence to support the point made: 6, 7
- Sentence(s) that provide explanations of the point made: 3, 4, 5

Discussion

This paragraph shows that to make a convincing point, it is necessary to state this point and explain it (This is because...). It should also be illustrated through examples (e.g. Esther's experience) and, where possible, with evidence (research conducted by Twigg).

As you can see, both examples and evidence have been taken from academic sources whose authors have been acknowledged through a reference.

Explanations and examples and/or evidence are both necessary if a convincing point is to be made; however, the order in which they appear in the paragraph may be different. This is illustrated by the next activity.

Activity 13

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Reread the following paragraph and identify the:

- point
- explanation
- example.

[1] The story is very different in poorly run residential homes. [2] At Cedar Court Nursing Home, for example, residents' rights to privacy and dignity are totally ignored by staff and they are treated as objects of care (Peace, 2005, p. 75). [3] As a result, the quality of life experienced by these residents appears to be very low. [4] It is therefore clear that, in residential homes too, when carers fail to distinguish between private and public spaces and disregard residents' wishes and needs, the quality of care suffers.

Note the appropriate sentence numbers in the box below before comparing your answers with mine.

Point:
Explanation:
Example:

Answer

- **Point:** Sentence 1
- **Explanation:** Sentence 4
- **Example:** Sentence 2

Discussion

This paragraph starts with a point, illustrates it with an example and ends with a concluding sentence that provides an explanation.

4.4 Presenting your paragraphs

As you have seen so far, when writing an essay a main concern should be clarity. This is achieved by clearly introducing and structuring the paragraphs, moving from general information to specific details and dealing with only one point at a time.

In the next activity you will learn that presentation also helps to produce a clear answer that tutors can easily follow.

Activity 14

Allow 5 minutes

Figure 11 contains visual representations of three possible ways to present an essay (A, B, C). Match each one to the tutor feedback below.

1. This is a well-presented essay. Each paragraph develops one point and is clearly separate from the others.
2. This essay is difficult to follow. It develops many points but these are not easy to identify as the essay is presented as one unbroken chunk of text.
3. This essay deals with several issues but only one or two sentences are used to develop each point. In some cases explanations are provided in a separate short paragraph. This makes the text difficult to read.



Figure 11 Visual representations of different types of essay

Note the appropriate numbers in the box below before comparing your answers with mine.

A:
B:
C:

Answer

A: 2

B: 3

C: 1

Discussion

The way in which an essay is presented can help readers to clearly see its organisation and identify each point easily. If all points are merged into one long paragraph or if the supporting sentences are presented separately, readers will find it very difficult to follow.

5 Using the last paragraph to conclude the essay

An essay should always have a concluding paragraph. An effective concluding paragraph should:

- refer to the assignment question and its key content words
- refer to the claim made in the introduction
- refer to and draw together the points made in the main body of the essay
- provide a clear answer to the question
- provide a brief comment (optional).

Activity 15

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read these two conclusions and then answer the questions that follow.

Conclusion 1

To conclude, in each of the settings described there can always be valid reasons for an individual's private space to be entered. Aspects of safety cannot be ignored and regulations must be adhered to, particularly in non-domestic settings. There are always the problems of staff routines, and the greater good of all patients must be balanced against an individual's needs. However, care should be taken when handling all these situations. Care staff should always remember that they are dealing with individual people. It must be difficult enough to cope with the loss of physical or mental capabilities, and to have to come to terms with the impossibility of ever leading a healthy independent life again without the added indignity of being treated as an object. Everyone is entitled to respect and to be given at least some control and freedom. This is a basic human right.

Conclusion 2

To conclude, whether they work in hospitals, residential homes or patients' homes, carers must be sensitive to the different characteristics of private and public spaces. This sensitivity helps to carefully balance, on the one hand, patients' need to privacy, dignity and control over their lives and, on the other, the carers' need to guarantee safety and effective care. Evidence shows that this approach ultimately affects quality of care as patients will appreciate the security provided by the care context but at the same time benefit from having at least some autonomy and some control over their private spaces. This is likely to increase patients' well-being and favour the recovery process.

1. Which conclusion more closely follows the main characteristics of the concluding paragraph described above?
2. Why do you think this?
3. Why is the other conclusion less effective?

Make some notes in the box before comparing them with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Conclusion 2 is the most effective because it very clearly answers the question asked, which was 'Why is it important for carers to recognise the differences between public and private spaces?' It does this by referring to the point, made in the introduction, that an understanding and sensitivity to these differences affects quality of care and is therefore good practice.

In providing this answer, Conclusion 2 summarises the main points made by the main body of the essay. This is done by mentioning 'patients' need to privacy, dignity and control over their lives' and 'the carers' need to guarantee safety and effective care'.

Conclusion 1 is less good because it does not clearly answer the question. It summarises many points made by the main body and provides recommendations and comments. Recommendations were not required and it was therefore not necessary to include them.

6 This week's quiz

Now it's time to complete the Week 4 badge quiz. This is in a similar format to the previous weeks' quizzes but this time, instead of having five questions to answer, there will be 15. You will still have three tries at answering each question, with hints to help. This quiz will look at the topics from this week as well as the previous three weeks.

This quiz is the first of the two quizzes that count towards your badge. You need to do this quiz and the Week 8 quiz to get your badge for this course. You do need to achieve 50% on both.

Doing the quizzes is a great way for you to check your own learning – and it is always good to find out that you are on the right track.

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

Go to:

[Week 4 compulsory badge quiz.](#)

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

7 Summary

This week you have learned how to use notes and an outline to write an essay. You have also looked at the structure of introductions, body paragraphs and conclusions, and at the way in which these contribute to produce a relevant essay.

These are this week's most important learning points:

1. Communication takes place between a sender (a writer or speaker) and a receiver (a reader or a listener).
2. One way in which students and tutors communicate is through assignments and tutor feedback on assignments.
3. When writing, it is important to keep the reader in mind as this helps to produce clearer, more relevant texts.
4. The essay and each of its paragraphs should proceed from general information to specific details.
5. Introductions often contain an introductory sentence and background information.
6. Introductions should contain the author's main claim and an outline of the essay.
7. Each paragraph should start with a general sentence that introduces its theme.
8. The supporting sentences should gradually narrow the focus by including explanations, examples and evidence.
9. The layout of an essay should help to identify each paragraph and the point it makes.
10. The conclusion should be used to draw together the points made in the main body of the essay, and to refer back to the assignment question and the claim made in the introduction.

You can now go to Week 5.

Week 5: Linking ideas

Introduction

So far you have looked at the essay-writing process and at the structure of each part of a good essay. This week you will look at the essay as a whole and focus on ways to link its various parts so that readers will find it easy to read.

Anna introduces the week in the following video:

Video content is not available in this format.



Some of the activities this week are based on Fred's essay from Week 4. I suggest you [download the file](#) that's been provided and print it out, as you may find it helpful to be able to highlight, underline or annotate portions of the text.

By the end of this week you will be able to recognise ways to:

- link the introduction and the paragraphs to the essay question
- introduce new information by linking it to information already known to the reader
- link paragraphs and sentences through linking words and phrases.

1 Helping your reader to follow your text

An essay is easy to read if it is a cohesive text. In a cohesive essay all parts – the introduction, the paragraphs and the conclusion – are linked and work together to provide a relevant answer to the assignment question. These links need to be clear to the people who read the text. In this section you will see how this is achieved.

1.1 The house analogy

One way to look at an essay is to imagine that the writer is behaving in the same way as someone who is selling a house and showing the potential buyers around the different rooms. This analogy is used in the next activity.

Activity 1

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Chris Lee, an Open University tutor, uses the house analogy when she helps students to understand essay structure and the importance of linking ideas. Read the advice she offers her students and then answer the questions that follow:

Try to pretend that you are somebody selling a house and showing the clients around it. You would start with an introduction to the house, possibly just before entering or while standing on the doorstep. In this introduction, you would mention the number of rooms and where these are located. This is just like the introduction to an essay.

Then you would move into the living room and say, 'This is the living room', which is just like a topic sentence, and you would describe what is in the living room – that is the rest of the paragraph. You would then move into the next room, which is the next paragraph, introduce that, give the detail and then move on again.

When using the house analogy, moving into a new room is like introducing a new topic. You need to give the introduction to the room first, for example say, 'This is the dining room where we eat', rather than saying the detail like, 'Look at the knives and forks'. In the same way, when writing an essay you need to start with a clear topic sentence and then fill in the detail later, rather than the other way round.

The room analogy can help you deal with the logic of the argument, and linking paragraphs, which is one of the key difficulties, I think, for many students. You don't just leap from one room to the other but you make a sort of transition. For example, if you were going up the stairs to the bedroom you would have to finish showing the downstairs and use the stairs to link to the bedroom.

In a similar way, you should not leap from one bit of the essay to the next. You have to link the paragraphs together logically for the reader so that there is a flow in the argument that makes the logic stand out.

1. What is the mistake many students make?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Students have problems showing the logic of the main point they are making and linking their ideas. They leap from one part of the essay to another.

2. Why is it important to link paragraphs?

Provide your answer...

Answer

The student's logic must stand out and the essay should flow.

To ensure all the components of an essay are clearly linked and the text flows, it is important to use the first paragraph to tell the reader what the essay will be about. This can be done by introducing its topic, and then linking it to the assignment question by stating the main claim and outlining the rest of the text.

The body paragraphs also link to the assignment question. They follow the outline given by the introduction, develop the theme of the essay and support the writer's main point.

The conclusion should link to the title and to the introduction by restating the writer's main claim and by referring to the supporting points made in the paragraphs.

These links are illustrated in Figure 1.

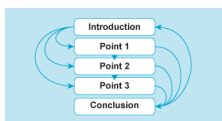


Figure 1 Links between the introduction, the paragraphs and the conclusion

1.2 Linking the introduction to the assignment question

A good introduction aims to show the reader that the essay will provide a relevant answer to the assignment question. To achieve this, the introduction should link back to the question. This is done by writing a paragraph that deals with all the key content mentioned in the assignment question. This is reinforced by the use of words (or their synonyms) mentioned in the question.

In the next activities you will look again at Fred's essay, which you worked with in Week 4, to see how his paragraphs are linked and how they work together to answer the assignment question. If you haven't done so already, I suggest you [download the file](#) that has been provided and print it out, as you may find it helpful to be able to highlight, underline or annotate portions of the text.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Reread the assignment question Fred had to answer. The key content words have been highlighted in bold italic and numbers have been added to link the words to a specific topic in Fred's essay.

Assignment question

Why is it important for ***carers*** [1] to recognise the ***differences*** [2] between ***public*** [3] and ***private*** [4] spaces? Your answer should refer to ***care*** [1] provided in ***hospital*** [5], ***residential*** [6] and ***domestic*** [7] settings.

Now look at the introduction to Fred's essay. Identify all the words Fred uses that relate to each specific theme. You can do this in any way you wish: by highlighting or underlining in different colours or otherwise adding numbers to a paper copy of the essay. Two numbers have already been placed for you. When you have finished compare your answer with mine.

Essay introduction

People consider their home their own private space [4] which they are able to control and keep separate from any public spaces [3] in which they live or work. However, should their circumstances change, and they find themselves in need of care, this private area may be encroached or they may have to spend time in a public space. This can be an uncomfortable experience whether care is delivered in public places such as hospitals or in residential and domestic environments. The ability to determine the differences between public and private spaces is therefore essential for those who wish to be skilled and effective carers as it affects the quality of their work in all care contexts. This essay will consider the differences between public and private spaces and how these can affect the behaviour of both carers and those receiving care in hospital, residential and private homes.

Answer

The word(s) in bold italic are the key words that link to each topic. The numbers indicate which topic the highlighted word(s) relates to.

Essay introduction

People consider their home their own **private space** [4] which they are able to control and keep separate from any **public spaces** [3] in which they live or work. However, should their circumstances change, and they find themselves in need of **care** [1], this **private area** [4] may be encroached or they may have to spend time in a **public space** [3]. This can be an uncomfortable experience whether **care** [1] is delivered in **public places** [3] such as **hospitals** [5] or in **residential** [6] and **domestic environments** [7]. The ability to determine the **differences** [2] between **public** [3] and **private spaces** [4] is therefore essential for those who wish to be skilled and effective **carers** [1] as it affects the quality of their work in all **care** [1] contexts. This essay will consider the **differences** [2] between **public** [3] and **private spaces** [4] and how these can affect the behaviour of both **carers** [1] and those receiving care [1] in **hospital** [5], **residential** [6] and **private** [4] **homes** [7].

If you chose to use colour to visualise this activity you can see the same information in this PDF: [Week 5 Activity 2 answer](#).

Discussion

It is important to use the first paragraph to introduce the key themes that will be covered in the essay. This helps readers to follow the student's reasoning and reassures them that the answer is relevant to the assignment question.

1.3 Linking the main body paragraphs to the introduction

Having stated a claim and outlined the essay, it is important to show readers that the paragraphs follow the outline provided by the introduction and deal with the key ideas mentioned in the question. This is done by ensuring that each topic sentence links back to both the outline and the claim, as well as to the key ideas mentioned in the introduction.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Reread the last two sentences of Fred's introduction, the topic sentences of each paragraph and the conclusion (all reproduced below). As you did in Activity 2, identify all the words that relate to the same specific topic. Some of these words are already highlighted, using the same system that was used in Activity 2 (bold italic and a topic number). If you prefer, you can highlight or underline words related to each topic using a different colour.

The ability to determine the ***differences*** [2] between ***public*** [3] and ***private*** [4] spaces is therefore essential for those who wish to be skilled and effective carers as it affects the ***quality of their work*** [1] in all care contexts. This essay will consider the differences between public and private spaces and how these can affect the behaviour of both carers and those receiving care in ***hospital*** [5], ***residential*** [6] and ***private homes*** [7].

Private and public spaces differ [2] greatly.

To provide good care in a mostly public space, such as the hospital environment, factors such as safety and the efficiency of the ward should be seen as paramount; however, it is also important to safeguard patients' needs.

In the residential care setting too, it is important that staff recognise the ***differences*** [2] between ***public*** [3] and ***private*** [4] spaces.

In a good residential home, the staff will acknowledge the residents' wishes to control their private space.

The story is very different in poorly run residential homes.

It would seem that those who receive care at home should be in a stronger position to maintain their autonomy, but even here carers must be aware that their behaviour can change this situation considerably.

A good home carer will always respect the wishes of the client and show them that their right to privacy is valued.

To conclude, whether they work in hospitals, residential homes or patients' homes, carers must be sensitive to the different characteristics of private and public spaces. This sensitivity helps to carefully balance, on the one hand, patients' need to privacy, dignity and control over their lives and, on the other, the carers' need to guarantee safety and effective care. Evidence shows that this approach ultimately affects quality of care as patients will appreciate the security provided by the care context but at the same time

benefit from having at least some autonomy and some control over their private spaces. This is likely to increase patients' well-being and favour the recovery process.

Once again you can do this activity in any way you wish: by highlighting, underlining or otherwise annotating a paper copy of the essay or by making notes in the box provided below. When you have finished compare your answer with mine.

Answer

The words in bold italic are the key words that link to each topic. The numbers indicate which topic the highlighted words relate to.

The ability to determine the **differences** [2] between **public** [3] and **private** [4] spaces is therefore essential for those who wish to be skilled and effective **carers** [1] as it affects the quality of their work in all **care** [1] contexts. This essay will consider the **differences** [2] between **public** [3] and **private** [4] spaces and how these can affect the behaviour of both **carers** [1] and those receiving care in **hospital** [5], **residential** [6] and **private homes** [7].

Private [4] and **public** [3] spaces **differ** [2] greatly.

To provide **good care** [1] in a mostly **public** [3] space, such as the **hospital environment** [5], factors such as safety and the efficiency of the ward should be seen as paramount; however, it is also important that **carers** [1] safeguard patients' needs.

In the **residential care setting** [6] too, it is important that **staff** [1] recognise the **differences** [2] between **public** [3] and **private** [4] spaces.

In a **good** [1] **residential home** [6], **the staff** [1] will acknowledge the residents' wishes to control their **private** [4] space.

The story is very different in **poorly run** [1] **residential homes** [6].

It would seem that those who receive **care** [1] at **home** [7] should be in a stronger position to maintain their autonomy, but even here **carers** [1] must be aware that **their behaviour** [1] can change this situation considerably.

A **good** [1] **home** [7] **carer** [1] will always respect the wishes of the client and show them that their right to **privacy** [4] is valued.

To conclude, whether they work in **hospitals** [5], **residential homes** [6] or **patients' homes** [7], carers must be sensitive to the **different** [2] characteristics of **private** [4] and **public** [3] spaces. This sensitivity helps to carefully balance, on the one hand, patients' need to **privacy** [4], dignity and control over their lives and, on the other, the **carers'** [1] need to guarantee safety and effective care. Evidence shows that this approach ultimately affects quality of **care** [1] as patients will appreciate the security provided by the **care** [1] context but at the same time benefit from having at least some autonomy and some control over their **private** [4] spaces. This is likely to increase patients' well-being and favour the recovery process.

If you chose to use colour to visualise this activity you can see the same information in this PDF: [Week 5 Activity 3 answer](#).

Discussion

This activity has shown that Fred's essay is indeed cohesive. This is because the key topics introduced in the introduction are discussed in the paragraphs. In particular, the differences between private and public spaces and the three care settings mentioned in the introduction are dealt with across all paragraphs in the essay.

All the topic sentences and the conclusion mention quality of care, which is the reason why, according to Fred, private and public spaces should be distinguished. If you read Fred's essay, you will notice that the content of paragraphs 3–8 also support his claim. Therefore all the paragraphs work together to explain and support Fred's claim.

Fred's essay is easy to follow because both the introduction and the paragraphs are connected to the introduction, the conclusion and the assignment question. However, it is also important to ensure that paragraphs are linked to each other and that within them, sentences are also clearly connected. You will learn how to do this in the following sections.

2 Using familiar information to introduce new information

To help the reader follow the reasoning in the main body of the essay, the writer's line of thinking should flow from paragraph to paragraph. This can be done by using information with which the reader is already familiar when introducing new ideas.

2.1 Linking paragraphs

One way to lead readers into the topic introduced in a new paragraph is to use the first sentence to mention something the reader already knows something about. This is usually a person, a concept or an event that has already been mentioned in the previous paragraph (Figure 2). This familiar information is used to introduce new information.

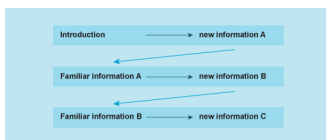


Figure 2 Linking paragraphs by reusing familiar information

For example, the last two sentences of Fred's second paragraph introduce the concepts of 'hospitals' and 'public space'. These will be perceived as familiar information by readers when they are reused at the beginning of the following paragraph (Figure 3).

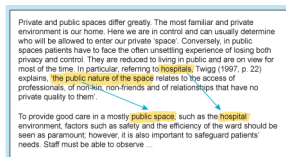


Figure 3 Example of linking paragraphs by reusing familiar information

A similar way to help readers follow a writer's reasoning is to mention the same familiar information in the topic sentences of two or more paragraphs. Therefore the topic sentence of each paragraph starts by mentioning the same familiar information. This is usually done when the writer needs two paragraphs to deal with the same topic. In this case, the writer can break each topic into two or more subtopics and deal with each in a separate paragraph (Figure 4).

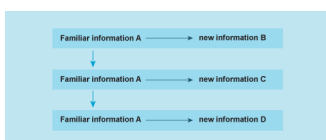


Figure 4 Linking paragraphs by placing the same familiar information in each of their topic sentences

This is the approach Fred takes in paragraphs 4, 5 and 6. Each paragraph starts with a topic sentence that introduces an aspect of care in residential homes:

[P4] In the **residential care setting** too, it is important that staff recognise the differences between public and private spaces. ...

[P5] In a good **residential home**, the staff will acknowledge the residents' wishes to control their private space. ...

[P6] The story is very different in poorly run **residential homes**. ...

Activity 4

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Reread the last two paragraphs of Fred's essay (reproduced below). Which of the two methods listed below does Fred use to link these paragraphs to each other? Make some notes in the box before comparing them with the answer.

1. The first sentence of a new paragraph mentions something the reader already knows something about.
2. The topic sentences of two or more paragraphs mention the same familiar information.

It would seem that those who receive care at home should be in a stronger position to maintain their autonomy, but even here carers must be aware that their behaviour can change this situation considerably. Carers' sensitivity to their clients' private space and needs can therefore make an enormous difference. This is because people in need of care have less choice over who comes into their homes and what carers do once inside. Even areas such as bedrooms and bathrooms can be 'under threat'. Though the reasons for this invasion of privacy may be fully understood and accepted, it is still difficult to lose control of the home environment. For example, when she was discharged from hospital, Esther Hurdle felt that she had limited control over her day-to-day life as her carer was more concerned with her own routines than with Esther's needs and capabilities (Peace, 2005, p. 73). Esther felt, as suggested by Twigg (1997, p. 22), that 'being and feeling at home means managing as you wish' and not according to some professional 'mode of coping'.

A good home carer will always respect the wishes of the client and show them that their right to privacy is valued. A person's home is rightly regarded as the last bastion of privacy and safety. It is all too easy to feel that any remaining control over one's own life is being taken away, if home care is not dealt with sensitively. Therefore, as Bell (1993, p. 40) advises, carers should treat the home care environment as their patients' private space.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Fred uses the second method, as the topic sentences of both paragraph 7 and paragraph 8 mention care at home.

[P7] It would seem that those who receive **care at home** should be in a stronger position to maintain their autonomy, but even here carers must be aware that their behaviour can change this situation considerably ...

[P8] A good **home carer** will always respect the wishes of the client and show them that their right to privacy is valued ...

2.2 Linking sentences

Familiar information can be used to introduce new information within paragraphs too. For example, the information introduced at the end of the first sentence below (carers' behaviour) is treated as familiar information at the beginning of the second sentence, which focuses on a specific type of carers' behaviour: carers' sensitivity to their clients.

It would seem that those who receive care at home should be in a stronger position to maintain their autonomy, but even here **carers must be aware that their behaviour** can change this situation considerably. **Carers' sensitivity to their clients'** private space and needs can therefore make an enormous difference.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Reread the following paragraph taken from [Fred's essay](#). In what way does new information build on information the reader is already familiar with? Identify all the words or phrases that are linked in this way.

For example, at Liberty of Earley House, the residents all have their own rooms and are able to keep many personal possessions (Peace, 2005, p. 71). This enables them to retain their sense of identity and gives them a degree of control over at least part of their lives. They are happy to allow the staff access to their 'territory' and are grateful for the sense of security which they get from knowing that help is always on hand if required. The residents have all had to come to terms with the fact that, for reasons such as age or infirmity, they can no longer lead fully independent lives, but can happily accept this compromise.

Once again you can do this activity in any way you wish: by highlighting, underlining or otherwise annotating a paper copy of the essay or by making notes in the box provided below. When you have finished compare your answer with mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

As can be seen below, the first sentence introduces the new theme 'residents'. This becomes familiar information, which is used to introduce each of the following sentences through the use of the words 'the residents', 'them' and 'they'.

Another link is established by using the word 'this' in the second sentence to summarise the information at the end of the first sentence. Therefore, 'this' is treated as familiar information in the second sentence.

For example, at Liberty of Earley House, **the residents** all have *their own rooms and are able to keep many personal possessions* (Peace, 2005, p. 71). *This* enables **them** to retain their sense of identity and gives them a degree of control over at least part of **their** lives. **They** are happy to allow the staff access to their 'territory' and are grateful for the sense of security which **they** get from knowing that help is always on hand if required. **The residents** have all had to come to terms with the fact that, for reasons such as age or infirmity, **they** can no longer lead fully independent lives, but can happily accept this compromise.

If you chose to use colour to visualise this activity you can see the same information in this PDF: [Week 5 Activity 5 answer](#).

3 Using connectives to link information

Another way to connect paragraphs and sentences is to use linking words or phrases. These linking words are also called connectives.

In the following paragraph, Fred uses four connectives:

The story is very different in poorly run residential homes. At Cedar Court Nursing Home, **for example**, residents' rights to privacy and dignity are totally ignored by staff and residents are treated as objects of care (Peace, 2005, p. 75). **As a result**, the quality of life experienced by these residents appears to be very low. It is **therefore** clear that, in residential homes **too**, when carers fail to distinguish between private and public spaces and disregard residents' wishes and needs, the quality of care suffers.

As you can see, in this example the connectives are used in the following ways:

for example: This connective helps the reader to understand that the situation explained in the second sentence is an example of the more general situation introduced in the topic sentence

as a result: this connective links the sentence describing the example to a sentence that describes its effect

therefore: this connective links the last sentence to the previous ones by introducing a consequence of the situation they describe

too: this connective links the situation referred to in the last sentence to situations described in previous sentences.

A range of connectives can be used in different ways to link the ideas contained in sentences and paragraphs. In the following sections you will look at connectives used to:

- add information and ideas
- add an example
- compare and contrast ideas
- express cause and effect relationships.

3.1 Adding information and ideas

It is often necessary to add new ideas and information to what has already been said. This can be signalled through a connective, as in these examples:

Furthermore, while the Earth's temperature has been steadily rising over the last 200 years, there has **also** been a steady increase in the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

There are other types of uncertainty in measurements that may need considering **too**.

The most common words that writers use to add ideas or new information are:

- also
- too
- in addition
- furthermore
- moreover

The essay question may require a list of related points; for example, the student may have to list several reasons, causes or effects. To help the reader follow the text, one of the sets of linking words shown in Table 1 could be used to start each paragraph.

Table 1 Sets of linking words

Set 1	Set 2	Set 3	Set 4	Set 5
Firstly, ...	One reason/cause/ effect ...	The first reason/cause/ effect ...	Sometimes ...	The first point to note ...
Secondly, ...	Another reason/ cause/effect ...	The second reason/ cause/ effect ...	At other times ...	The next point ...
Lastly, ...	A further reason/ cause/effect ...	The third reason/cause/ effect ...		
Finally, ...				

If the list can be included in one paragraph, these linking words can be placed in each sentence to introduce an additional point, as in this example taken from the Open University course *Understanding business behaviour*:

Firms may decide to go multinational for a variety of reasons. **Sometimes, the chief motivation** is the reduction of costs, such as labour costs, costs of raw materials and components, and transport costs. **At other times, the growth motive** is more important: a firm may wish to exploit any advantages that it has over its rivals. **Another reason** may be the possibility to reduce costs of production due to a large number of items being produced. The desire to circumvent import restrictions may be **another motivation** for firms to become multinational.

Adapted from: Suneja (2000)

As you can see, to add variety to their writing, this author used the words reason, motivation and motive when introducing each example of why firms may decide to go multinational.

3.2 Giving examples

In Week 4 you saw that to fully explain a point it is useful to illustrate it by adding an example. To help the reader notice the sentences containing examples and to distinguish them from sentences containing a point or an explanation, writers use a range of linking words and phrases, such as these:

- for example
- for instance
- is an example

is a case in point

one example is

such as (Note that 'such as' can only be used to link information within and not between sentences.)

is illustrated.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Fill the gaps in the sentences below by inserting one of the listed linking phrases. Sometimes more than one phrase can be used.

for example	is illustrated
as an example	is a case in point
one example	such as

- 1 Technology often involves devices or tools, but it also includes social innovations. _____, a book can be thought of as a technology for sharing ideas, or a meeting between people as a technology for sharing experience to solve a problem
- 2 In this book, farming is used _____ of a technology that involves tools, knowledge and effective organisation of people in order to work.
- 3 From a social science perspective migration provides an interesting example of how large-scale social forces impact upon individual lives. The experience of Barack Obama is _____. His parents, and also the young Obama, migrated across the world.
- 4 This complexity _____ by the following case study.
- 5 If migrants feel that their ancestral language negatively affects their life chances, they may encourage children to use only English. _____ is that of a poor community of Yiddish-speaking immigrants in the early twentieth-century Cape Town.
- 6 Some sciences, _____ chemistry and physics, tend to be based within laboratories.

Answer

1. Technology often involves devices or tools, but it also includes social innovations. For example/for instance, a book can be thought of as a technology for sharing ideas, or a meeting between people as a technology for sharing experience to solve a problem.
2. In this book, farming is used **as an example** of a technology that involves tools, knowledge and effective organisation of people in order to work.
3. From a social science perspective migration provides an interesting example of how large-scale social forces impact upon individual lives. The experience of Barack Obama is **a case in point**. His parents, and also the young Obama, migrated across the world.
4. This complexity **is illustrated** by the following case study.
5. If migrants feel that their ancestral language negatively affects their life chances, they may encourage children to use only English. **One example** is that of a poor community of Yiddish-speaking immigrants in the early twentieth-century Cape Town.

6. Some sciences, ***such as*** chemistry and physics, tend to be based within laboratories.

4 Comparing and contrasting ideas



Figure 5

University assignments often require students to link ideas by comparing or contrasting them.

When you **compare** things, the task is to **explain how they are similar**.

When you **contrast** them, you explain **how they are different**.

Whether it concerns a theory, an approach or a procedure, writing about similarities and differences is common to all academic fields.

This section focuses on the effective use of linking words to indicate similarities and differences between things and ideas in a text.

4.1 Becoming familiar with words and phrases that signal comparison and contrast

Compare and contrast can be signalled in many ways. The following activity introduces the words and phrases most commonly used in formal and academic texts.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Here are some words and phrases that are commonly used to signal comparison or contrast.

but	instead	unlike	and
while	both	also	whereas
be different (from)	too	neither ... nor	however
on the other hand	like	in contrast	be the same (as)

Copy and paste, or type, those that you think signal **comparison** (similarity) into the first box below, and those that signal **contrast** (difference) into the second box.

Comparison

Provide your answer...

Contrast

Provide your answer...

Answer

Table 2 Comparison and contrast

Comparison (similarity)	Contrast (difference)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • both • and • also • like • too • be the same (as) • neither ... nor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • but • in contrast • unlike • be different (from) • on the other hand • however • instead • while • whereas

Discussion

You don't need to memorise these words and phrases. By meeting them in your reading and incorporating them in your writing, you will gradually master their use.

4.2 Putting it into practice

Practice can help to express similarities and differences correctly. The following activity gives you an opportunity to use the compare and contrast connectives introduced in Activity 7.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The table below compares the job of a home carer employed by an agency with that of a personal assistant employed directly by the service user.

Table 3 Comparison of home carer and personal assistant

Component	Home carer	Personal assistant
Terms and conditions of work	Involves unsocial hours, and the need to be flexible	Involves unsocial hours, and the need to be flexible
Training opportunities	Varies, but these ought to be available (in the way they are for staff at Somebody Cares)	Probably none in a formal sense
Training opportunities	Limited, but possibility of attaining supervisory or managerial roles	None

Choice of clients	Very limited	Considerable
Relationship with client	Will vary, but formally constrained by care plan, employer's regulations and health and safety considerations	Personally negotiated, but there may well be issues associated with maintaining a boundary between work and friendship
Amount of personal risk associated with the job	Vulnerable as they work alone, often in the homes of people they do not know	Limited, although there may be some if the relationship with the employer goes wrong
Job satisfaction	Depends on the clients and the way the job is managed by the agency	Likely to be considerable if they get on with the person who employs them

(The Open University 2008 K101 Introduction to health and social care, Block 1, Unit 3, p. 150)

Some aspects of the two roles – such as their **terms and conditions of work** (first row of the table) – are considered to be much the same. Others, such as **opportunities for training** (second row of the table), differ.

In this activity you will practise various ways of expressing similarity on the one hand and difference on the other, with reference to the first two components of the table.

Choosing from the following connecting words, complete the gaps in the sentences below. Copy the word into the appropriate gap. Some of the words will need an initial capital letter at the start of the sentence.

unlike	however	while/ whereas	both
like	both	the same/ similar	and

1. Expressing comparison (similarity)

- (a) The terms and conditions of home carers and personal assistants are _____ in that they _____ involve unsociable hours and flexible schedules.
 (b) _____ home carers, personal assistants are required to work unsociable hours to flexible schedules.
 (c) _____ home carers _____ personal assistants are required to work unsociable hours to flexible schedules.

Answer

- a. The terms and conditions of home carers and personal assistants are **the same/ similar** in that they **both** involve unsociable hours and flexible schedules.
 b. **Like** home carers, personal assistants are required to work unsociable hours to flexible schedules.
 c. **Both** home carers **and** personal assistants are required to work unsociable hours to flexible schedules.

2. Expressing contrast (difference)

- (a) _____ the training opportunities available to home carers vary, personal assistants have none in a formal sense.
- (b) _____ home carers, whose training opportunities vary, personal assistants have none in a formal sense.
- (c) The training opportunities available to home carers vary. Personal assistants, _____, have none in a formal sense.

Answer

- a. **While/Whereas** the training opportunities available to home carers vary, personal assistants have none in a formal sense.
- b. **Unlike** home carers, whose training opportunities vary, personal assistants have none in a formal sense.
- c. The training opportunities available to home carers vary. Personal assistants, **however**, have none in a formal sense.

Discussion

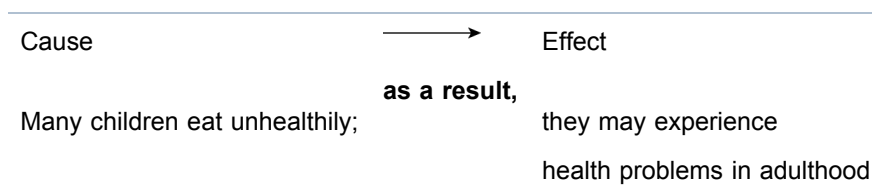
These examples demonstrate that there are several ways of comparing or contrasting in any given text. Compare and contrast connectives can be used within a single sentence or over two or more sentences.

The structure used will both influence and be influenced by the kinds of connecting words that are used. Using a variety of connecting words to compare and contrast will add interest to an author's writing.

5 Using linking words to express cause and effect relationships

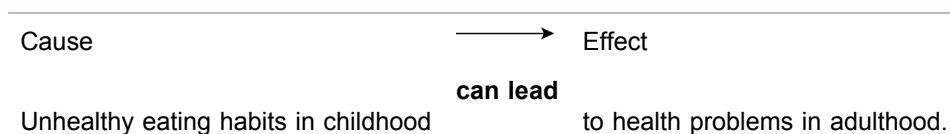
In essay writing, as in everyday life, it often happens that something causes something else to happen. For example, if a person eats many fried or fatty foods this could mean that they put on weight or face some health problems. In this example, eating a lot of fried or fatty foods is the cause or influence that has resulted in weight gain or health problems (the effect or impact).

Sentences or longer texts expressing these relationships contain a cause and an effect, and a connective, as in this example:

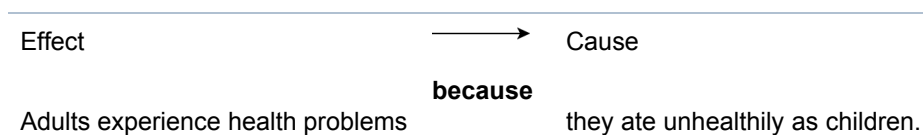


The phrase **as a result** is a connective that links the cause and the effect in this sentence. Other words and phrases such as **so**, **therefore**, **thus** and **consequently** could be used in place of **as a result**.

Cause–effect relationships can also be expressed using verbs; that is, words that describe an action, as in this example:



It is also possible to mention the effect before the cause:



5.1 Writing cause–effect sentences

In the next activity, you will practise combining causes and effects into sentences using connectives.

Activity 9

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The following table shows some examples of the connectives that can be used to join cause and effect.

Table 4 Examples of connectives

Cause connectives	Effect connectives	Nouns for cause and effect	Verbs for cause and effect
due to	so	influence	influence
since	as a result (of)	effect	affect
because (of)	therefore	factor	cause
if	thus	consequence	lead to
	hence	impact	resulted in
	consequently		
	accordingly		

The causes below contain information on how schools are intervening in the health of children. Alongside them are some of the effects that these interventions are having. Combine each pair of cause and effect to make complete sentences, using some of the connectives given in the table to help you join them together. Type your combined sentences in the response boxes. Note, too, whether you choose to have the cause or the effect first in a sentence, and how this affects your choice of connective.

1.	Cause	Effect
	Children in many schools have a greater variety of sports and exercise options than in the past	More healthy children

Provide your answer...

Answer

Because children in many schools have a greater variety of sports and exercise options than in the past, there are now more healthy children.

2.	Cause	Effect
	National Curriculum means less room for subjects like cookery and home economics	Less practical experience for children in nutrition, food handling and preparation – widely regarded as skills essential for healthy living

Provide your answer...

Answer

The National Curriculum has meant less room for subjects like cookery and home economics, which has resulted in less practical experience for children in nutrition, food handling and preparation. These skills are widely regarded as essential for healthy living.

3.	Cause	Effect
	The National Curriculum places a heavier workload on children	Less time available for play and exercise

Provide your answer...

Answer

Due to the National Curriculum placing a heavier workload on children, they now have less time available for play and exercise.

4.	Cause	Effect
	Education authorities given the right to sell off playing fields	More than 6000 sites have been sold

Provide your answer...

Answer

Education authorities were given the right to sell off playing fields. Consequently, more than 6000 sites have been sold.

5.	Cause	Effect
	Companies 'donate' equipment in exchange for vouchers that people collect by buying their products	Children eat more chocolate. An estimated 5440 chocolate bars, containing over 33 kg of fat and more than a million calories, would need to be eaten to get the most expensive item on offer

Provide your answer...

Answer

The effect of companies 'donating' equipment in exchange for vouchers that people collect by buying their products is that children eat more chocolate. An estimated 5440 chocolate bars, containing over 33 kg of fat and more than a million calories, would need to be eaten to get the most expensive item on offer.

6.	Cause	Effect
	Telephone companies put up phone masts on or near school premises	Fears that electromagnetic fields from the masts may pose a health risk

Provide your answer...

Answer

There are fears that the electromagnetic fields caused by mobile phone masts that have been put up by telephone companies on or near school premises may pose a health risk.

7.	Cause	Effect
	Vending machines selling 'junk' food installed in UK schools	Children consume more high-calorie drinks and junk food – reinforcing unhealthy eating patterns

Provide your answer...

Answer

Since vending machines that sell 'junk' food have been installed in UK schools, children are consuming more high-calorie drinks and junk food. This is reinforcing unhealthy eating patterns.

Discussion

Your answers may differ from the ones suggested above, as you may have chosen different connectives. In the answers given here, the cause comes first in sentences 1–4 and 7 and the effect comes first in sentences 5 and 6.

6 Referring to visual information

In essay and report writing, it may be necessary to include visuals such as a picture or a diagram. To help the reader see the relevance of these visuals, it is important to refer to them in the text.

To achieve this, it is necessary to give the visual a number (Figure 1, Table 1, etc.) and a title indicating its theme. This allows the writer to refer to the visual using one of these phrases:

As can be seen in Figure 1 ...

According to Figure 1, ...

Figure 1 shows ...

Figure 1 indicates that ...

As shown in Figure 1 ...

In the example text used in Activity 10, the figure has been given a number and a title, and the writer refers to it in the central part of their text by using the phrase 'as can be seen in Figure 1'.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Look at the structure of the paragraph below and decide which of these functions each sentence performs:

- Introduction to the topic of the paragraph.
- Specific evidence contained in the table, which helps to develop the topic of the paragraph: sentences 2 and 3
- Additional comments on the same topic.

[1] In the last 15 years, employers have had to respond to an increased demand on the part of the employees for a better work/life balance. [2] As can be seen in Figure 1, this demand has generated a significant increase in flexible working practices offered by employers. [3] In particular, the provision of home-working and compressed work weeks has more than doubled over a period of fifteen years (CIPD, 2012). [4] This strategy tends to reduce absenteeism and lead to a more motivated and productive workforce (Bentley, 2014).

	2012	2004	1999
Flexitime	50	35	27
Job-sharing	49	31	26
Home-working	54	26	13
Term-time working	33	20	16
Compressed work weeks	44	16	–

Figure 6 The provision of flexible working arrangements (% employers). Source: Adapted from CIPD (2012)

Note your answer in the box below before comparing it with mine.

Introduction to the topic of the paragraph:

Specific evidence contained in the table, which helps to develop the topic of the paragraph:

Additional comments on the same topic:

Answer

Introduction to the topic of the paragraph: sentence 1

Specific evidence contained in the table, which helps to develop the topic of the paragraph: sentences 2 and 3

Additional comments on the same topic: sentence 4

Images and diagrams can be used to illustrate the points made in the text. However, readers will understand the relevance of these visuals if the text clearly refers to them.

7 This week's quiz

Well done! You have completed another week. Now it is time for the weekly quiz to see how you are getting on with what you've learned this week. This week's quiz won't count towards your badge so it has only five questions.

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

Go to:

[Week 5 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

8 Summary

This week you have learned how to write a cohesive essay that readers will find easy to follow.

These are the key learning points:

- All parts of an essay can be connected so that they work together to answer the question.
- Paragraphs and sentences can be linked by using familiar information to introduce new information.
- Paragraphs and sentences can be connected by using linking words.
- Linking words can help the writer to add information, give examples, express cause–effect and compare–contrast relationships.
- A range of linking phrases can be used to refer to information contained in images and diagrams.

You can now go to Week 6.

Week 6: Understanding and using academic style

Introduction

Style is the way people express themselves when communicating with other people. They do this through body language, choice of clothes, the tone of their voice and through images, music and language.

The way people express themselves depends on their personality, but their stylistic choices are also constrained by each specific situation in which they communicate.

This week you will look at the ways in which people adapt style to fit different everyday contexts and then focus on academic style. Academic style is the way in which language can be used to communicate in writing and to be understood in a university context.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week you will:

- recognise that different styles are appropriate to different situations
- recognise the different styles used by university texts
- begin to use a formal academic style.

1 Different situations call for different styles

In everyday life we are likely to communicate with different people in different situations. It is therefore quite natural to adapt our style of communication so that it is appropriate to these situations.

In this section you will look at the way in which people adapt their speaking and writing style in everyday life and consider the technical language they sometimes use.

1.1 Everyday talk

At home we might talk with our family and friends, at work with colleagues, customers and business partners, and in other environments, such as the bar, restaurant or club, with acquaintances and friends. We are likely to behave and speak differently depending on the context in which we communicate with other people.

In the next activity you will consider the different ways in which people adapt the way they talk with other people to fit different situations.

Activity 1

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The pictures below show different contexts where communication happens between people. Consider the likely behaviour and the language used by the people who are involved. Write your thoughts about this in the boxes below, then compare them to mine.



Figure 1a-d Communicating in different contexts

Figure 1a

Provide your answer...

Answer

a. This picture shows some friends having a drink at a coffee shop. This is an informal situation as can be seen by their relaxed attitude and casual clothes. Their conversation will be spontaneous and may include laughter, jokes and informal language.

Figure 1b

Provide your answer...

Answer

b. This picture illustrates a job interview. Both participants will typically wear a business suit and behave formally. The conversation will also be more formal. The person being interviewed may have prepared their answers and will carefully choose the language they use, perhaps selecting technical and formal terms to impress the interviewer.

Figure 1c

Provide your answer...

Answer

c. In this picture, two adults talk with a child at the park. Both adults will probably use simple familiar words and phrases and speak slowly to be understood by the child. They may also change their tone of voice to sound more friendly

Figure 1d

Provide your answer...

Answer

d. The presenter in this picture is probably addressing a group of colleagues or business partners. The situation calls for formal behaviour and the use of formal language and technical terms. The speaker is likely to have prepared their talk in advance and, to help colleagues follow, they would present a clearly structured talk, supported by diagrams and data.

Discussion

This activity shows that the context in which communication takes place affects people's chosen style. In other words, the physical context, the people and their reasons for talking affect the kind of behaviour and language they choose to adopt. Different behaviour and language could be adopted but would be considered inappropriate. For example the kind of spontaneous, very informal language and tone used between friends at a coffee shop would be inappropriate during a job interview or when talking with a child.

1.2 Written styles in everyday life

The style adopted in everyday written communication can vary too. You can probably think of times when you have chosen a different style to take into account who you were writing to and your reason for writing. This will have had an effect on the layout, formality and structure of your text as well as on your choice of vocabulary.

For example, a business email will be more formally organised and written than an email to a friend, and a text message may be very informally written, contain symbols and even grammatical errors.

Similarly, different newspapers may follow a different style depending on the readers they are addressing.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Compare the different styles adopted by the UK newspapers *The Guardian* and *The Sun* to cover the topic of immigration. These are some of the things you could consider:

- layout
- size of text
- use of images
- use of colour
- amount of text
- the headlines.

Make some notes in the box below before comparing your answer to mine.



Figure 2 The different styles of *The Guardian* and *The Sun* newspapers

Provide your answer...

Answer

The Sun uses large fonts and images and vivid colours to illustrate the point made by the headlines. The amount of text is limited. The headline talks directly to the readers in 'you tell him', and uses colloquial speech with language such as 'or else!' and **idioms** like 'draw a red line'.

The Guardian uses smaller fonts and fewer images. The news on immigration is not illustrated and colour is not used. The front page contains a large amount of text arranged on several columns. The headlines simply report information using more formal language such as 'condemn' and 'immigration law'.

The two newspapers use different styles because they address readers who have different requirements. *The Sun*'s readers look for a light read, stories and language that relate to their everyday lives. *The Sun* fulfils these requirements through their distinctive use of fonts, colour, images and language. In contrast, *The Guardian*'s readers want to gain a deeper understanding of a range of stories and prefer a newspaper that provides a great deal of information presented in paragraphs.

1.3 Use of specialist words in everyday life

A key part of any writing style is choice of vocabulary. It is common to use specialist vocabulary in the workplace when it is necessary to describe specific situations and objects. The same applies when people talk about shared hobbies and interests and often use a great deal of specialist language.

If you have a hobby or special interest, you may regularly use specialist words that may only be understood by people who share your interest. For example, I have recently read a sports magazine that refers to football players using specialist terms I do not fully understand, such as midfielder, sweeper and winger.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Do you have a hobby or an interest that you discuss with other people using specialist or technical language? Do you ever read a specialist magazine or website about your hobby or talk about it with other people? Think of some examples of words or phrases you might use. Write some notes in the box below and then compare your answers to mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

The answer is personal to you, but you might like to read my example. I have recently come across some written instructions my daughter has used to knit a scarf.

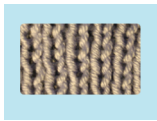


Figure 3 Single rib stitch

The single rib stitch is created with K1, P1 across the work on the right side. If you started with an even number of stitches, you will K1, P1 on the wrong side row too.

(Keep on Knitting, 2014)

While I consider these very complex instructions, my daughter seems to have no problem following them despite having only recently learned to knit. She uses some of this language when talking about her knitting with friends who have the same hobby and have helped her to get started.

Specialist language, symbols and language structures are often used by groups of people who have a common interest and purpose for communicating. This common language allows them to understand each other when referring to topics that are very specific to their field or their interests. While it may be difficult to start with, those who are new to the field are gradually introduced to this style by more expert friends and colleagues.

2 Academic style

As you have seen in the previous section, the style used depends on the topic being dealt with and the situation in which communication is taking place. In familiar situations, it is much easier to use the most appropriate style, but speaking or writing in new contexts, or about a new topic, or with different people, makes greater demands on communication skills and may make it necessary to learn different ways to communicate.

If you decide to study for a university degree, you will become a member of the community that studies your chosen subject. As such, you will be helped by the study materials and your tutor to gradually learn to understand and use the specific style that is followed by members of this community.

This consists in learning to understand and write texts that follow a very specific structure. You would also learn to use specific grammatical structures and the academic and the specialised vocabulary of the field.

In this section you will look at some formal and less formal university texts.

2.1 Distinguishing between formal and informal texts

You will now read and compare three business studies texts. This comparison will allow you to identify some of the characteristics of formal and informal university texts.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Skim read Texts 1, 2 and 3. You should just get the gist of these texts and look at their style, so it is not necessary to understand every word or understand their content in any depth. When you have finished, complete the tasks that follow.

Text 1

The cause of (dis)satisfaction for an individual at work may be the result of one or many factors. It is likely that our satisfaction within work is both implicit (inside ourselves and difficult to articulate) and relative to our circumstances at any particular time; it is also likely to be affected by our previous jobs. We are likely to enjoy some aspects of our work but not others. There is no one theory that can explain job satisfaction, but there are some models and frameworks that can help us think about it. This is difficult for those individuals (managers and HRM people) who are responsible for both the productivity and the psychological well-being of people within a business.

(Source: Preston, 2012)

Text 2

Studies in organizational behavior support the position that organizational structure affects performance, employee satisfaction, and job related stress. Kerr et al. (1974) observed that rule oriented structure adversely affects employee satisfaction but improves productivity. In general, it has been

observed that high autonomy and broad **job scope** are directly related to employees' intrinsic job satisfaction (Fleishman, 1973; House, 1971; Hunt and Liebscher, 1973). Contradicting the mainstream trend in literature, Zeist (1983) reported a greater degree of job satisfaction in more highly structured roles since role clarity reduced anxiety and served as a basis for reward seeking activities. The size of the organization is also a factor in determining employee satisfaction. Porter and Lawler (1964) observed that although satisfaction is greater in relatively flat organizations with 5,000 or fewer employees, satisfaction was also found to be greater in large organizations with more than 5,000 employees and many hierarchical levels. Senatra (1980) observed significant relationships between organizational climate, role perceptions, job related tension, satisfaction, and propensity to leave.

(Source: Zanzo, 1995, p. 2)

Text 3

I started this job a year ago. There are very strict rules and I can't make any decisions. I like to do my job well and come up with lots of ideas but my boss only cares to check how well or badly I do routine jobs.

He doesn't care about anything other than me doing my work fast and on demand, but I would really like to make my own decisions and get involved in different tasks and in different departments. I think that there are more opportunities and staff should be more satisfied in big companies like ours. But at the end of the day, because of the way I am managed, I don't really enjoy what I do at work.

I have noticed that there isn't much to be learnt from the environment I am working in. More often than not I'm nervous about failing my tasks and everything that goes on at the office and so, like many others in this department, I'm frustrated with my surroundings.

So it's obvious that many of us want to quit.

(Source: Kerr, R. and Peters, H., 2010, English Communication Skills for Global Managers, Milton Keynes, The Open University)

Task 1

Decide which of the three texts is:

- a. an informal **reflection**
- b. a formal paragraph taken from first year Open University (OU) teaching materials
- c. a very formal journal article.

Provide your answer...

Answer

(Task 1)

- Text 3.** This is an informal text in which a student reflects on their personal experiences at work. The student might have posted it in an **online forum** as part of a discussion with fellow students.
- Text 1.** This is a more formal text taken from Open University Business Studies teaching materials.
- Text 2.** This is a very formal text taken from a specialist journal article. Students may study this type of text if they conduct independent research at the end of their second or third year.

Task 2

What features of each text helped you decide which texts were more formal than others? For example, look at the way they are organised and which kind of words they use.

Write some notes in the box below before comparing your answer to mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

(Task 2)

In Text 3, the student discusses their own personal experiences and feelings. For this reason, 'I' is used throughout. The language used includes idioms, such as 'at the end of the day', and familiar expressions such as 'big companies' and 'my boss'. This text is informally organised as it contains several short paragraphs, each dealing with several issues. Sentences are only sometimes linked using informal linking words such as 'but' and 'so'.

Text 1 is written by an OU academic writer who aims to teach students through a written text. The author uses informal words such as 'we' as they are talking to the students, as well as more formal terms such as 'factors', 'implicit' and 'psychological'. The definition of 'implicit' is provided in brackets to help the students understand. The text is presented as a paragraph that starts with an effective topic sentence and ideas are clearly linked.

Text 2 is a very formal text written by a researcher who writes for those who study or are doing research on the topic. The text reports information from research and contains a great deal of formal and specialist language. Specialist language includes 'rule oriented structure' and 'job related tension'. The text starts with a clear topic sentence, which is followed by sentences that illustrate its main point.

Discussion

The style of university texts may vary depending on their authors, the purpose for writing and the intended readers. Students' writing can not only take the form of informal reflections shared in informal forum discussions but also very formally organised texts. The style of Open University study materials is formal but, particularly in the first year, the technical words are defined. Their authors tend to use a friendly tone and talk directly to the students.

Student essays should follow the style adopted in the essay you read in Week 4. This essay uses a formal structure and the academic and specialist vocabulary displayed in Texts 1 and 2. It does not, however, use the informal language you noticed in Text 3 nor the friendly tone achieved by the OU materials through the use of 'we' and 'our'. Open University students gradually learn to understand and use academic language and are helped in this by their tutors. As they progress with their studies, students are usually ready and interested in more complex readings that contain a great deal of more formal and technical language.

3 The main features of academic style

You will now look again at Text 2 and Text 3 to identify the most common features of academic style in more detail.

As you know, before reading an academic text it is a good idea to consider the things you already know about its topic. You will do this in the next activity.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Text 2 looks at the ways in which a business structure can have an effect on employees. Read it again and think about your experience as an employee or the experience of somebody you know. Then answer the questions that follow.

Text 2

Studies in organizational behavior support the position that organizational structure affects performance, employee satisfaction, and job related stress. Kerr et al. (1974) observed that rule oriented structure adversely affects employee satisfaction but improves productivity. In general, it has been observed that high autonomy and broad job scope are directly related to employees' intrinsic job satisfaction (Fleishman, 1973; House, 1971; Hunt and Liebscher, 1973). Contradicting the mainstream trend in literature, Zeist (1983) reported a greater degree of job satisfaction in more highly structured roles since role clarity reduced anxiety and served as a basis for reward seeking activities. The size of the organization is also a factor in determining employee satisfaction. Porter and Lawler (1964) observed that although satisfaction is greater in relatively flat organizations with 5,000 or fewer employees, satisfaction was also found to be greater in large organizations with more than 5,000 employees and many hierarchical levels. Senatra (1980) observed significant relationships between organizational climate, role perceptions, job related tension, satisfaction, and propensity to leave.

(Source: Zanzo, 1995, p. 2)

How do the following factors affect your (or their) job satisfaction and productivity?

- A highly structured role
- Level of autonomy
- Your job scope
- Size of the business that employs you
- Do any of these factors cause anxiety or stress?

Provide your answer...

Answer

The answer is personal to you but you may be interested in reading mine.

When I first started to work I was inexperienced and anxious about my ability to be productive. I therefore needed narrow job scope (to do only a very limited range of tasks) and a highly structured role (several guidelines and rules to follow). Later I started gaining satisfaction (enjoyment) from a broader job scope and higher autonomy.

Discussion

This activity has helped you to think about the topic of the two texts and to use some of the specialist vocabulary they contain to think about your own experience. You should now be ready to read the two texts in more detail.

3.1 Comparing formal and informal language

In this activity you will look at how similar ideas can be expressed using formal and informal language.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Part 1

Below, Text 2 and Text 3 have some phrases highlighted in bold italic font.

Look at Table 1 below and the using the [table](#) provided, match the highlighted expressions of formal language in Text 2 to the informal phrases in bold italics in Text 3 that have a similar meaning or function. Some words and expressions have already been placed in the table as examples.

Text 2

Studies in organizational behavior support the position that organizational structure affects **performance**, **employee satisfaction**, and **job related stress**. Kerr et al. (1974) observed that **rule oriented structure** adversely affects **employee satisfaction** but improves **productivity**. In general, **it has been observed** that **high autonomy** and **broad job scope** are directly related to employees' intrinsic **job satisfaction** (Fleishman, 1973; House, 1971; Hunt and Liebscher, 1973). Contradicting the mainstream trend in literature, Zeist (1983) reported a greater degree of job satisfaction in more highly structured roles since role clarity reduced **anxiety** and served as a basis for reward seeking activities. The size of the organization is also a factor in determining employee satisfaction. **Porter and Lawler (1964) observed that** although satisfaction is greater in relatively flat organizations with 5,000 or fewer employees, satisfaction **was also found to be** greater in **large organizations** with more than 5,000 employees and many hierarchical levels. Senatra (1980) observed significant relationships

between organizational climate, role perceptions, **job related tension**, satisfaction, and **propensity to leave**.

(Source: Zanzo, 1995, p. 2)

Text 3

I started this job a year ago. There are **very strict rules and I can't make any decisions**. I like **to do my job well** and come up with lots of ideas but my boss only cares to check how well or badly I do routine jobs.

He doesn't care about anything other than me **doing my work fast** and on demand, but I would really like **to make my own decisions** and **get involved in different tasks and in different departments**. **I think that** there are more opportunities and staff should be more satisfied in **big companies** like ours. **But at the end of the day, because of the way I am managed, I don't really enjoy what I do at work**.

I have noticed that there isn't much to be learnt from the environment I am working in. More often than not **I'm nervous about failing my tasks** and everything that goes on at the office and so, like many others in this department, **I'm frustrated with my surroundings**.

So it's obvious that **many of us want to quit**.

Table 1 Comparing formal language with informal language

<u>Formal language</u>	<u>Informal language</u>
performance	to do my job well doing my job fast
	I don't really enjoy what I do at work
job related stress	
	There are very strict rules and I can't make any decisions
adversely affects employee satisfaction	But at the end of the day, because of the way I am managed, I don't really enjoy what I do at work.
It has been observed	
	to make my own decisions
	get involved in different tasks and in different departments
Porter and Lawler (1964) observed that...	I think that
....was also found to be	
large organisations	
	many of us want to quit

Answer

Table 2 Answer to Activity 6

<u>Formal language</u>	<u>Informal language</u>
------------------------	--------------------------

performance	to do my job well
productivity	doing my work fast
employee satisfaction	I don't really enjoy what I do at work
job satisfaction	
job related stress	I'm forever nervous about failing my tasks
anxiety	I'm frustrated with my surroundings
job related tension	
rule oriented structure	there are very strict rules and I can't make any decisions
adversely affects employee satisfaction	But at the end of the day, because of the way I am managed, I don't really enjoy what I do at work.
It has been observed	I think that
high autonomy	to make my own decisions
broad job scope	get involved in different tasks and in different departments
Porter and Lawler (1964) observed that	I have noticed that...
was also found to be	so it's obvious
large organisations	big companies
propensity to leave	many of us want to quit

Part 2

When you have finished, compare the two lists. In what ways do each set of phrases differ?

Make some notes in the box below before comparing your answer to mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

The formal phrases express similar meanings or functions in a more concise way. This is done by using either one technical term, such as 'performance' or 'satisfaction', or a group of terms, such as 'broad job scope'.

More informal phrases tend to use full sentences such as 'get involved in different tasks and in different departments'. While these phrases may sound more familiar, their more formal equivalents are able to express specific and technical meanings that are commonly used and understood by specialists.

The language used in the formal text indicates that the writer draws on research (Porter and Lawler found (1964) that...) and discusses the topic in an objective way. Conversely, the language used in the informal text shows that its author takes a subjective approach as they draw on personal experiences and views (I have noticed, I think).

3.2 Identifying specific features of academic style

In the next activity you will look at the two lists of phrases in your table and identify specific features of academic and formal style.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Compare the formal and informal expressions listed in your table and any other differences you may have noticed while reading the two texts. Here are some of the things you may have noticed:

- use of contractions, such as 'it's', 'don't'
- use of personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you', 'he', 'she', 'it', 'we', 'they'
- expressions used to introduce information or ideas
- number of words used to describe an idea
- length and complexity of sentences
- overall structure of the text
- choice of words.

Write your observations in the box below before comparing them to mine.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Table 3 Formals texts and informal texts

<u>Formal texts</u>	<u>Informal texts</u>
Use of expanded forms <i>it is, cannot</i>	Use of contractions <i>it's, can't, doesn't</i>
Texts are impersonal <i>I</i> is rarely used. Formal texts more commonly use: <i>it, he, she, they, the organisation</i>	Informal texts tend to use: <i>I, we, you, ours</i>
Writers strive to be objective and use research findings to support the points they make <i>Studies....support the position that...</i> <i>it has been observed</i> <i>...was found to be greater</i> <i>Porter and Lawler (1964) observed</i>	Writers make subjective statements. They state personal views and experiences <i>I think</i> <i>I feel that</i> <i>It's obvious</i>
Use of technical terms and very concise expressions <i>employee satisfaction</i> <i>propensity to leave</i>	Use of less concise everyday expressions <i>staff are satisfied</i> <i>many of us want to quit</i>

<p>Complex sentences</p> <p><i>Contradicting the mainstream trend in literature, Zeist (1983) reported a greater degree of job satisfaction in more highly structured roles since role clarity reduced anxiety and served as a basis for reward seeking activities.</i></p>	<p>Simpler sentences</p> <p><i>I think that there are more opportunities and staff should be more satisfied in big companies like ours.</i></p>
<p>Texts are structured in paragraphs</p> <p>Texts move from general to specific</p>	<p>Texts follow an informal structure</p> <p>There may several short paragraphs and a less logical progression</p>
<p>Word choice</p> <p>Formal vocabulary: one long word instead of two or more short words; words of Latin or Greek origin, e.g. <i>oriented, adversely, autonomy, hierarchical, propensity</i></p> <p>Formal verbs such as <i>to arrive, to obtain</i></p>	<p>Word choice</p> <p>Informal vocabulary: short words <i>do, make, get</i></p> <p>Idiomatic expressions: <i>at the end of the day</i></p> <p>Use of phrasal verbs such as <i>come up, goes on</i></p> <p>Phrasal verbs, which consist of a verb and a preposition or an adverb, are more commonly used in informal texts and informal conversation.</p>

4 Using formal vocabulary

This section gives you the opportunity to practise using some of the features of academic style through a few exercises.

As you have seen, everyday expressions such as idioms, informal words and long wordy phrases are not normally used in formal academic texts. You will practise finding formal equivalents of these expressions in the next activity.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Read the sentences below and explain why it would be better to avoid using the italicised words and phrases in an assignment. Then, reduce their informality by replacing them with one of the formal equivalents listed below.

- negative
- A profitable business
- A considerable amount
- It is recommended
- In addition
- can be passed
- Porter and Jones (2013) found that
- invest in
- It is widely accepted that
- throughout
- This example shows that

1. ***A lot of*** time was wasted.

_____ time was wasted.

Answer

1. Informal word – **A considerable amount** of time was wasted.

2. Smoking can have ***bad*** health effects.

Smoking can have _____ health effects.

Answer

2. Informal word – Smoking can have **negative** health effects.

3. The business has shops ***all over the place in*** the UK.

The business has shops _____ in the UK.

Answer

3. Idiom – The business has shops **throughout** in the UK.

4. ***I believe*** the government should support small businesses.

_____ the government should support small businesses.

Answer

4. Subjective expression – **It is recommended** the government should support small businesses.

5. People need to ***come up with some money to buy*** solar panels.

People need to _____ solar panels.

Answer

5. Wordy and informal – People need to **invest in** solar panels.

6. ***Some researchers said*** that antimalarial tablets were effective.

_____ that antimalarial tablets were effective.

Answer

6. Imprecise – **Porter and Jones (2013) found that** that antimalarial tablets were effective.

7. ***If we look at this example we can see that*** not all babies develop at the same rate.

_____ not all babies develop at the same rate.

Answer

7. Wordy and informal – **This example shows that** not all babies develop at the same rate.

8. ***Another thing is that*** not all babies develop at the same rate.

_____ not all babies develop at the same rate.

Answer

8. Informal and imprecise – **In addition** not all babies develop at the same rate.

A business that makes a lot of profit is considered successful.

_____ is considered successful.

Answer

9. Wordy and informal – **A profitable business** is considered successful.

10. The term heritage is used to refer to property or practices that **you can pass** from one generation to the next.

The term heritage is used to refer to property or practices that _____ from one generation to the next.

Answer

10. Use of 'you' is informal – The term heritage is used to refer to property or practices that **can be passed** from one generation to the next.

11. **As we all know**, scientific knowledge is tested through experiments and observations.

_____, scientific knowledge is tested through experiments and observations.

Answer

11. Informal – **It is widely accepted that**, scientific knowledge is tested through experiments and observations.

4.1 Replacing phrasal verbs with one-word equivalents

Actions are expressed through words called verbs. In everyday speech, or in less formal written communication, it is common to refer to actions using phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs consist of two words such as *go on* and *find out*.

Some phrasal verbs are used in formal texts. Examples of these are:

'Gains (2013) **pointed out** that...'

'The investigation was **carried out** by means of a questionnaire.'

'The article **puts forward** a new theory.'

However, many phrasal verbs are considered informal and are usually replaced with one-word verbs. In the following activity you will practise finding more formal one-word equivalents of informal phrasal verbs.

Activity 9

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Use the one-word formal verbs listed below to replace the informal phrasal verbs used in the sentences below.

- decreased
- arrived
- devised
- identify
- increased
- returned
- investigate
- repeated
- include

1. It is necessary to **add in** the new information.

It is necessary to _____ the new information.

Answer

1. include

2. Due to the recession, sales **went down**.

Due to the recession, sales _____.

Answer

2. decreased

3. The immigration rates **have gone up** recently.

The immigration rates _____ recently.

Answer

3. increased

4. The team **came up with** a good strategy.

The team _____ a good strategy.

Answer

4. devised

5. They **turned up** late.

They _____ late.

Answer

5. arrived

6. It is important **to find out** the potential problems.

It is important _____ the potential problems.

Answer

6. identify

7. The Romans left Britain in 383 and never **came back**.

The Romans left Britain in 383 and never _____.

Answer

7. returned

8. This essay will **look into** the effects of global warning.

This essay will _____ the effects of global warning.

Answer

8. investigate

9. Experiments are **done again** to verify the accuracy of the findings.

Experiments are _____ to verify the accuracy of the findings.

Answer

9. repeated

4.2 Becoming familiar with specialised vocabulary

Academic texts use a great deal of technical vocabulary that is specific to the field being written about. When you start a university qualification, you will be exposed to a range of readings that contain both technical and formal vocabulary and this will help you to become used to it and learn it.

One way to familiarise yourself with specialist language before starting a university qualification is to read websites and magazines or watch documentaries that specialise in the subject you are thinking of studying in the future. For example, you could read good quality English language newspapers, listen to good quality radio programmes such as

those on BBC Radio 4, watch OU/BBC documentaries, or study a short [OpenLearn](#) or [FutureLearn](#) course.

However, it is important to note that, in order to be understood by a wide range of people, newspapers and websites contain some less formal expressions.

If you wish to build your vocabulary, you could take time to notice new specialist or formal words as you read or watch documentaries. Look them up in a dictionary if necessary and record them for future use. You will learn how to make effective use of dictionaries and record vocabulary in Week 7.

5 Reporting information from sources

As you saw in Week 2, academic writers follow some very specific conventions when they acknowledge ideas and information taken from sources. One of these conventions requires them to include in their texts the names of other authors and their ideas. One way to acknowledge an author is to use an in-text citation. This is done through the use of a range of verbs called reporting verbs.

These verbs are used to report what other authors have said. However, rather than the informal verb 'say', a range of other more formal verbs are used, as in these examples:

- Zeist (1983) *reported* a greater degree of job satisfaction...
- Kerr et al. (1974) *observed* that rule oriented structure adversely affects employee satisfaction.

As you can see, both these phrases include the name of the author and the date their work was published. This is followed by the reporting verb and the information taken from another source.

Tables 4 and 5 below show that two patterns are normally followed.

Table 4 illustrates pattern 1. As you can see, the reporting verb is followed by a noun. Only a small number of verbs can be used in this way. The tense used can be the present (identifies) or the past (identified). The use of the past tense highlights the fact that information and ideas were published sometime in the past, while the use of the present tense focuses more on the fact that these ideas are still valid and useful.

Table 4 Pattern 1

Author	Reporting verb	Noun (thing or idea being reported)
Pears (2009)	identifies described proposes mentions	three possible strategies.

Table 5 illustrates pattern 2. As you can see, the reporting verb is followed by 'that' and by a sentence describing the idea or information being reported. A larger number of verbs can be used to report information in this way. Again, the tense used can be the present (states) or the past (stated).

Table 5 Pattern 2

Author	reporting verb + that	Sentence describing the idea/information reported noun+verb
Phillips (1974)	observed that argued that found that states that explained that	children learn through play.

Alternatively, information can be reported using the phrase 'according to' as shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Using 'according to'

According to	Author (date)	Sentence describing the idea/information reported noun+verb
According to	Phillips (1974)	children learn through play.

Table 7 shows a pattern often used when reporting a definition.

Table 7 Reporting a definition

Author (date)	defines ... as	+ definition
Preston (2012)	defines autonomy as	'the extent to which the job allows the employee to exercise choice in their work'.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 10 minutes

In the following two sentences an in-text citation is placed after a quotation. Rewrite them using one of the phrases you have seen above.

1. 'Accent refers specifically to differences in pronunciation' (Sergeant, 2012, p. 13).

Provide your answer...

Answer

Quotation 1 can be rewritten in two ways:

- According to Sergeant (2012, p. 25), the term accent 'refers specifically to differences in pronunciation'.
- Sergeant (2012, p. 25) defines accent as 'differences in pronunciation'.

2. 'Ultimately it is the diversity of human society which will shape the future of English' (Sergeant, 2012, p. 346).

Provide your answer...

Answer

Quotation 2 can also be rewritten in two ways:

- According to Sergeant (2012, p. 81), 'ultimately it is the diversity of human society which will shape the future of English'.

- Seargeant (2012, p. 81) argues that 'ultimately it is the diversity of human society which will shape the future of English'.

6 Hedging

Hedging is a further key part of academic style. It means using 'cautious' language. This is because academics have to be cautious when making statements as there may not always be enough evidence to be certain about something that their research findings seem to indicate.

Consider the following three sentences:

- Languages are **always** associated with cultural, social and political issues, which are in tension with one another.
- It is **often** the case that languages are associated with cultural, social and political issues, **some** of which are in tension with one another.
- Sanders (2013, p. 34) found that the English language is often associated with social and political issues, which may be in tension with one another.

The first sentence indicates that an association always exists and suggests that all issues are contrasting. This is a very general statement that could be proven wrong as there may not be enough evidence to prove that this is always the case.

The second sentence is more cautious and uses 'hedging' expressions such as 'often' and 'some' to acknowledge that some languages may not be associated with these issues and that, in any case, these are not always in tension with one another.

The third sentence is less general as it focuses more specifically on the English language. It also supports the statement with reference to research. It uses the words 'often' and 'some' to indicate that there is no absolute certainty.

The most common words used to hedge are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Common hedging words

Verbs	Adverbs	Adjectives	Phrases
may	possibly	probable	to a great extent
could	probably	possible	it would appear
can	generally	likely	it is often the case
might	in general	unlikely	
seem to	mainly	usual	
appear to	largely		
tend to	usually		
seem to	perhaps		
	often		
	sometimes		

Activity 11

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Part 1

Read the following three sets of sentences. For each set identify the sentence that uses hedging and the specific words used to hedge.

1.

- a. This debate will probably continue for many decades to come.
- b. This debate will certainly continue for many decades to come.

Provide your answer...

Answer

- a. Hedging is achieved by using 'probably'

2.

- a. Obviously people around the world are ambivalent about the English language.
- b. People around the world may be ambivalent about the English language.

Provide your answer...

Answer

- b. Hedging is achieved by using 'may'

3.

- a. With rapid advances in communication technology, it is likely that we will become literate in new ways.
- b. With rapid advances in communication technology, we will all become literate in new ways.

Provide your answer...

Answer

- a. Hedging is achieved by using 'likely'.

Part 2

Make the following sentences sound less certain and more cautious by introducing suitable hedging words or phrases.

1. Migrants use the local language when interacting with their children at home.

Provide your answer...

2. Today's students cannot read critically.

Provide your answer...

3. In the past, students took responsibility for their mistakes.

Provide your answer...

4. Past students thought of education as a privilege; current students view it as an entitlement.

Provide your answer...

Answer

There are many ways to edit these phrases. Here are some suggestions:

1. Migrants are likely to use the local language when interacting with their children at home.
2. It seems that today's students cannot read critically.
3. In the past, students appear to have taken responsibility for their mistakes.
4. Past students generally thought of education as a privilege; current students sometimes view it as an entitlement.

7 This week's quiz

Well done, you've just completed the last of the activities in this week's study before the weekly quiz. This quiz will let you check your understanding of what you have learned this week, while also helping to prepare you for the badge quiz at the end of Week 8. By completing the weekly quiz you'll also know how the quizzes work before you complete the badge quiz, so it's a good idea to make time for them if you can.

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

Go to:

[Week 6 practice quiz](#).

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

8 Summary

These are the key learning points this week:

- The term 'style' refers to the way people communicate in different contexts.
- In everyday life, people tend to adopt a different style according to the situation and who they communicate with.
- Academic writing uses a specific style which fits the type of subject being studied.
- Academic writers vary their style to fit the context in which they are writing, but generally they will use a formal style and technical terms.
- Formal academic style tends to express ideas more concisely and precisely through a range of grammatical structures and formal words.
- Students learn academic style gradually by reading academic texts and with the support of a tutor.
- There are a number of ways to report information from sources in a formal way.
- When stating ideas and reporting information it is important to hedge; that is, to use cautious language.

You can now go to Week 7.

Week 7: Learning new specialised and academic vocabulary

Introduction

If you decide to study at university, you will need to learn new vocabulary. This will allow you to become a member of the academic community that studies your chosen subject. Learning to read and use new words may appear difficult at the beginning but with time it is possible to build a good academic and specialist vocabulary. This week you will learn a range of strategies that will help you to understand, learn and record new words.

Video content is not available in this format.



By the end of this week you will:

- be aware of a range of vocabulary learning strategies
- be able to make the most of the available online dictionaries
- be able to choose which words to learn
- be able to record new words.

1 Learning new academic and specialised words



Figure 1 Knowledge of academic and technical vocabulary is needed at university

Studying a university course involves reading and writing texts containing words that may be new to you. There are **specialised (or technical)** words and word groups that are associated with a particular subject area (for example, *chromosome* in biology, *derivative* in economics, *baud* in ICT, *global integration* in business studies). There are also many **general academic** words that are used across most subject areas (for example, *concept*, *equitable*, *capitalism*, *exclusive*, *comprise*).

While it is possible to acquire some new vocabulary naturally, simply by using it, you can also use strategies to enhance this process.

In this section you will reflect on your current vocabulary building strategies and consider other ways in which you can develop your ability to learn new words.

1.1 Reflecting on your current vocabulary building strategies

Both at work and in your leisure time you may have needed to learn new technical terms related, for example, to machinery or techniques you have had to use. For instance, when preparing for a driving test, it is necessary to learn the correct words for the various parts of a car and its accessories, as well as for different types of signs, roads and crossings. You may also remember learning new words when studying a foreign language.

In the next activity you will reflect on the vocabulary building strategies you have used so far.

Activity 1

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Using the headings in the boxes below, note down the strategies you usually use to check the meaning of new words and to record and learn them. Type your answers in the boxes below.

How you check the meaning of new words

How you record new words

How you learn new words

Consider the answers you have just written and think about the following questions:

- How effective have your vocabulary building strategies been so far and why?
- How could they be improved further?

1.2 Looking at some more strategies

Reflecting on your current strategies is very useful but by comparing them with those of other people, particularly with students who are currently learning new words, you are likely to discover new vocabulary learning strategies. You will do this in the next activity.

Activity 2

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Sharing and comparing ideas with your fellow students can help you improve your vocabulary learning strategies.

Below is a list of messages written by some students who used their tutor group forum to exchange tips on how to record and learn new words. Think about the strategies they mention and identify which ones you already use and which ones you would like to try. Type your answers in the boxes below.

1. When I'm reading, I underline all the words I don't know and, when I've finished reading, I look up them up in a dictionary. I add the words to a long word-processed list that I started a while back and try to remember them.
2. Some readings contain too many words I don't understand, so I note down and try to learn only those I think are important first to recognise and later to use myself. These will be technical terms that are essential to talk about my subject or more general academic words I can use in my essays.

3. I agree that sometimes it is not necessary to learn the new words contained in a reading. Sometimes I try to understand the key ideas by focusing on the words I do understand. These help me to understand the context in which the new words are used.
4. When I'm not sure about a particular term, I sometimes ask other students for help with its precise meaning. Often they find the same term difficult too, so we help each other make sense of it.
5. English is not my first language so I look up unfamiliar words in a **bilingual dictionary**, checking their translation and pronunciation. I then copy the word, translation and pronunciation into a notebook, sequenced in alphabetical order. I read the new additions out aloud until I've memorised them.
6. I prefer to use a monolingual dictionary to look for a definition in English rather than in my mother tongue. In this way I get used to thinking about it in English.
7. I do the same, but I also note down one or two examples of the word being used in different texts. Using a contrasting colour to highlight the word makes it stand out in the example sentences. Having a record of the word in use makes me more confident about using it appropriately myself.
8. I write new words on post-its which I stick on the wall next to my computer. Seeing them every day helps me remember them. Once I've started using them, I replace them with new ones.
9. I use mind maps or tables to organise words according to particular topics or themes so that they are linked by their meaning.

Strategies you already use

Strategies you would like to try

Discussion

Your preferred strategies are likely to depend on your past experience and your learning style. In general, however, students find that the most effective strategies are those that involve focusing on a selection of new words, classifying them, reviewing them regularly, and making an effort to use them in their own speech and writing.

Whatever your usual preference, you may find it useful to try out some new strategies, to see if they work better for you.

2 Looking up words in an English language dictionary

There are many reasons for looking up a word in the dictionary and finding a definition is just one of them. As you may need to use as well as understand new words, you may also want to:

- learn how to pronounce the word
- check how it is spelled
- find words that have a similar meaning (synonyms)
- find out what role it plays in a sentence
- see some sentences that contain that word
- find out which other words can be used with that word.

This information is particularly valuable if you want to use the new word in your own writing. If this word is new to you or you are not very familiar with its use, you may not know how it is used in a sentence or which words normally precede or follow it. If you need to paraphrase it or you want to find an alternative way to refer to the same meaning, you will also need to find its synonyms.

You will learn how to find this information through the following activities.

2.1 Different types of dictionaries

There are many types of dictionaries:

- Generic English language dictionaries – these are monolingual dictionaries, which are dictionaries that provide a definition in English.
- Bilingual dictionaries such as the [Collins English–French Dictionary](#).
- English language learner's dictionaries, such as the [Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary](#) and [The Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English](#), which provide simple definitions for students.
- Specialist dictionaries such as the [Dictionary of Science](#), which define specialist terms.
- **Collocations** dictionaries such as the [Oxford Collocations Dictionary](#), or the sites, [Ozdic](#) and [Just the Word](#), which allow you to find the most common combinations of words.
- Thesauri such as [Thesaurus.com](#), which provide collocations, synonyms and related words.

Dictionaries can be accessed in a variety of ways. You have the option to use:

- Print dictionaries which you can purchase online or from a bookstore. These normally provide a CD ROM containing additional resources such as advice on how to learn vocabulary, exercises, pronunciation and a full thesaurus.

- Online dictionaries available only on subscription such as the [Oxford English Dictionary](#). This dictionary, which gives comprehensive information, can generally be accessed for free from university libraries by enrolled students.
- [Dictionary apps](#) that you can access through a smartphone or tablet.
- Free online dictionaries such as [The Collins English Dictionary](#).
- Search engines such as [OneLook](#) which find definitions from several free online dictionaries.

2.2 Using an online search engine to find information about a word

As you have seen, there are many reasons for looking up a word in a dictionary and one dictionary may not provide all the information you need. For example, you may want to look at more examples in which that word is used or you may find that looking at the definition given by another dictionary can help you clarify the meaning of the word.

It is therefore useful to look up new words in *more than one* dictionary through a search engine. You will practise using a search engine in the next activity.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 10 minutes

In this activity you will learn how to use the search engine [OneLook](#) to find information about a word.

Go to [OneLook](#), enter the word 'strategy' in the search window, click on 'search' and look at the page displayed by the search engine. What kind of information does it provide?

Answer

The page provides the short version of the Macmillan Dictionary's detailed definition of the word 'strategy' as well as a list of links to 65 dictionaries which also define the word. These dictionaries are classified according to their specialism: the list includes 28 general English language dictionaries, 8 dictionaries specialising in business terminology, 1 specialising in art, 3 on computing and many others.

Some of the dictionaries included in the general list may already be familiar to you. Note that the list includes both American English and British English. These two varieties of English sometimes use different vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation.

The list also includes the Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary. This dictionary is very useful to anybody who is looking for a definition expressed through simpler words and for additional grammatical information.

Discussion

This search engine allows you to look up the same word in more than one dictionary. This allows you to search for more information about the word and also to look for information that is clearer to you. In addition, if you found the word in a business studies text or needed to write a business studies essay, you will be interested in the definition given by a dictionary that specialises in business terminology.

2.3 Finding and understanding specific information about a word

In the next activity you will practise finding information about a word.

Activity 4

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Look again at the list of dictionaries displayed by OneLook when you entered the word 'strategy'. Find the Macmillan dictionary definition of the word 'strategy' in the list of general dictionaries. Note down the kind of information it provides. How can each piece of information be useful to you?

Provide your answer...

Answer

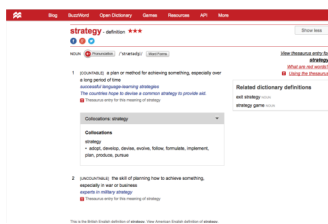


Figure 2 The Macmillan Dictionary information about the word **strategy**

This dictionary provides:

- Two definitions. This word has two meanings, so two definitions are given.
- Frequency of use. Three stars indicate that strategy is one of the 7500 most used words.
- Grammatical information. Strategy is a noun and can be both countable and uncountable. The meaning of countable and uncountable will be explained in the following section.
- Word forms. For this word, the dictionary gives the singular form (strategy) and the plural form (strategies). This information is very useful when using words that have unusual plural forms such as man (singular) and men (plural) or analysis (singular) and analyses (plural).
- Pronunciation. By clicking on the British or American flag, you will be able to look up the British English and the American English pronunciation as, occasionally, these can be different.
- Origin of the word. The word 'strategy' comes from Greek and French. If you know either or both these languages, this information can help you to better understand and remember the word strategy.
- Examples. These are very useful examples that can help you to see how this word is normally used in the context of a phrase or sentence.
- Some collocations. These are words that normally precede or follow the word 'strategy'. For example, 'devise a strategy', 'plan a strategy' and 'adopt a strategy'.

are common combinations of words. This information helps if you need to use this word in your own writing.

- Synonyms. These can be found by clicking on the red symbol 'T' (Thesaurus). You may need to find synonyms if you need to paraphrase a text or wish to refer to something in a variety of ways throughout your essay. More synonyms can be found by looking up the word in a specialised website such as [Thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com)

Discussion

This is very useful information if you want to use a word in your own writing. While it is not necessary to look up all this information, it is important to know that dictionaries provide it and that these are available online. Many of the dictionaries listed by OneLook.com are also available in hard copy.

2.4 Using several dictionaries to find more information about a word

If you wish to find additional information about a word, you can look it up in more than one dictionary. You will practise this in the following activity.

Activity 5

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Go back to the [OneLook](https://www.onelook.com) page and look up the word **strategy** in the Collins Dictionary, and in Vocabulary.com. What additional information can you find?

x

Answer

The Collins English Dictionary gives more synonyms and links to translations of the word in several languages. Vocabulary.com gives more examples showing how 'strategy' can be used in a sentence. It also provides other words that are part of the same 'word family'. These are all the words that have a similar form and meaning. The word family of strategy includes: strategic, strategies, strategically, strategist, and strategists.

These words allow you to express an idea in a different way, perhaps when paraphrasing. For example, the phrase 'adopt a strategy to deal with a problem' can be turned to 'deal with a problem strategically'. A list of all the academic word families is provided by the Academic Word List ([AWL](#)) provided by the website [UEFAP](#).

2.5 Finding collocations

If you have never seen or used a particular word before or need help paraphrasing a phrase, you may want to look at different ways in which this word is normally used with other words. These combinations of words are called collocations.

You will practise this through the following activity.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Log on to the [Just the word](#) website and enter the word 'strategy'. You will be taken to the following page.

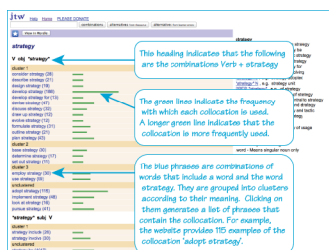


Figure 3 Collocations for the word **strategy**

Use just-the-word.com to find more formal equivalents for the **words in bold** in this sentence:

Management **came up** with a **good** strategy and **used** it throughout the organisation.

Answer

More formal equivalents of 'To come up with a strategy' are most of the items in the first cluster: adopt, develop, devise, draw up, formulate, outline and plan a strategy. The verbs devise, develop and plan are the most commonly used.

The phrase 'good strategy' is very general. To find the best equivalent, it would be necessary to know in what way the strategy was good. Possible alternative collocations are: comprehensive, effective, successful and clear strategy.

Equivalents of 'use a strategy' are: adopt, implement and pursue a strategy.

3 Understanding the grammatical information about a word

Understanding the grammatical information about a word helps to make correct use of that word. In this section you will learn how to use dictionary information about:

- countable and uncountable nouns
- word classes.

3.1 Countable and uncountable nouns

Knowing if a word is countable or uncountable helps to use it in the context of a sentence.

Uncountable nouns are nouns that cannot be counted. These include names of substances such as rice and milk and **abstract nouns** such as music, fun and happiness. These words cannot be plural. It would be incorrect to say rices, milks, musics, funs and happinesses.

As these words refer to things that cannot be counted, it is incorrect to use 'many', 'a few', 'several', 'a' or 'an' when talking about their quantity. However, it is correct to say:

a bag of rice, **a grain of** rice

a glass of milk, **a lot of** milk, **some** milk, **no** milk

some fun, **a lot of** or **a little** happiness or, more formally, **a great deal of** happiness.

Countable nouns are words that refer to things that can be counted. These are both **concrete nouns** such as girl, dog and book and abstract nouns such as idea and strategy.

These words can be plural (dogs, girls, books, ideas and strategies) and can be preceded by 'many', 'a few', 'a' or 'an' as in:

a dog, **a few** girls, **several** books

a few ideas, **many** strategies.

Some words can be **both countable and uncountable**. This is because they have more than one meaning. For example, the word 'room' can be used to refer to the parts of a building (countable) or the amount of space needed (uncountable):

3.2 Distinguishing between countable and uncountable nouns

If you know that a word is uncountable, you will be able to use correctly. The following activity gives you an opportunity to practise this skill.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 10 minutes

You will now look at two sets of words. The first set includes common everyday words, while the second set contains academic words.

Question 1

Which of the following everyday words are countable and which are uncountable nouns?

If you are unsure, try to place the word 'many', 'a' or 'an' before it. If this seems correct, that word is countable; if it doesn't, it is uncountable. Some words can be both countable and uncountable. If you are unsure, look them up in the dictionary.

- pen
- car
- light
- luggage
- computer
- information
- time
- traffic
- sadness
- pound
- butter
- skill

Provide your answer...

Answer

Countable: pen, car, computer, pound.

Uncountable: luggage, information, traffic, sadness, butter.

Countable and uncountable: light, time, skill.

Discussion

Did you classify all the words correctly? Words that are both countable and uncountable have more than one meaning. They are therefore difficult to classify and it is necessary to look them up.

Question 2

Unlike familiar vocabulary, specialised and academic vocabulary can be difficult to classify and therefore to use. Which of the following are countable, which are uncountable and which can be both? If you are in doubt, consult a dictionary.

- clarity
- consumer
- expertise

- cycle
- knowledge
- location
- culture
- progress
- evidence
- function
- research
- information
- expert
- experience

Provide your answer...

Answer

Countable: consumer, location, cycle, function, expert.

Uncountable: clarity, expertise, knowledge, progress, evidence, research.

Countable and uncountable: experience, culture.

Discussion

If a word is unfamiliar to you, or you rarely use or hear it, you may not know how to use it. This leads to errors such as 'many researches' or 'an information'. These errors can be avoided by using a dictionary.

3.3 Word classes

Dictionaries also define words in terms of the class to which they belong. Words that belong to the same class behave in the same way within sentences.

Knowing whether a word is a noun, a verb, an adjective or some other type of word will help you to use it correctly. In particular, it helps university students to understand their tutors' corrections and explanations.

The table below presents the word classes.

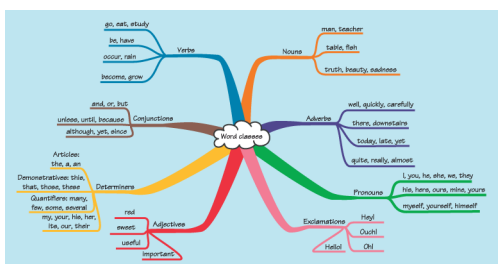


Figure 4 Word classes

You can also [download](#) a version of the above diagram.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The table below defines each word class but it is incomplete. Using the information contained in the mind-map, fill the empty boxes. One has already been filled as an example. You can [download](#) a version of the table.

Table 1

Definition	Word class	Examples
Words that describe what happens, an action or something someone does, or a state of being.	verbs	Dictionaries are useful. The student wrote an essay. It rained all day.
Words that identify: people, things, states, qualities, ideas.		Dictionaries are useful. The student wrote an essay . Tiredness can kill.
Words that give information about a noun.		An important point. A good idea.
Words used to describe an adjective, a verb or an adverb; for example they may explain how, when and where and how action takes place.		Private and public spaces differ greatly .
Words that take the place of a noun that has already been mentioned or is known.		Sam walked all day. In the evening, she was very tired.
Words that express emotion, such as joy or anger.		Wow! I can't believe it!
Words that are used to connect other words and sentences.		I have a dog and a cat.
Words that indicate whether the noun contained in a sentence is general or specific.		I bought a (general) new computer. This (specific) car is quite powerful.

Answer

Table 2

Definition	Word class	Examples
Words that describe what happens, an action or something someone does, or a state of being	verbs	Dictionaries are useful. The student wrote an essay. It rained all day.
Words that identify: people, things, states, qualities, ideas.	nouns	Dictionaries are useful. The student wrote an essay . Tiredness can kill.
Words that give information about a noun.	adjectives	An important point.

		A good idea.
Words used to describe an adjective, a verb or an adverb; for example it may explain how, when and where and how action takes place.	adverbs	Private and public spaces differ greatly .
Words that take the place of a noun that has already been mentioned or is known.	pronouns	Sam walked all day. In the evening, she was very tired.
Words that express emotion, such as joy or anger.	exclamations	Wow! I can't believe it!
Words that are used to connect other words and sentences.	conjunctions	I have a dog and a cat.
Words that indicate whether the noun contained in a sentence is general or specific.	determiners	I bought a (general) new computer. This (specific) car is quite powerful.

3.4 Avoiding word class confusions

Understanding the role that a word plays in a sentence can help you to use and spell it correctly.

For example, some students confuse the words **advise** and **advice**. They often find it difficult to decide which should be used in the following two sentences:

- (a) I always accept his _____
(b) Your tutor will be able to _____ you.

To decide, it is useful to first of all determine the class of the word missing in each case. For the first sentence to make sense, the missing word must be a thing and therefore a noun. The second sentence needs a word describing an action, therefore a verb is missing.

If you look up advice and advise, you will find that advice is a noun and should be used in the first sentence. Advise is a verb and should be placed in the second sentence. Dictionaries also provide examples which help to check that your spelling is correct. If you listen to the pronunciation of these two words you will also notice that their pronunciation differs.

Activity 9

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Use the following words to fill the gaps in the sentences below. Use a dictionary to help you decide.

Practice or practise

1. To learn a language you need to _____ it regularly.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Practise

Practice or practise

2. Including a reference is considered good academic _____.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Practice

Accept or except

3. Children should never _____ a present from a stranger.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Accept

Accept or except

4. All my friends will be able to come _____ Louise.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Except

Cite or site

5. It is very important to _____ your sources.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Cite

Cite or site

6. I found a very useful _____.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Site

Lose or loose

7. To _____ weight it is important to exercise regularly.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Lose

Lose or loose

8. This path is dangerous because of _____ stones and snow.

Provide your answer...

Answer

Loose

4 Deciding which words to learn

While it is good to extend your understanding and use of new vocabulary by looking up new words in your dictionary, it is important to remember that it is not always necessary to know or learn every word in a text. In this section you will consider situations in which you may not need to understand every word, and cases in which you may want to choose to learn only some words.

4.1 Understanding texts that contain specialised and academic vocabulary

Sometimes you may just want to quickly read a text to test your previous knowledge about a subject and decide if it is worth reading it in more detail later. Alternatively, you may read it just to find some specific information and you may not be interested in understanding every word. You will practise this skill in the next activity.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 15 minutes

The text below is about infectious diseases and, in particular, about AIDS. You may want to [download](#) and print this text as you will need it again to complete Activities 11 and 12. Skim read it and then scan it to decide if the statements below are true or false. Try to do this activity without stopping to look up unfamiliar words.

The global threat of infectious diseases

1. Since the 1980s, infectious disease has re-emerged at the top of the global health agenda, destroying the optimism following World War 2 that modern medical interventions, such as antibiotic therapy and mass vaccination programmes, could eliminate deaths from infection. The new awareness of infection as a major threat to health has centred on the AIDS pandemic.
2. Acquired immune deficiency syndrome had already claimed over 21 million lives by the start of 2001, including 4.5 million children. By that date, new infections with HIV (the human immunodeficiency virus) in Sub-Saharan Africa had accelerated past 16,000 per day; in some regions over 25% of the adult population were already infected and average life expectancy at birth had fallen by more than 10 years.
3. AIDS was not the only apparently 'new' infection to threaten human health. Later in this chapter we review some other 'emerging' infectious diseases in the twenty-first century, which have risen in importance against the general downward trend globally in infection as a cause of death.
4. The impact of HIV/AIDS on the economies, and hence the political stability, of heavily affected countries, is a major cause for international concern, and reminds us that an infectious disease still has the

potential to alter the course of a nation's history. Past epidemics and the long-term impact of diseases have been among the most potent forces shaping the current global distribution of population and cultures. Their influence can be seen in the balance of political and economic power in the modern world.

(The Open University, 2003)

1. The infectious disease that causes most concern is AIDS.

☐ True

True – AIDS is mentioned at the end of the first paragraph, which is about infectious disease. The same paragraph also states that AIDS is seen as a 'major threat', which suggests that there is concern and explains that awareness is now centred on AIDS. The word pandemic (worldwide/global epidemic) is not essential to decide if the statement is true or false.

☐ False

2. AIDS kills only adults.

☐ True

☐ False

False – Paragraph 2 states that 4.5 million children died of AIDS (claimed over 21 million lives by the start of 2001, including 4.5 million children).

3. In 2001 in Africa, half the population suffers from AIDS.

☐ True

☐ False

False – Paragraph 2 states that over 25% of adults in some regions in Sub-Saharan Africa (and not all Africa) are affected.

4. Some other infectious diseases have started to appear.

☐ True

True – Paragraph 3 explains that some new infections have started to appear and AIDS is 'not the only new infection'. It is not necessary to understand the word 'emerging' as the words 'new ... infectious diseases' are sufficient to answer the question.

☐ False

The spread of AIDS has economic and political effects.

☐ True

True – The answer is in Paragraph 4, which is about the impacts (i.e. a synonym of effects) of AIDS. The first sentence mentions effects on economies and political stability. The last sentence mentions an 'influence' on the 'balance of political and economic power'. The key words that are necessary to decide if the statement is true or false are all the synonyms of 'affect' and 'effect' (e.g. influence, impact, cause).

☐ False

Discussion

If your purpose for reading is to get the general gist or to answer some general questions, it may not be necessary to understand all the words that may not be clear. As you have seen in Week 1, reading words in context can help you to guess their meaning without needing to use a dictionary. This involves focusing on the words you

do understand and, in particular, using your understanding of the words around the unfamiliar ones in order to guess their meaning.

After answering your initial questions, you will need to decide if it is worth gaining a deeper understanding of the text. This may be because new questions have emerged or while reading the text you may have found information that can be used in an assignment.

If you decide to read the text in more depth, you will probably need to gain a better understanding of the technical and academic terms it contains. This decision will depend on your reason for reading it and how you will use the information it contains.

4.2 Deciding which words to learn

In order to expand your specialised and general academic vocabulary more rapidly and effectively, it is helpful to distinguish three types of words in the texts you read:

- Words and word groups that are highly relevant to your present studies that you already use. These words are part of your **active vocabulary**.
- Words and word groups that you understand but would not be able to use when speaking or writing. These words are part of your **passive vocabulary**, as you can recall their meaning only when you encounter them in the speech and writing of someone else.
- Words and word groups that you don't understand but could be relevant to your present studies.

The following provides an opportunity to practise distinguishing between these three types of words.

Activity 11

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Look closely at the text from Activity 10, '[The global threat of infectious diseases](#)', and note down examples for each of the three categories described above. Type your answers in the boxes below:

Words and word groups that you already understand and use

Words and word groups that you understand but cannot use

Words and word groups that you don't understand

Answer

Of course, it is impossible to predict what you have written as your answer will depend on your background and your first language. Here are some possibilities:

Words and word groups that you already understand and use: infection, birth, cause, impact

Words and word groups that you understand but cannot use: infectious disease, optimism, interventions, mass vaccination programmes, claimed, accelerated, infected, average life expectancy, threaten, emerging, downward trend, concern, potential, alter the course of, shaping

Words and word groups that you don't understand: antibiotic therapy, pandemic, acquired immune deficiency syndrome, human immunodeficiency virus, hence, epidemic

Having identified the words in the text that are part of your active vocabulary, your passive vocabulary, and those that are completely new to you, it is important to decide if you need to upgrade your knowledge of any of them. Look again at the lists you have made and answer the following questions. Type the answers in the boxes below.

Which of the words and word groups that you only understand should become part of your active vocabulary? Why?

Provide your answer...

Which of the words that are completely new to you should become part of your active or passive vocabulary? Why?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Your answer will depend on your interests and on the subject you are thinking of studying. For example, active knowledge of specialised terms such as human immunodeficiency virus is likely to be essential if you are interested in science or medicine, but less so if you want to learn English literature.

However, general academic terms such as concern, emerging and potential can be used in many academic contexts, so you will probably want to be able to understand and use these, whatever your interests.

Discussion

Identifying and classifying new words after reading a text can be a time-consuming process. However, being selective about the words that you wish to focus on and deciding that some of these will be for passive, rather than active, use can make your vocabulary learning more efficient. As you study new modules, selecting which new words and word groups to learn for either active or passive use will become easier.

4.3 Identifying specialised and general academic vocabulary

One of the ways of selecting the words you want to learn consists in distinguishing between **specialised vocabulary** (technical terms that are specific to a particular subject) and **general academic vocabulary** (formal vocabulary that you may find in many subject areas).

Activity 12

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The text from '[The global threat of infectious diseases](#)' is copied below (under the main source heading 'A force in human history'). Some words and word groups have been highlighted in bold. Decide whether each one is specialised vocabulary (which in this text means medical terminology) or general academic vocabulary. Highlight in yellow the words or word groups that you think are specialised vocabulary, and in green the words or word groups that you think are general academic vocabulary.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Answer

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Specialised vocabulary	General academic vocabulary
infectious disease	re-emerged
antibiotic therapy	eliminate
mass vaccination programmes	claimed
pandemic	accelerated
human immunodeficiency virus	review
epidemics	downward trend
	impact
	potential

Discussion

As you notice new specialised vocabulary related to your field of study, you may want to build a glossary of terms which you can use in your essays.

5 Recording vocabulary

One way to learn and remember new words consists in recording them. You can write the meaning of the new words on the readings in which you found them or in your notes, or you can use post-its or lists.

This section introduces you to two effective methods: the use of vocabulary cards and mind maps or tables.

5.1 Using vocabulary cards to record vocabulary

A vocabulary card is a card containing useful information about a word. The kind of information you record on your vocabulary cards depends on your needs, but it is normally useful to include the definition, synonyms, the most common collocations and some examples. If you know the phonetic symbols, you may want to also record the pronunciation.

Activity 13

Allow approximately 15 minutes

[Download](#) the printable version of the table below to record information about 'stability', one of the academic words contained in the reading 'The global threat of infectious diseases'. While dictionaries provide several definitions, examples and collocations, it is only necessary to record information related to your interests. For the purposes of this exercise, just record information that would interest somebody who studies or is interested in economics and politics.

Table 3

Word	Definition/s	Word family	Example/s	Collocations
Word class				
Countable/uncountable				
Pronunciation				

Answer

My card contains information taken from the Macmillan Dictionary, Just the Word. To find the word family, I have used the Academic Word List provided by UEPF.

Table 4

Word	Definition/s	Word family	Example/s	Collocations
Word class				
Pronunciation				
Stability noun	A situation in which things happen as they	instability, stabilisation,	The rise of nationalism	Economic/ social/

uncountable /stə'biləti/	should and there are no harmful changes.	stabilise, stabilised, stabilises, stabilising, <i>stable</i> , unstable	could threaten the stability of Europe. The country must achieve political stability.	political/ financial stability Achieve/main- tain/ensure/ promote sta- bility Threaten/un- dermine sta- bility Period of sta- bility Threat to sta- bility
-----------------------------	--	---	--	---

Discussion

Vocabulary cards can be kept in alphabetical order for easy reference. They can also be used as flash cards. Just write the word on the back of the card. When you want to revise, look at the word, try to remember its definition and then turn the card to check. If you use a smartphone or a tablet, you could search the internet and download a flash card app that will allow you to revise your list of new words wherever you are

5.2 Using mind maps and tables to record vocabulary

Another way to record the new words you have decided to learn is to group them according to their meaning and to present them using a diagram. You will practise this skill through the following activity.

Activity 14

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The words and word groups below have been selected by a student who read the text, [‘The global threat of infectious diseases’](#), and decided to record them using a mind map. The student decided to group them using the following three branches:

- Words related to health problems.
- Words related to the effects of these health problems.
- Words related to medical interventions, i.e. solutions to the health problems.

Drag these words and word groups into the gaps in the mind map below to complete it.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Answer

You should have placed the words and word groups in the appropriate branches of the mind map as shown below. However, within each branch you may have the items in a different order.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Discussion

This activity has shown you how new words can be grouped using a diagram. This can also be achieved by using a table or three lists under different headings.

If you are accessing this activity using only the keyboard, tab to a target and press the Enter key to cycle through the choices.

Table 5

Health		
Health problems	Medical interventions	Possible effects of new diseases
epidemic	antibiotic therapies	death
pandemic	vaccination programmes	reduced life expectancy
infectious		
AIDS		
(acquired immune deficiency syndrome)		
HIV		
(human immunodeficiency virus)		
infectious disease		
immunodeficiency		

Alternatively, you can write the three groups of words in different colours. Whichever method you use, you will find that both the process of deciding how to classify new words and the physical act of creating a diagram, a table or a list will help you to recall them when necessary.

6 This week's quiz

Well done, you've just completed the last of the activities for this week's study before the weekly quiz.

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

Go to:

[Week 7 practice quiz.](#)

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

7 Summary

In Week 7, you have learned that:

- Specialised and academic vocabulary is often used at university.
- Many strategies exist that can help you to learn new vocabulary.
- There are many types of print and online dictionaries.
- Dictionaries provide a great deal of information.
- The grammatical information given by dictionaries can help you to avoid errors.
- Using a collocations dictionary helps choose the most appropriate combinations of words.
- It may not be necessary to learn every new word.
- It is advisable to distinguish the words that should be part of your active and passive vocabulary.
- New vocabulary can be recorded through vocabulary cards, lists, mind maps and tables.

Further reading

The following are provided to potentially assist you in your learning. They are in no way required for completion of this course.

Countable and uncountable nouns

www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/learnit/learnitv192.shtml

Monolingual print dictionaries

Cambridge Advanced Learner's dictionary

www.cambridgeonlineapps.com/dictionaries/aldict.html

The Oxford Learner's Dictionary of Academic English

<https://elt.oup.com/catalogue/items/global/dictionaries/9780194333504?cc=global&sel-Language=en>

The Macmillan Dictionary

www.macmillandictionary.com/buy.html

Bilingual online dictionaries

Reverso <http://dictionary.reverso.net/> Online dictionaries providing translation from English to Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Russian, Hebrew, Polish, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Arabic.

Wordreference.com www.wordreference.com/ Online dictionaries providing translation from English to Spanish, French, Portuguese, German, Italian, Russian, Polish, Romanian, Czech, Greek, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Turkish, Arabic.

Dictionary apps

<http://appadvice.com/appguides/show/english-dictionary-apps>

English language search engine

OneLook <http://www.onelook.com/> Dictionary search engine. Enter a word in the search window and you will be provided with links to several dictionaries that define it. The reverse dictionary helps to find the correct word by letting users enter a description, a question or a related word.

Word classes

Oxford Dictionaries grammar section

www.oxforddictionaries.com/words/word-classes-or-parts-of-speech

The British Council <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/english-grammar>

You can now go to Week 8.

Week 8: Structuring sentences and word groups

Introduction

As you have seen in previous weeks, to express their ideas clearly, academic writers use language in a structured way. So far, you have looked at the overall structure of academic and formal texts and, in particular, essays. You have seen that these texts are organised in paragraphs and that paragraphs are composed of sentences.

This week you will focus on the way writers communicate their ideas through sentences and smaller units of language called word groups. You will also learn how punctuation is used to help writers to organise sentences and increase their clarity.

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By the end of this week, you will be able to:

- distinguish between units of language
- use noun and verb groups
- structure sentences
- use punctuation.

1 Units of language

It is helpful to look at the organisation of texts by dividing language into six units: the word, the word group, the clause, the sentence, the paragraph and the text.

The table below illustrates each of these units with examples taken from the essay you read in Week 4.

Table 1

Unit	Example
word	lives
noun group	fully independent lives
verb group	can lead
clause	they can no longer lead fully independent lives
sentence	The residents have all had to come to terms with the fact that, for reasons such as age or infirmity, they can no longer lead fully independent lives, but can happily accept this compromise.
paragraph	Paragraph 5: In a good residential home ... happily accept this compromise.
text	The whole essay written by Fred

You have already looked at the way in which a whole text and its paragraphs are organised. You now need to focus on ways to organise word groups and sentences accurately so that you can use them to express ideas and convey information clearly and concisely.

2 Structuring noun groups

Noun groups are one type of word group. Nouns usually refer to a person, an animal, a thing, an event (a meeting) or process (for example, digestion), or a concept (in science, diversity). They can combine with articles, adjectives, adverbs and other nouns to form noun groups. Each noun group has one main noun which is the word that all the other words help to define.

For example

their own private spaces in public areas

This noun group contains the noun **spaces** which is the main noun. Information **before** and **after** the main noun is used to define it. In this example, the adjectives placed before the main noun are used to specify which spaces (i.e. their, own, private) the writer is focusing on. The main noun can also be followed by information that further describes it. In this example, this information is 'in public areas'.

Newspaper headlines often use noun groups to present a great deal of information in a limited space and as a way to get the reader's attention:



Figure 1 Newspaper headlines

2.1 Giving information in noun groups

As you have seen, extra information about the main noun may come before or after the main noun. The different ways in which this can be done are summarised in this activity.

Activity 1

Allow approximately 15 minutes

Look at the list of examples of noun groups below. The main nouns in each sentence are in **bold**.

The activity is split into two: 'Before the main noun' and 'After the main noun'. You need to:

1. Look at the type of word you are being asked to look for. Use the examples (in italics) or a dictionary if you are unsure of any of the terms.
 2. Choose the noun group from the examples given below.
 3. Type the relevant part of the noun group into the text boxes.
- Broadcasting **rights** for sports events
 - **competition** between media providers
 - The large-scale media **coverage** that is devoted to sport, and especially football

- Béthune's open-air **market**
- The **setting**, place du Maréchal Foch, with its surrounding Art Deco and Flemish style houses
- The open-air **market**
- Electromagnetic **radiation**
- some of **these**
- The **energy** contained in these photons
- different **aspects** of the spectrum
- Technological **advances**
- One of the best forms of **communication**
- **papers** published in one country

Part 1: Before the main noun

Adjectives (describe a noun), e.g. *primary research*

Provide your answer...

Answer

Electromagnetic
Different
Technological
Best
The open-air

Other nouns, e.g. *government statistics*

Provide your answer...

Answer

Media coverage
Setting, place du Maréchal Foch
Forms of communication

Suffix -ing, e.g. *smoking ban*

Provide your answer...

Answer

Broadcasting rights

Noun + possessive 's', e.g. *children's health*

Provide your answer...

Answer

Béthune's

Articles, determiners, e.g. *this decision*

Provide your answer...

Answer

- some of
- One of the

Part 2: After the main noun

Word groups starting with a preposition (e.g. to, for, in), e.g. *travellers to the USA*

Provide your answer...

Answer

for sports events
between media providers
with its surrounding Art Deco and Flemish style houses
of the spectrum

Defining relative clauses, e.g. *items that were found during an investigation*.

These can be 'reduced', e.g. *items found during an investigation*.

Provide your answer...

Answer

that is devoted to sport, and especially football
contained in these photons
published in one country

Discussion

Sometimes noun groups are extended by adding extra examples with the **conjunction** *and*, for example:

with its surrounding Art Deco and Flemish style houses

that is devoted to sport, and especially football

2.2 Ordering information before the main noun

A great deal of information can be conveyed by placing adjectives, adverbs and other nouns before the noun. However, these must be placed in the order indicated by the table below.

You probably do this much of the time without thinking, but academic writing can be helped by becoming more aware of the underlying 'rules'.

Table 2

Which?	How is it?	What is it like?				What kind?			Main noun
<i>Determiner</i> (my, the, a, this, some)	<i>opinion</i>	<i>size</i>	<i>age</i>	<i>shape</i>	<i>colour</i>	<i>origin</i>	<i>material</i>	<i>purpose</i>	
her	beautiful				black		silk	party	dress
a			new		red	Italian		racing	car
some		large	prehistoric						animals

Activity 2

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Look at the following word lists and create a grammatically correct noun group for each one.

1. corporation – multinational – large – a – American
2. insect – a – flying – brightly coloured – long
3. long-term – undesirable – economic – several – effects
4. solution – temporary – accounting – acceptable – an
5. task – time-consuming – very difficult – this – reading
6. very small – five-year-old – cat – a – rescue – black
7. antique – impressive – table – dinner – marble – Italian – an

Answer

1. a large American multinational corporation
2. a long brightly coloured flying insect
3. several undesirable long-term economic effects
4. an acceptable temporary accounting solution
5. this very difficult time-consuming reading task
6. a very small five-year-old black rescue cat
7. an impressive antique Italian marble dinner table

Discussion

This activity shows that a great deal of information can be conveyed through noun groups. Adjectives (e.g. large, difficult, antique), adverbs (very, brightly) and nouns (dinner, marble, rescue) placed before the main noun allow a writer to convey a great deal of information in a clear and concise way.

Writing concisely using noun groups that give detailed information is often important in assignments where there is a need to keep within a strict word limit. Of course, it is important not to overuse adjectives and adverbs as, if too many are included, the text can become too dense and difficult to read.

2.3 Use of the apostrophe to express possession

In English, 's (**apostrophe s**) is used to show possession, as in the following sentences:

1. The Open University's main campus is in Milton Keynes.
2. Labov's model has been used to analyse the story.

In the first sentence, 's is used to express the relationship between an owner, The Open University, and something that is being possessed: the main campus. The second sentence mentions a model that has been devised by Labov. It is his model.

Also, it is necessary to add 's to singular words ending in 's' as in this example:

The business's goal is to expand overseas.

If the owners are described through a plural noun ending in s, it is just necessary to add the apostrophe at the end of the word as in this example:

Open University tutors mark their **students'** assignments promptly.

Common errors

It is incorrect to leave out the apostrophe as in this example:



Incorrect

The authors view has been criticised.

In this example the writer is referring to the view of the author and not to several authors, so the word author should be followed by 's.

The correct sentence is:



Correct

The author's view has been criticised.

It is incorrect to use the 's to make a word or an **acronym** plural, as in these examples:

I have three dog's.

I have many DVD's.

But it is correct to write:

I have three dogs.

I have many DVDs.

Activity 3

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Find the errors in the use of 's in the signs below. How should they be corrected?



Figure 2 Signs

Provide your answer...

Answer

- Here 's is used incorrectly to make chef and cook plural. Correction: chefs and cooks.
- Acronyms such as MOT should be formed by just adding an s. Correction: MOTs and repairs.
- The plural of dates is formed by adding an s, as in 1970s and 70s. Correction: 80s.
- Correction: Children's Hospital.

Discussion

Some road signs no longer use 's to indicate possession and in the UK many people no longer use it in informal writing. However, in academic writing this form is still used as it provides clarity.

2.4 Using noun groups to write more concisely

Activity 4

Allow approximately 10 minutes

As well as adding information so that the writer can say what they mean more clearly and accurately, noun groups can help the writer to say something in fewer words.

For example:

(a) The rights to broadcast sporting events on radio and television have become more lucrative. (14 words)

becomes

Broadcasting rights for sports events have become more lucrative. (9 words)

(b) The open-air market which takes place in the town of Béthune (11 words)

becomes

Béthune's open-air market (3 words).

Rewrite the sentences below using a noun group to reduce the number of words and create one sentence.

(a) The first magazines which were produced about sports appeared in the eighteenth century. They had a small circulation. (18 words)

Provide your answer...

Answer

(a) The first sports magazines produced in the eighteenth century had a small circulation. (13 words)

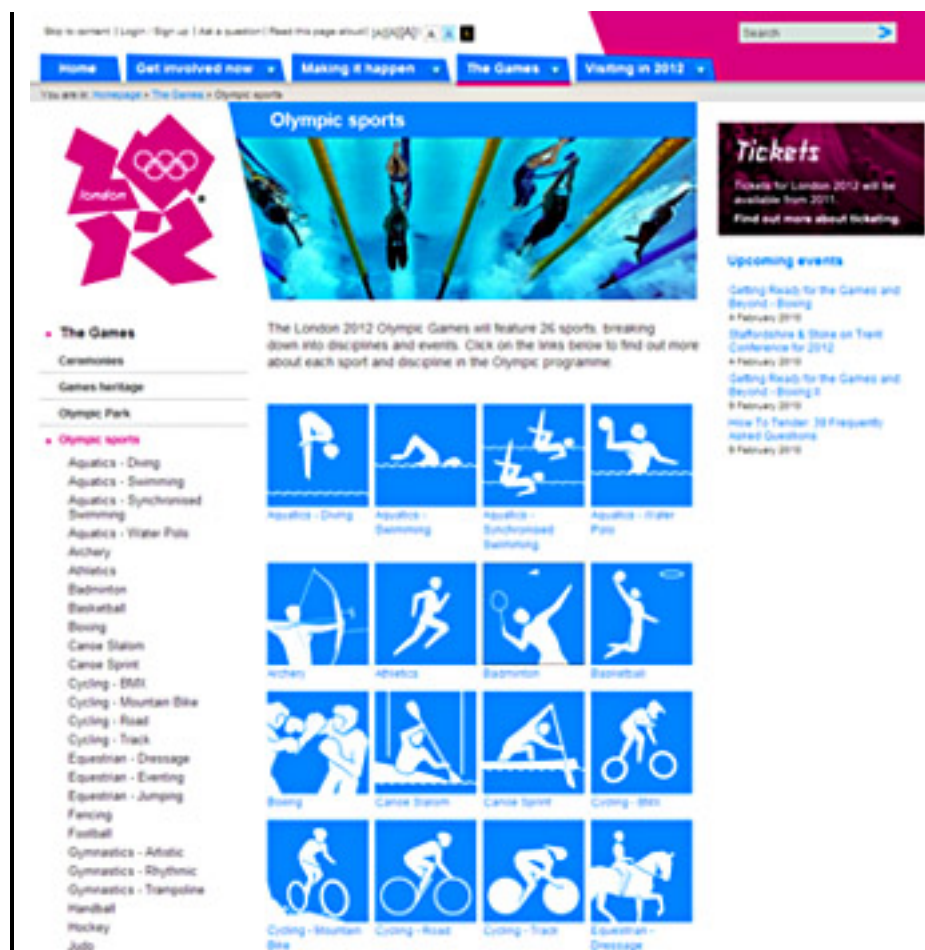


Figure 3

(b) Radio, television and the internet all provide coverage of sporting events. This coverage has transformed sports media into an industry which operates all over the world. (26 words)

Provide your answer...

Answer

(b) The coverage provided by radio, television and the internet has transformed sports media into a global industry. (17 words)



Figure 4

(c) The warship which was commanded by Admiral Nelson was called the HMS *Victory*. It is now a major tourist attraction. (20 words)

Provide your answer...

Answer

(c) Admiral Nelson's warship, HMS *Victory*, is now a major tourist attraction. (11 words)

(d) Volunteers who work on the preservation of HMS *Victory* have gained a lot of specialist knowledge. They share this knowledge with academics, school parties and other visitors. (27 words)

Provide your answer...

Answer

(d) Specialist knowledge gained by volunteers working on preserving HMS *Victory* is shared with academics, school parties and other visitors. (19 words)

2.5 Using noun groups to label diagrams

Noun groups are often used by teaching materials to convey complex information in a concise and precise way. This allows the writer to express complex information clearly and in a small space. In the example below, which has been taken from the Open University course S104 *Exploring science*, noun groups are used to label a diagram.

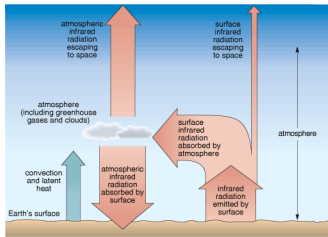


Figure 5 Noun groups used to label a diagram

Source reference: The Open University (2007)

2.6 Learning to recognise and use noun groups

Perhaps the most effective way to learn how to use noun groups is by noticing them in your readings and then trying to express yourself in the same way when writing formal texts.

University students meet noun groups in their textbooks. Very often these noun groups are technical terms that students need to learn and reuse in their assignments. The example below, again taken from the Open University course S104 Exploring science, uses the technical terms 'total rate of energy gain', 'total rate of energy loss' and 'Earth's surface'.

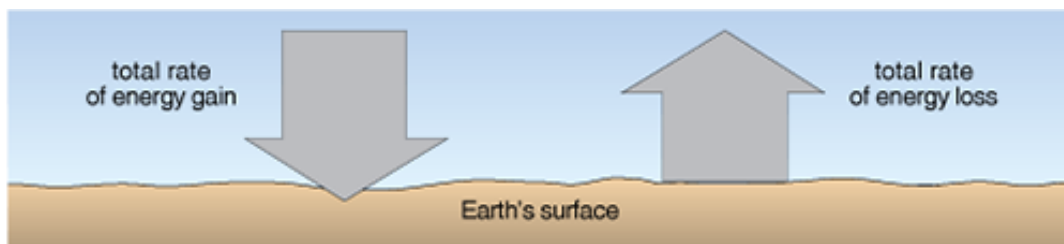


Figure 6 Technical terms

Activity 5

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Read this extract again from *The Guardian* newspaper which you read in Week 2, and carry out the following two tasks:

1. Write down all the noun groups that you can find in the article.
2. Identify the main noun in each group.

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission said the absolute child poverty goal was "simply unattainable" and that this was on course to be the first *decade since records began in 1961 not to see a fall in absolute child poverty. [...]

Iain Duncan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, argues that addressing poverty by just increasing benefits is flawed and the root causes must be addressed by getting more parents into jobs. But the commission says "ending poverty mainly through the labour market does not look

remotely realistic by 2020". In too many cases it simply moves children from low income workless households to low income working households.

(Sparrow, 2014)

Provide your answer...

Answer

Here is a list of the noun groups contained in the extract. The main nouns are in bold.

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty **Commission**

the absolute child poverty **goal**

the first **decade** since records began in 1961

a fall in absolute child **poverty**

the work and pensions **secretary**

the root **causes**

more **parents**

the labour **market**

too many **cases**

children from low income workless **households**

low income working **households**

Discussion

This article contains a large number of noun groups. Some of them are quite long and convey a great deal of information in a very precise and concise way. Expressing content in this way is a feature of the academic style, as you saw in Week 6.

Noticing these noun groups not only helps you to get used to this style but also to learn some useful combinations of words that are typical of a specific subject. For example, the expression 'root causes' is used in many academic fields and 'child poverty', 'absolute child poverty' and 'low income households' are very often used as technical terms in Social Sciences subjects such as Economics and Politics. If you were to study these subjects, it would be a good idea to make a note of these noun groups and use them in your writing.

3 Structuring verb groups

Verb groups are another type of word group. A verb is a word that describes **doing** something, for example:

donate, influence, distribute.

It can also be a word that describes **thinking, feeling or being**, for example:

need, trust, be.

Verbs in English often combine with prepositions to make different meanings, for example:

roll out, look for, find out.

They also combine with other verbs to convey tense (past, present and future), for example:

went, stay, are operating, will help.

As you have seen in Week 6, they may also combine with other verbs to convey certainty or different degrees of possibility, for example:

will achieve, would be, can influence, may sound.

In the next sections you will look at why and how verbs combine to express tense, and how to choose the correct tense in academic writing.

3.1 Indicating present, past and future in English

Verb tense is the way you can show whether an event takes place in the past, the present or the future. Figure 5 shows how this is achieved in English.

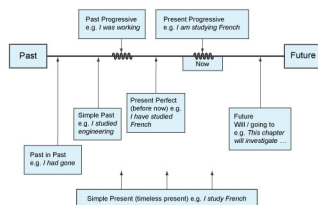


Figure 7 Expressing present, past and future

3.2 Selecting the most appropriate tense

In academic writing, different tenses are used in different text types for different purposes. In the following activity, you will look at how tenses are used in five university texts.

Activity 6

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Read Extracts 1 to 5 and answer the following questions for each of them.

1. **What** is the topic?
2. **What** type of text is it?

3. **Which** verb tense is used?

For each extract, choose from the items in the list below to answer the three questions. Copy or type your answers into the boxes following the extracts.

Type of text	Topic	Verb tense
Biographical recount	Ecosystems	Past
Description of an object	Computing	Future
Introduction to module material	Job interview	Present
Autobiographical recount	Light energy	
Methods section of a research report	Person's career	

Extract 1

In this chapter we will revisit the food chains from Chapter 2 to investigate how living things process that energy in the form of food, and what this can tell us about the interrelationships between the living and non-living components. We shall also examine the implications for our own use of ecosystems to produce the food we need to support a growing human population.

(The Open University, Y161 *Introducing environment*, p. 35)

1. What is the topic?
2. What type of text is it?
3. Which verb tense is used?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Question	Extract 1
1 What is the topic?	Ecosystems
2 What type of text is it?	Introduction of module material (environment)
3 Which verb tense is used?	Future

Extract 2

I used a lamp with a Megaman Compact 2000 energy-saving light bulb, placed it behind the workbench, arranged the lamp so that the bulb was

3 cm above the table surface and pointed forward. To obtain a light-tight enclosure I had used a shoe box made of cardboard.

(Dehnert, D., OU student assignment for S104 *Exploring science*)

1. What is the topic?
2. What type of text is it?
3. Which verb tense is used?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Question	Extract 2
1 What is the topic?	Light energy
2 What type of text is it?	Method section of a report
3 Which verb tense is used?	Past

Extract 3

A second member of the panel quizzed her closely about her fluency in other languages but was sharply reminded by his colleague that it was not that job they were interviewing for. The third member of the panel explained that he was the current line manager for this role but that he would be retiring before the person they appointed would start the job. The fourth member of the panel asked some relevant questions, but all the time that Rita was responding to his questions, he was looking through a pile of papers on the desk in front of him.

(The Open University, B120 *Introduction to business studies*, p. 36)

1. What is the topic?
2. What type of text is it?
3. Which verb tense is used?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Question	Extract 3
1 What is the topic?	Job interview

2 What type of text is it?	Biographical recount
3 Which verb tense is it written in?	Past

Extract 4

After completing two successful gap years as a volunteer at a residential youth centre, I went on to set up my own company and work for myself, as a freelance youth worker. I did this successfully for 3 years, taking on other employees as well. Last year however a position arose at a youth centre in Nottingham where I had previously volunteered.

(Baptist, T., OU student assignment for E132 *Leading work with young people*)

1. What is the topic?
2. What type of text is it?
3. Which verb tense is used?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Question	Extract 4
1 What is the topic?	Person's career
2 What type of text is it?	Autobiographical recount
3 Which verb tense is used?	Past

Extract 5

The processor can be thought of as the 'brain' of the computer in that it manages everything the computer does. A processor is contained on a single microchip or 'chip'. A chip is a small, thin slice of silicon, which might measure only a centimetre across but can contain hundreds of millions of transistors. The transistors are joined together into circuits by tiny wires which can be more than a hundred times thinner than a human hair. These tiny circuits enable the processor to carry out calculations and other manipulations of data.

(The Open University, T175 Block 1, *Networked living: exploring information and communication technologies*, p. 41)

1. What is the topic?
2. What type of text is it?
3. Which verb tense is used?

Provide your answer...

Answer

Question	Extract 5
1 What is the topic?	Computing
2 What type of text is it?	Description of an object
3 Which verb tense is used?	Present

Discussion

The verb tenses you use will depend on what you are doing when you write. If you are writing a recount (Extracts 3 and 4), many of the verbs will be in the past tense – a recount is a record of events in the past. This is similar to the methods section of a research report (Extract 2) – what you did is recorded. If you are writing a description (Extract 5), many of the verbs will be in the simple present tense – a description focuses on the permanent qualities or routine actions of the thing described and does not refer to time. If you are writing an introduction (Extract 1), many of the verbs will use the future tense because you are writing about something that will happen in the future.

3.3 Expressing the past

In everyday speech, past events can be easily discussed, but combining different verbs to express the past in writing can be challenging. It is therefore helpful to look at some of the key principles.

Activity 7

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Look at Extracts 2 and 3 (below) again and highlight examples of the following tenses:

simple past

past in the past (time before then)

past progressive (something which is currently happening in the past).

To highlight your chosen text, first click on one of the coloured highlighter symbols to choose the appropriate tense. Then click on the appropriate part of the text. Click on the eraser symbol and click on the text again if you need to remove the highlight and try again.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Answer

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Discussion

In Extract 2, there are examples of the simple past (*used, placed, arranged, pointed*) and there is an example of the past in the past: *had used* indicates something which happened before something in the past.

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Answer

Interactive content is not available in this format.

Discussion

In Extract 3, there are examples of the simple past and the past progressive. The past progressive is used for something which is currently happening in the past (*that job they were interviewing for, Rita was responding to his questions, he was looking through a pile of papers*). The focus here is on a period of time and not on a point of time.

Expressing the past is done in the following different ways.

Simple past

For example, in Extract 2:

I **used** a lamp.

This event started and finished in the past.



Figure 8

Past in the past

However, in Extract 4, for example:

Last year however a position arose at a youth centre in Nottingham where I **had previously volunteered**.

This action started and finished in the past, but it is the past in the past because the volunteering occurred before the position arose. The focus here is on the position.



Figure 9

Progressive past

This way of expressing the past is identified, for example, in Extract 3:

Rita **was responding** to his questions

You need to be able to distinguish between events that occurred at a particular point in the past and those which continued in the past.

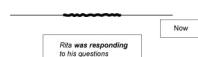


Figure 10

3.4 Using the past tense

You have identified the use of past verb tenses in academic texts. You now focus on using past verb tenses.

Activity 8

Allow approximately 5 minutes

Using the right verb tense (past)

In the box below is an example of a historical recount taken from the teaching material for a social sciences course, with some blank spaces. In the spaces insert the correct past verb tense of the verbs in brackets.

During both world wars there _____ [be] quite dramatic changes in that women were encouraged out of the home and into production. This _____ [happen] both in 1914 and in 1939. In some ways the working lives of women were different after each war too. Certainly new employment opportunities _____ [open] up for women in the 1920s, with the growth of office and shop work. Similarly, there _____ [be] new opportunities for employment in the period after the Second World War with the expansion of part-time work. Part-time work _____ [be] virtually unknown before the war and many of the part-time jobs _____ [create] by the state in the service sector (in teaching, nursing and clerical work) were taken up by married women.

Answer

During both world wars there **were** quite dramatic changes in that women were encouraged out of the home and into production. This **happened** both in 1914 and in 1939. In some ways the working lives of women were different after each war too. Certainly new employment opportunities **were opening** up for women in the 1920s, with the growth of office and shop work. Similarly, there **were** new opportunities for employment in the period after the Second World War with the expansion of part-time work. Part-time work **had been** virtually unknown before the war and many of the part-time jobs **created** by the state in the service sector (in teaching, nursing and clerical work) were taken up by married women.

(The Open University (2008) Y157 *Understanding society*, Text 4, p. 20)

4 Structuring simple sentences

When people speak, they use their voice to signal when they reach the end of one point and are starting another. When you write, you do this by writing a sentence. You may not be consciously aware of whether people use sentences while speaking, and often it does not matter whether people speak in complete sentences or not. However, when you write, it does matter. If it is not written in sentences, your writing can be difficult to read and the meaning may not be clear. Also, writing in complete sentences is an important feature of academic style. But what exactly is a sentence?

Activity 9

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Question 1

Read the following five examples. Which of these is a sentence?

1. Just in time!
- ☐ Sentence
 - ☐ Not a sentence

Answer

1. This example starts with a capital letter and ends with an exclamation mark, so it could be a sentence. However, grammatically, **it is not a sentence** because it lacks a verb and it does not include the person or thing that does the action.

2. A very innovative approach
- ☐ Sentence
 - ☐ Not a sentence

Answer

2. This example contains a noun group, which could be the thing that does the action. However, **it is not a sentence** because no action is mentioned as this example does not contain a verb or verb group. Finally, this example lacks an important feature of sentences: a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation mark.

3. Private and public spaces differ greatly.
- ☐ Sentence
 - ☐ Not a sentence

Answer

3. **This example is a sentence** because it has all the necessary features. It starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. It states the thing being described, the noun group 'private and public spaces', and also contains the verb 'differ'.

4. What is a sentence?

- ☐ Sentence
- ☐ Not a sentence

Answer

4. **This example is a sentence**, which expresses a question. It starts with a capital letter and ends with a question mark. It mentions a thing being described (a sentence) and contains a verb (is).

5. Been there, done that!

- ☐ Sentence
- ☐ Not a sentence

Answer

5. **This is not a sentence**. It does contain two verbs expressing an action (been, done) but the person who did this action is not mentioned.

6. Read the following text.

- ☐ Sentence
- ☐ Not a sentence

Answer

6. **This is a sentence** which expresses an order. It starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop. It contains a verb. The person who should carry out the action (you) is implied and this is acceptable in sentences expressing advice.

Discussion

Examples 1, 2 and 5 are often used in conversations or in informal texts such as text messages, Facebook messages, postcards or informal emails. They would be considered inappropriate however, if included in an essay or other formal document.

Question 2

Based on the insights you gained from the reading and the answers to Question 1, what are the features of a typical sentence?

Provide your answer...

Answer

- A sentence is a group of words that starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, a question mark (?) or an exclamation mark (!).

- A sentence can be used to make a statement (example 3), ask a question (example 4) or express an order, a piece of advice or an exclamation.
- A sentence normally includes a person, thing or situation that performs an action or is described. This person, thing or situation is a noun or a noun group.
- A sentence should also include a verb which either expresses an action or links the thing, person or situation to its description

The sentences you have looked at so far are **simple sentences** as they contain one noun group and one verb group. To understand how more complex sentences are structured, you need to learn about clauses. You will do this in the following sections.

4.1 Simple sentences and independent clauses

A clause is a group of words that contains:

- a subject – the person, thing or situation that does an action or that is described
- a predicate – information about the subject.

A simple sentence consists of one independent clause that ends with a full stop. This clause must be independent, that is, it must express a complete thought and make sense on its own.

These are two basic patterns frequently followed by independent clauses.

Pattern A

The clause is about *a person or a thing (the subject) that does an action* as in the following example:

The children slept.

Clause	
Subject	Predicate
The children	slept

In this clause, the subject is the noun group 'the children'. The action carried out by the subject is expressed by the verb *slept*.

The predicate is what the clause says about the subject. It always includes at least a verb or a verb group. In this case the predicate only includes the verb *slept*.

In pattern A, the predicate may also contain an object, as in the following example:

This essay will consider the differences between public and private space.

Clause	
Subject	Predicate

	Verb group	Object
This essay	will consider	the differences between public and private space

In this clause, the subject is the noun group 'This essay'. The action carried out by the subject is expressed by the verb group 'will consider'. The object is a noun or noun group. It is the thing or person on which the action is performed.

Clauses following pattern A can also contain two predicates as in this example:

The residents have their own rooms and keep many personal possessions.

Clause			
Subject	Predicate 1	Connecting word	Predicate 2
The residents	have their own rooms	and	keep many personal possessions

It is important to know that not all verbs can be followed by an object. For example, it is incorrect to use the verbs **go** or **sleep** in the sentences 'the children slept in the bed' or 'I went to the cinema'. These verbs are called **intransitive verbs**.

Verbs that can be followed by an object, such as **consider**, **eat** or **write**, are called **transitive verbs**. You can find out if a verb is transitive or intransitive in most dictionaries. When you use an unfamiliar verb, knowing if it is transitive or intransitive can help you use it within a sentence

Pattern B

The clause is about *a state or a feeling experienced by the subject* as in the following example:

The story is very different in poorly run residential homes.

Clause	
Subject	Predicate
The story	is very different in poorly run residential homes

Clauses following this pattern can also contain two predicates as in this example:

The residents are happy and feel safe.

Clause			
Subject	Predicate 1	Connecting word	Predicate 2
The residents	are happy	and	feel safe

5 Structuring compound sentences

Academic and formal texts may contain some simple sentences. However, many sentences are not simple, instead they contain more than one independent clause.

A **compound sentence** is a sentence that connects two or more independent clauses with a connecting word.

Here is an example of a compound sentence containing two independent clauses that are linked by the connecting word *and*:

Clause 1	Connecting word	Clause 2
Skimming is used to get an overview of a text	and	scanning helps to find a specific piece of information.

This compound sentence could be broken into two complete sentences:

Skimming is used to get an overview of a text.

Scanning helps to find a specific piece of information.

In practice, you would not want to split these two sentences because they work fine joined together. Additionally, if you write only in simple sentences, your writing will read jerkily. Running things together into longer sentences provides a more flowing read and gives a more 'natural' feel.

It is important to remember that in academic texts, two independent clauses must always be joined by a linking word and must be correctly punctuated. The linking words used to connect independent clauses are conjunctions and adverbs.

5.1 Using conjunctions in compound sentences

One way to connect two independent clauses within a sentence is to use the following conjunctions:

as so but or

As is used with a similar meaning to *because*, when one statement is the reason for another, as in this sentence:

I cannot share this information **as** it is confidential.

So is used when one statement is the result of the previous one, as in this sentence:

Do tasks that are quickly achieved **so** they don't seem too daunting.

But is used when there is a contrast between the two, for example:

Friends are important to young people **but** parents still have a very important role.

Or is used when a statement is an alternative to the previous one, for example:

Parents may send their children to school **or** they may educate them at home.

Other conjunctions include: *for*, *yet* and *nor*.

When the two clauses are quite long, place a comma before the coordinating conjunction to help the reader to see where one clause ends and another begins.

5.2 Using adverbs in compound sentences

The two independent clauses that form a compound sentence are often linked through an adverb. You met most of these adverbs in Week 5 when you looked at ways to link ideas. The most common of these adverbs are listed in the following table.

Adding emphasis	Giving an example	Adding a consequence	Adding a contrasting idea	Adding a similar idea
indeed in fact	for example for instance	therefore consequently hence thus as a result	however conversely on the other hand instead on the contrary nevertheless	similarly likewise

Compound sentences linked through an adverb are structured as follows:

First independent clause	Semi-colon	Adverb	Comma	Second independent clause
Researchers have studied AIDS for many years	;	however	,	a vaccine has not been found yet.

Activity 10

Allow approximately 10 minutes

The following sets of sentences have been incorrectly or unclearly organised. Rewrite them including the adverb in the brackets and making correct use of punctuation.

Example:

Staff must be able to observe the patients this has the effect of reducing patients' privacy and dignity. (however)

Answer

Staff must be able to observe the patients; however, this has the effect of reducing patients' privacy and dignity.

1. Migration is often seen as a large-scale or impersonal issue. It is an intense personal experience which transforms the individual lives of those who move. (however)

Provide your answer...

Answer

1. Migration is often seen as a large-scale or impersonal issue; however, it is an intense personal experience which transforms the individual lives of those who move.
2. Global warming causes changes in ecosystems many animal populations will dwindle or die out. (consequently)

Provide your answer...

Answer

2. Global warming causes changes in ecosystems; consequently, many animal populations will dwindle or die out.
3. Technology includes social innovations, a book can be thought of as a technology for sharing ideas. (for example)

Provide your answer...

Answer

3. Technology includes social innovations; for example, a book can be thought of as a technology for sharing ideas.
4. All businesses must be aware of the environments in which they operate, they must identify factors that may affect them. (in particular)

Provide your answer...

Answer

4. All businesses must be aware of the environments in which they operate; in particular, they must identify factors that may affect them.
5. At Cedar Court Nursing Home, rights to privacy and dignity are totally ignored by staff; residents are treated as objects of care. (indeed)

Provide your answer...

Answer

5. At Cedar Court Nursing Home, rights to privacy and dignity are totally ignored by staff; indeed, residents are treated as objects of care.

6 Structuring a complex sentence

Complex sentences differ from compound sentences in that their meaning *depends on* the combination of the two clauses, one of which is incomplete because it cannot stand on its own.

Look at this example:

If children's diets are low in energy

This clause contains a subject (children's diets) and a predicate (are low in energy) but it cannot stand on its own because it starts with 'if'. This type of clause is called a dependent clause because in order to be meaningful it needs to be joined to an independent clause.

For example:

Dependent clause	Comma	Independent clause
If children's diets are low in energy	,	they will stop growing and gaining weight.

Now look at another example:

When people suffer from malnutrition, they are often deficient in the vitamins and minerals needed by the body.

As with the example using 'if', this sentence consists of two clauses, each of which includes a subject and a predicate. However, the first clause cannot stand on its own because it starts with 'when': it therefore needs to be joined to an independent clause to make sense. When the two sentences are joined, it is clear to the reader that it is only when people are deficient in the vitamins and minerals needed by the body that they may suffer from malnutrition.

6.1 Connecting sentences with 'if' and 'when'

Compound sentences are formed by connecting two or more clauses which could stand on their own with the same meaning even if they were separated.

Complex sentences differ from compound sentences in that their meaning *depends on* the combination of the two statements, so that the two clauses cannot stand on their own.

The most common words used to connect sentences in this way are **if** and **when**.

Activity 11

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Look at this example:

If children's diets are low in energy

Does this clause make sense to you? Is it clear?

This clause needs to be joined to another one in order to be meaningful.

For example:

***If** children's diets are low in energy, they will stop growing and gaining weight.*

The two clauses are combined as shown below.

	somebody	does or is	something
	subject	verb	object (or rest of the clause)
First clause	children's diets	are	low in energy
Second clause	they	will stop growing and gaining	weight

Each of the above clauses has a meaning on its own but, when **if** is added, it means that not all children's diets are low in energy and not all of them will stop growing and gaining weight.

Sentences with *if* and *when* cannot stand alone but must always combine two clauses. The meaning of one of the clauses always depends on the meaning of the other.

Now look at another example:

***When** people suffer from malnutrition, they are often deficient in the vitamins and minerals needed by the body.*

As with the example using 'if', this sentence consists of two clauses which include a subject, verb and the object or rest of the clauses:

	somebody	does or is	something
	subject	verb	object or rest of the clause
First clause	people	suffer	from malnutrition
Second clause	they	are	often deficient in the vitamins and minerals needed by the body

Again, each of these clauses has a meaning, but that meaning is changed by the addition of *when* when both are combined into a sentence. This makes it clear to the reader that it is only when people are deficient in the vitamins and minerals needed by the body that they may suffer from malnutrition.

A sentence containing *if* or *when* which does not combine two clauses doesn't make sense. **Connecting sentences with 'if' and 'when'**

Match each of the clauses below with a suitable clause starting with *If* or *When* from the left-hand column to make a sensible sentence.

they tend to maintain this practice into adulthood.

their level of concentration suffers.

call the out-of-hours number provided.

you will put on weight.

take the next dose as normal.

you are less likely to have heart disease.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

1. If children are introduced to good dental hygiene early,
2. When people don't sleep enough,
3. If the surgery is closed,
4. If you take in more calories than your body consumes,
5. If you forget to take your medicine,
6. If you take regular exercise,

Discussion

Note how clauses beginning with 'If' or 'When' end in a comma. You will see more examples of this in the next activity.

6.2 Other connecting words that work like if and when

There are several more ways of joining two or more clauses together to make longer sentences. Some of these connecting words are **because**, **although** or **even though**, and **while**.

Because is used to indicate the reason for whatever is stated in the other half of the clause.

Although, *even though* and *while* are all used to express a contradiction between the two joined clauses.

As, *because*, *although* and *even though* all behave in the same way in that they are attached to a clause which is joined to another clause. They can be used at the beginning of the sentence or in the middle but the statement they are attached to must follow immediately after them.

Activity 12

Allow approximately 10 minutes

Select the appropriate connecting words to complete the sentences below.

after	before	even if	since	unless	until
-------	--------	---------	-------	--------	-------

whenever	where	whereas/ while	because	although/even though	
----------	-------	-------------------	---------	-------------------------	--

Sara had had a rather negative impression of her father ____ she started to attend counselling sessions.

Answer

Sara had had a rather negative impression of her father **until** she started to attend counselling sessions.

The affairs of one patient should never be discussed in the hearing of others, even if they have the same condition ____ this is agreed with the patient concerned.

Answer

The affairs of one patient should never be discussed in the hearing of others, even if they have the same condition **unless** this is agreed with the patient concerned.

____ some people make particular use of their local support group, others prefer to make this kind of contact online.

Answer

Whereas/While some people make particular use of their local support group, others prefer to make this kind of contact online.

____ his mother became ill, Harry attended to all her paperwork and bill payments.

Answer

After his mother became ill, Harry attended to all her paperwork and bill payments.

____ a support group starts in a pub and feels very casual, it will need one or two people to keep the whole process going.

Answer

Even if a support group starts in a pub and feels very casual, it will need one or two people to keep the whole process going.

____ confidential information is passed on by phone, it should be given only to the person authorised to receive it.

Answer

Where confidential information is passed on by phone, it should be given only to the person authorised to receive it.

7 This week's quiz

Well done – you've not only come to the end of this week's study, but you've also almost completed the final week in *English: skills for learning*.

To finish up in style and be able to share this achievement with others, if you want to, now complete the Week 8 badge quiz.

Quizzes can only be completed on OpenLearn and will require registration / enrollment to course

Go to:

[Week 8 compulsory badge quiz](#).

Remember, this quiz counts towards your badge. If you're not successful the first time you can attempt the quiz again in 24 hours.

Open the quiz in a new tab or window (by holding ctrl [or cmd on a Mac] when you click the link).

8 Summary

This week you have learned how to structure word groups and use them to form clauses and sentences.

In Week 8 you have learned:

- A noun can combine with articles, adjectives, adverbs and other nouns to form a unit of language called a noun group.
- Noun groups are used in academic and formal texts to express a great deal of information very concisely. They are frequently used to make notes and label diagrams.
- It is useful to notice and make a note of noun groups you find in your readings.
- Verbs are words used to describe doing or feeling, thinking and being.
- Verb tense is the way you can show whether an event takes place in the past, the present or the future.
- Verbs can combine with other verbs to form a unit of language called a verb group.
- Noun and verb groups can be combined to form either an independent or a dependent clause.
- Clauses contain a subject and a predicate.
- A sentence is a unit of language that makes sense on its own. It starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.
- There are three types of sentence: simple, compound and complex sentences.

Well done for completing *English: skills for learning*! During the past eight weeks, you have learned the skills necessary to communicate effectively at university but also in many everyday contexts. In particular, you have learned how English speaking academic communities structure units of language and link ideas, and how to exploit this understanding to read and write university texts. You have also learned how to break reading and writing tasks into manageable steps and how to employ a range of note making strategies. You should also be better able to recognise and use an academic and formal style and use online dictionaries to select the most appropriate vocabulary.

I hope that these skills will help you to fulfil your wish to become a more confident communicator and a successful student.

If you've gained your badge you'll receive an email to notify you. You can view and manage your badges in [My OpenLearn](#) within 24 hours of completing all the criteria to gain a badge.

Now you've completed the course we would again appreciate a few minutes of your time to tell us a bit about your experience of studying it and what you plan to do next. We will use this information to provide better online experiences for all our learners and to share our findings with others. If you'd like to help, please fill in this [optional survey](#).

You can now return to the course progress page.

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