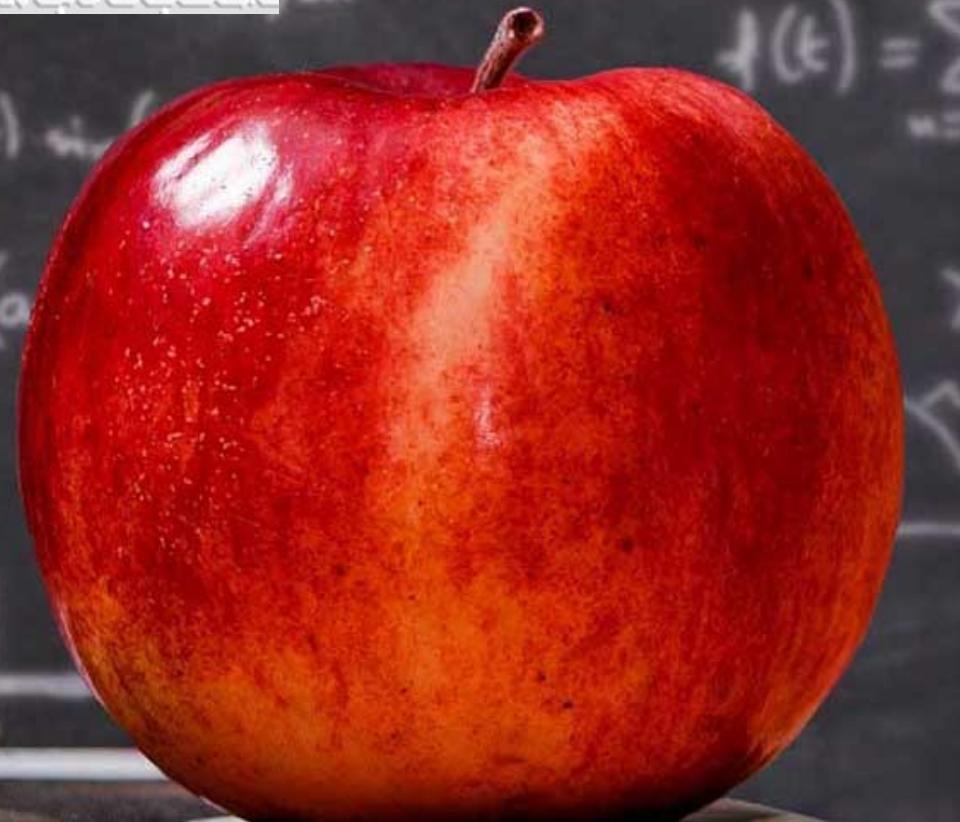




Structure and Style: Syntax in Academic writing

Assistant Professor Sashka Jovanovska



Why is Syntax in academic writing important?

Syntax in academic writing refers to the arrangement of words and phrases into clear, grammatically correct, and logically structured sentences.

It governs how sentence elements are ordered to convey meaning precisely, maintain coherence, and support an appropriate academic tone.

Learning Objectives



01

Identify the main sentence structures used in academic writing.

02

Recognize the differences between formal and informal syntax.

03

Make your writing clearer, more coherent, and concise.

04

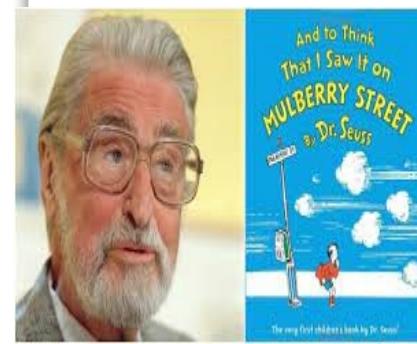
Transform everyday sentences into academic ones.

Interesting Facts about Writing

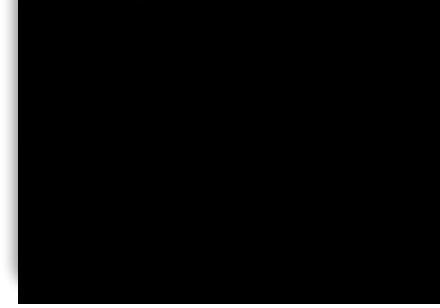
Agatha Christie suffered from dysgraphia which meant she could not write legibly; as a result, she dictated all of her novels.



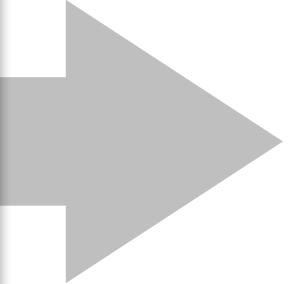
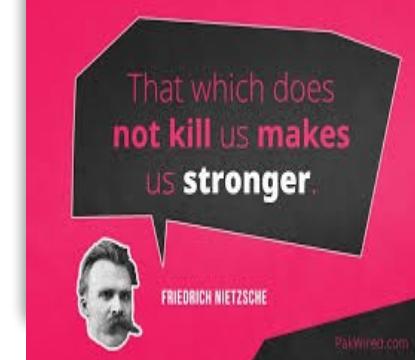
When Dr. Seuss was stuck writing his books, he would go to a secret closet filled with hundreds of hats and wear them till the words came.



Ernest Hemingway sharpened pencils to help him think while he was writing.



The first philosopher to 'write' on a typewriter was Friedrich Nietzsche.





Mastering Your Writing Voice

Understanding syntax, style, and structure gives you the tools to craft compelling prose that resonates with readers.

01

Analyze sentence types and effects

Choose declarative, imperative, interrogative, or exclamatory based on your purpose

02

Experiment with sentence structures

Use loose, periodic, balanced, and freight train techniques strategically

03

Control rhythm and emphasis

Apply repetition, coordination, and subordination to guide your reader's experience

Advanced Techniques



Rhetorical Question

A question posed for persuasive effect without expecting a reply



Appositive

A noun or phrase used to identify or rename another noun



Coordination

Using coordinating conjunctions (and, but, for, nor, or, so, yet) to join clauses



Subordination

Using subordinating conjunctions (because, although, when, if) to create complex sentences



Repetition for Emphasis

Anaphora

Repetition at the beginning of successive clauses

"This royal throne of kings, this haunting isle, This earth of majesty, this seat of Mars"

Epistrophe

Repetition at the end of successive clauses

"What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny compared to what lies within us." —Emerson

Four Subordinating Structures

1 Loose Structure

Main clause comes first

"We must always be weary of conclusions drawn from social insects, since their evolutionary tract lies so far from ours."

2 Periodic Structure

Main clause follows subordinate parts

"Since there is no future for the black ghetto, the future of all Negroes is diminished."

3 Convolved Structure

Main clause split with subordinate parts intruding

"White men, at the bottom of their hearts, know this."

4 Centered Structure

Main clause occupies the middle

"Having wanted to walk on the sea like St. Peter, he had taken an involuntary bath, losing his mind and reputation."

Exercise 1: Rewriting Sentences

Instructions: Rewrite the following informal sentences into academic style. Be precise, avoid contractions, and use formal vocabulary.

1. Kids these days spend too much time online.
2. Teachers don't really care if students use their phones in class.
3. A lot of people think climate change is not that big of a deal.
4. We should do stuff to protect animals.
5. The study shows that students get better when they practice more.

Informal: Kids these days spend too much time online.

Academic: Contemporary adolescents devote a significant amount of time to online activities.

Informal: Teachers don't really care if students use their phones in class.

Academic: Many instructors demonstrate limited concern regarding students' use of mobile phones during lectures.

Informal: A lot of people think climate change is not that big of a deal.

Academic: A considerable portion of the population underestimates the severity of climate change.

Informal: We should do stuff to protect animals.

Academic: It is necessary to implement effective measures to ensure the protection of wildlife.

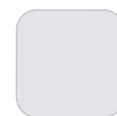
Informal: The study shows that students get better when they practice more.

Academic: The research findings indicate that increased practice correlates with improved student performance.



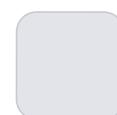
Balanced Sentences

Two parts, roughly equivalent in length, creating harmony and emphasis



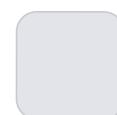
Parallel Structure

"In a few moments, everything grew black, and the rain poured down like a cataract."



Split Balance

"Visit either you like; they're both mad."



Rhythmic Flow

"Children played about her; and she sang as she worked."

The Freight Train Technique

Couples short, independent clauses to make longer sequential statements

"And the rain descended and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon the house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

This technique creates rhythm and builds momentum through repetitive structure.



Four Essential Sentence Types

1

Declarative

Forms a statement

"Tomorrow I will go to the store."

2

Imperative

Makes a command or request

"Get me some water. Leave that cat alone."

3

Interrogative

Forms a question

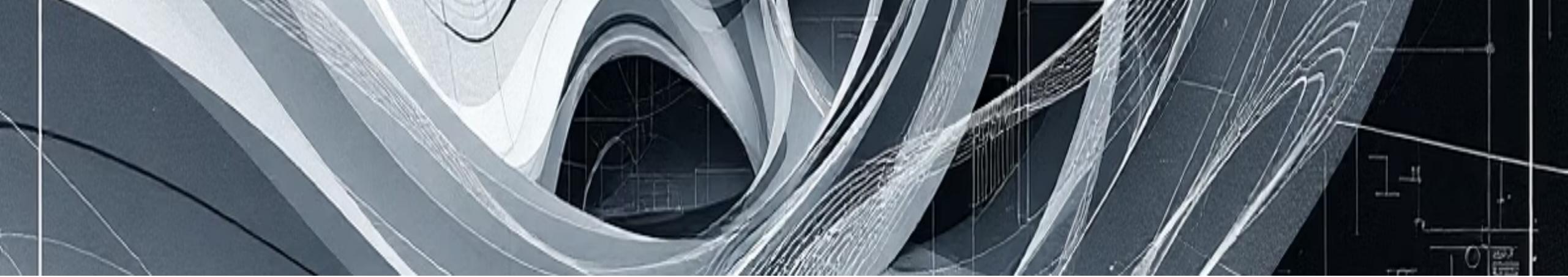
"What do you think I should wear?"

4

Exclamatory

Expresses strong feelings

"It's alive! It's alive!"



Defining Our Core Elements

Syntax

The arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language

Style

The way you write - your voice, word choice, tone, and sentence structure that readers "hear"

Structure

The grammatical arrangement and organization of words, phrases, and sentences



Exercise 2: Syntax Puzzle

Instructions: Rearrange the words/phrases to form a grammatically correct academic sentence.

1. *significant role / plays / a / education / in / development / cognitive / students'*
2. *evidence / there is / that / directly / sleep / performance / affects / academic*
3. *social media / impact / communication skills / both positive / has / and negative / on*
4. *in order to / essential / is / it / maintain / a balanced diet / good health*
5. *global economy / influence / strongly / technological innovations / the*

1. Education plays a significant role in students' cognitive development.
2. There is evidence that sleep directly affects academic performance.
3. Social media has both positive and negative impact on communication skills.
4. In order to maintain good health, it is essential to have a balanced diet.
5. Technological innovations strongly influence the global economy.

Words of Wisdom from the Masters

“You have none.”

— Sheanne Cox

“Style is a simple way of saying complicated things.”

— Jean Cocteau

“Fashions fade, style is eternal.”

— Yves St. Laurent

“Proper words in proper places make the true definition of style.”

— Jonathan Swift

Focus Areas in Writing



Note Taking

Capturing key information efficiently and effectively.



Essay Writing

Structured argumentative and analytical compositions.



Summaries from Notes

Condensing information into digestible formats.



Creative Writing

Narratives, poetry, and imaginative expression.



Research Reports

Subject-specific academic and professional writing.



From Basic to Brilliant

Before: Basic Writing

"The Polar Bear lives in the Arctic. It is big and white and can grow up to three metres long. It eats seals and dead animals."

After: Stylistic Excellence

"Lurking in the vast hinterland of the Arctic wastes is one of nature's most commanding creatures: the Polar Bear. This savage and unpredictable species..."

The Foundation: Outlining Rules

01

Left Side of Page

Proper formatting and organization structure.

02

Header Information

Name, subject, and date clearly displayed.

03

Topic Sentence with Roman Numeral

Main ideas clearly identified and numbered.

04

Number Supporting Ideas

Logical progression of supporting points.

05

Clincher Statement

Strong conclusion that reinforces the main point.

Sentence Openers: Six Powerful Techniques

Subject Opener

Traditional subject + verb pattern for clarity.

Adverb Opener (-ly)

Start with adverbs to modify verbs or adjectives.

Clausal Opener

Begin with subordinate clauses using "when," "while," "because."

Prepositional Opener

Begin with prepositions like "in," "on," "under."

Verbal Opener (-ing/-ed)

Use participles, gerunds, and infinitives.

VSS (Very Short Sentence)

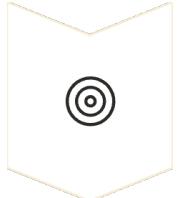
Dramatic impact through brevity and emphasis.

Dress ups: Elevating Your Sentences



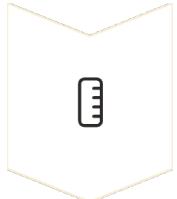
Adverb (-ly)

Add descriptive adverbs to enhance action and description.



Quality Adjectives

Use dual adjectives to create vivid imagery.



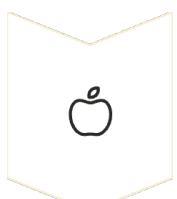
Quality Verbs

Replace weak verbs with strong, specific action words.



Because Clause

Add reasoning and explanation to strengthen arguments.



Who/Which Clause

Provide additional descriptive information about subjects.



WWW.ASIA Clauses

When, while, where, as, since, if, although clauses.

Decorations: Adding Flair and Drama

1

Questions

Engage readers with rhetorical or direct questions.

2

Dialogue

Include conversation and quotations for authenticity.

3

3sss (Short Staccato Sentences)

Create rhythm with brief, punchy sentences.

4

Dramatic Opening & Closing

Frame paragraphs with powerful VSS statements.

5

Figures of Speech

Similes, metaphors, allusions, and personification.

6

Alliteration

Repetition of initial consonant sounds for effect.

Mastery Through Practice

Key Principles

- Practice and drill techniques consistently
- Move beyond rigid 6-6-6 paragraph requirements
- Focus on stylistic choices first, then add content
- Use decorations sparingly - like "salt and pepper"



Remember: Style is not about showing off - it's about communicating complex ideas with clarity and elegance. Master these techniques to transform your writing from ordinary to extraordinary.



Exercise 3: Paragraph Challenge

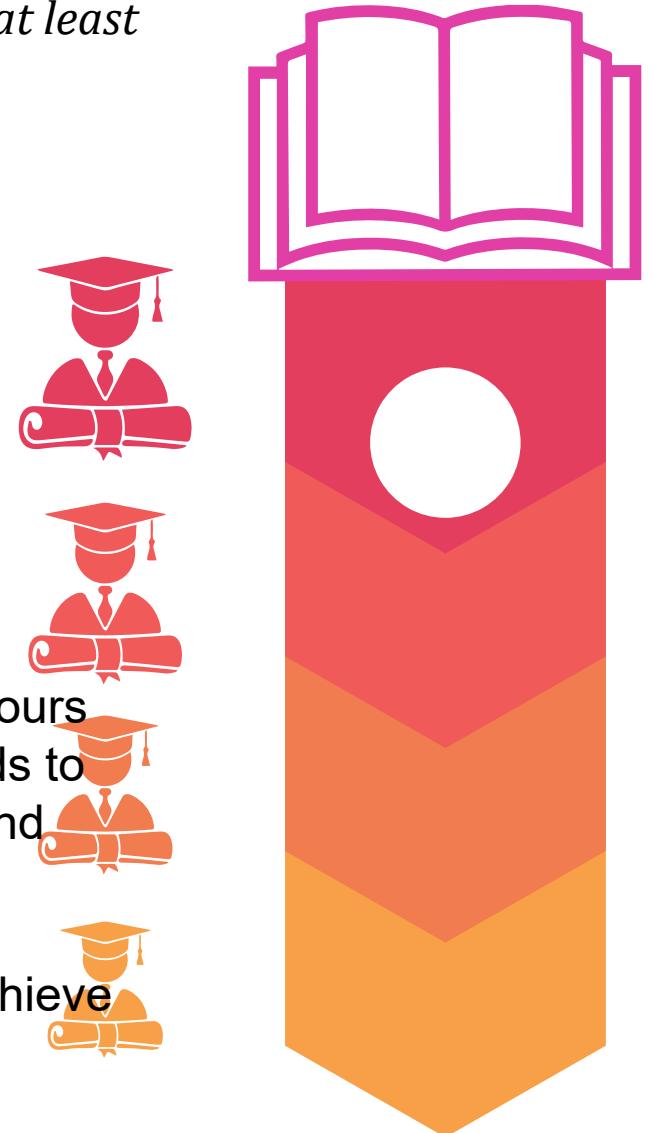
Instructions: Use the following facts to write a short academic paragraph. Include at least one complex sentence, appropriate transitions, and parallelism.

- Fact 1: University students spend an average of 3 hours daily on social media.
- Fact 2: Excessive use may lead to procrastination.
- Fact 3: Some platforms can be useful for academic collaboration.
- Fact 4: Time management is a key factor for academic success.

Exercise 3: Paragraph Challenge (Sample Answer)

Recent studies reveal that university students spend an average of three hours daily on social media. Although excessive use of these platforms often leads to procrastination, certain applications can facilitate academic collaboration and peer support. Therefore, time management emerges as a crucial factor in balancing the potential benefits of social media with its negative effects.

Ultimately, students who manage their time effectively are more likely to achieve academic success, maintain productivity, and sustain healthy study habits.



SOME COMMON SYNTACTICAL MISTAKES

Syntax Passive Voice

- (1) They are breed by sprouting.
- (2) Its structure know as pitfall traps.

Tense

- (1) I am living in Skopje for 20 years.
- (2) Some butterfly become rare because many people has been hunt for collection.

Subject-Verb Agreement

- (1) They works from Monday to Friday.
- (2) They are the big cat which lives on earth.



SOME COMMON MORPHOLOGICAL MISTAKES

Morpheme Inflection

- (1) It has some pinnate leafs.
- (2) My town is the most busy town.

Derivation

- (1) Many people busy working in here.
- (2) Dolphin can be very entertainment.

Preposition

- (1) Not only to communication, handphone or smartphone has other function.
- (2) Some of them can jump to 30 feets in the air.

Article

- (3) Our town is a old town.
- (4) Elephant is a largest mammal on the land.



Copula be

- (1) Now, three species of the tiger is in danger of extinction.
- (2) Snake are also dangerous.

Personal Pronoun

- (1) Cactus has leaves like hair but it is spines.
- (2) Sparrow using t beak to eat.

Auxiliary

- (1) This fish have a beautiful fins and colorful tails.
- (2) My father have a big farm.

Demonstrative Determiner

- (1) The majority of there beetles eaten some little animal like an aphids.
- (2) This mammals lives in a group.



The Top Twenty Errors in Undergraduate Writing

A quick guide to troubleshooting your writing and avoiding the most common mistakes that trip up college students.



Why These Twenty Errors Matter

Writing instructors from across the country identified these patterns as the most frequent issues in student papers.

Understanding these errors helps you write more clearly and credibly.

This guide offers practical fixes you can apply immediately to strengthen your academic writing and improve your grades.



Errors 1-5: The Foundation Issues

1

Missing Comma After Introductory Element

Add a comma after introductory words, phrases, or clauses to signal where the main sentence begins.

2

Vague Pronoun Reference

Make sure every pronoun clearly refers to a specific noun. Avoid ambiguous "it," "this," or "they."

3

Missing Comma in Compound Sentence

Use a comma before coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet) joining independent clauses.

4

Wrong Word

Double-check easily confused words like affect/effect, its/it's, and their/there/they're.

5

Missing Comma with Nonrestrictive Element

Set off extra information with commas. If you can remove it without changing meaning, use commas.

Errors 6-10: Sentence Structure Problems

1

Unnecessary Shift in Verb Tense

Stay consistent with your verb tenses unless the timeline actually changes in your narrative.

2

Missing or Unnecessary Comma with Restrictive Element

Don't use commas around essential information that defines or restricts meaning.

3

Fused (Run-on) Sentence

Two complete sentences joined without punctuation or conjunctions create confusion. Add proper punctuation.

4

Comma Splice

Don't join independent clauses with just a comma. Use a semicolon, period, or conjunction instead.

5

Lack of Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

Pronouns must match their antecedents in number. Singular nouns need singular pronouns.

The Comma Splice: A Closer Look

What It Is

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined with only a comma, creating a grammatical error that weakens your writing.

How to Fix It

- Use a period to create two sentences
- Add a coordinating conjunction after the comma
- Replace the comma with a semicolon
- Rewrite to make one clause dependent

- Incorrect:** The study was comprehensive, it included over 500 participants.
Correct: The study was comprehensive; it included over 500 participants.
Correct: The study was comprehensive, and it included over 500 participants.

Errors 11-15: Precision and Clarity

1

Poorly Integrated Quotation

Introduce quotes with signal phrases and integrate them grammatically into your sentences. Never drop quotes without context.

2

Unnecessary or Missing Capitalization

Capitalize proper nouns, first words of sentences, and major words in titles. Don't capitalize common nouns for emphasis.

3

Missing Word

Read your work aloud to catch omitted words, especially articles (a, an, the) and prepositions that your brain may skip over.

4

Faulty Sentence Structure

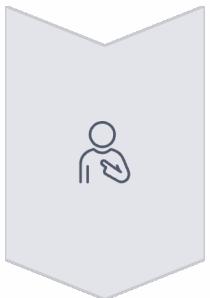
Ensure subjects and predicates work together logically. Mixed constructions confuse readers about what the sentence means.

5

Missing Comma in a Series

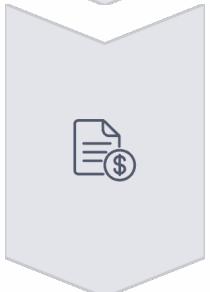
Use commas to separate three or more items in a list. The Oxford comma before "and" prevents ambiguity.

Quotation Integration Made Simple



Introduce

Use a signal phrase naming the author or source before the quote.



Quote

Keep quotes concise and relevant. Use only what you need to support your point.



Explain

Always follow quotes with your own analysis explaining their significance to your argument.



Errors 16-20: The Final Five

1

Lack of Subject-Verb Agreement

Subjects and verbs must agree in number. Singular subjects take singular verbs; plural subjects take plural verbs.

2

Lack of Agreement Between Pronoun and Antecedent

When using pronouns like "everyone" or "each," remember they're singular and need singular pronouns.

3

Sentence Fragment

Every sentence needs a subject and a complete verb. Fragments leave thoughts incomplete and confuse readers.

4

Wrong or Missing Preposition

Prepositions create precise relationships between words. "Different from" not "different than"; "comply with" not "comply to."

5

Its/It's Confusion

"Its" shows possession; "it's" means "it is" or "it has." This mix-up undermines your credibility instantly.

Your Action Plan for Better Writing

01

Review This Guide Regularly

Keep this list handy as a reference when revising your papers.

02

Focus on Your Weak Spots

Track which errors appear most in your graded work and target those areas.

03

Read Your Work Aloud

Hearing your sentences helps catch awkward phrasing and missing words.

04

Use Writing Center Resources

Take advantage of tutoring and workshops to strengthen your skills.



Strong Writing = Strong Ideas

Mastering these common errors elevates your writing from distracting to persuasive. Clear, correct prose allows your ideas to shine. Keep this guide accessible, practice consistently, and watch your writing transform.

Most morphological and syntaxes mistakes in Academic writing

MARIJA GJOSHEVA

LORA VELICKOVA

CVETANKA JOVANOVA

LILA KUSHEVSKA

GORICA CHERKEZOVA

SANJA GOCEVA

**THE RESEARCH HAS BEEN DONE
BY THE STUDENTS FROM III YEAR**

1. The first error in this paragraph is one of most important areas because there is no definite article. It should be one of the most important areas.

2. The second error is due to direct relationship. The better option would be due to its direct relationship to survival and health.

3. In the last sentence there is no need of **firstly** and **secondly** because we already have them in the other two paragraphs, so it would be better if we put a colon after **two reasons** and eliminate **firstly** and **secondly**.

Advances in health and biology and other areas of society in the last 100 years have transformed the way we live as well as postponing the day we die. There is no better time to be alive than now. To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Biology is one of 1. most important areas of science 2. due to its direct relationship to survival and health. Observing the rapid advances made, it has been suggested that it is presently the optimum time to be alive. I strongly agree with this affirmation for two reasons, 3. firstly lives have been improved, and secondly risks have been reduced.

First, comparing life with a century ago it is possible to list new benefits available such as hospitals, doctors, medicines, diagnoses, donors, and transplants, all of which were extremely rare previously. Advances in the sciences have improved lives across society considerably.

For example, consider an operation in France several years ago whereby a woman received a complete face transplant. This would be unthinkable in 1910, therefore, due to science her life has undoubtedly improved.

Secondly, health risks have fallen incredibly, so much so that it is possible to visit tropical countries which previously carried considerable dangers. This is because traditionally preventative measures such as vaccinations, immunisation and prescription tablets did not exist.

In addition over the last thirty years their cost has fallen rendering exotic travel available to almost anyone with the funds. 4. Therefore, modern science has increased the opportunities and reduced the risks related to travel, there has been no parallel in history.

To conclude, 5. I strongly agree that biology and improvements in science have increased people's well being 6. and their opportunities to explore the world. This is undoubtedly the first time in history such situations have existed.

4. THEREFORE, MODERN SCIENCE HAS INCREASED THE OPPORTUNITIES AND REDUCED THE RISKS RELATED TO TRAVEL.

5. **ERROR HERE IS AGREEABLE AND IT SHOULD BE REPLACED WITH AGREE BECAUSE WE NEED A VERB.**



6. **THIS OPPORTUNITIES AND IT SHOULD BE SUBSTITUTED WITH THEIR OPPORTUNITIES BECAUSE WE TALK ABOUT PEOPLE'S OPPORTUNITIES.**

THANK YOU

