

Common English Mistakes to Avoid When Writing a Research Paper

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Outline

I. Various types of common mistakes

1. Word choice
2. Grammar
3. Sentence structure and information structure
4. Stylistic considerations (conciseness/parallel structure)

II. Useful internet sites

I. Various types of common mistakes

1. Word choice

Exercise 1: Avoid commonly confused words.

1. Assure/ensure

- a. Knowing the principles of medical ethics does not _____ ethical behavior.
- b. He had been able to _____ them that the schools would not close.

2. Alternately/alternatively

- a. The mice were _____ fed and deprived of food.
- b. The dog's weight can be controlled by diet or, _____, by drugs.

3. Continual/continuous

- a. The machine made a _____ hum.
- b. The experiments were hampered by _____ infections in the rat colony.

Exercise 2: Avoid using informal language.

1. Germs grow well in dirty and warm temperatures.

→

2. The research assistant checked out the incident and got back to the director the next day.

→

Exercise 3: Avoid using sexist language.

1. In order to do well in a class, a student needs to do his homework.

→

Exercise 4: Choose proper collocations; replace *get* with a verb or expressions in the box.

sustain	contract	develop	be diagnosed with	catch
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1. To **get** cancer is the most frightening experience, and people often need intense counselling to cope with it.
2. Jinsoo escaped with bruises, but experts say he was lucky not to have **got** serious injuries.
3. Many musicians who **get** arthritis experience the tragedy of no longer being able to play their instrument.
4. Millions of people **get** malaria each year in poorer countries, and drugs to treat it are in short supply.

2. Grammar

Exercise 1: Choose appropriate verb tenses.

1. In recent years, technology (reach) a level where vast amounts of digital information are available at a low price.
2. Optical coherence tomography (OCT) (use) to analyze DME [6–9].
3. We (investigate) the causes of death among Korean diabetic patients between 2005 and 2015.
4. A questionnaire (is) mailed in April. A follow-up questionnaire (is) sent 2 months later to the dentists who (do not reply) to the initial mailing.
5. Genomics (provide) crucial information for rational drug design.

6. Table 1 above (demonstrate) the success of cloning in various animal species.
7. Figure 2 below (show) methylation in mouse 2-cell embryos.
8. Implications of these findings (include) further assessment of the accumulation of cultural stressors that may increase the risk of poor mental health outcomes among this group.

Comparison:

- (a) We found that the pressure **increased** as the temperature **rose**, which **indicated** that temperature **played** a significant role in the process.
- (b) We found that the pressure **increases** as the temperature **rises**, which **indicates** that temperature **plays** a significant role in the process.

Exercise 2: Choose appropriate active/passive voice verbs.

1. The patient **hospitalized** for complications following outpatient surgery.
2. The patient **discharged** from the hospital when treatment was complete.
3. The hospital **was staffed** by emergency personnel during the storm.
4. A hazardous chemical **is contained** by the flask.
5. The human heart **is consisted of** four chambers.
6. The patient **committed** to a psychiatric facility.
7. Patients were randomly assigned to receive X drug (25 mg per day) or matching placebo for four weeks, after which the dose of X drug **increased/was increased** to a maximum of 50 mg per day.
8. After week 1, the mean systolic and diastolic blood pressure **increased/was increased** in both groups from base line to each time point throughout the remainder of the trial.

3. Sentence structure and information structure

A. Sentence structure

➤ Types of sentence structure

Simple Sentence	One independent clause
Compound Sentence	Independent clause + independent clause
Complex Sentence	Independent clause + (one or more) dependent clause(s)
Compound-complex Sentence	Independent clause + Independent clause + (one or more) dependent clause(s)

COMPOUND SENTENCES

A compound sentence is a sentence in which **two independent clauses are joined**.

The following are the three methods in making compound sentences.

(1) Use a **comma** and a coordinating **conjunction** (FANBOYS).

This acronym represents seven coordinating conjunctions: **For, And, Nor, But, Or, Yet, So**

- I went to the book store, **and** I bought the textbooks.
independent clause *independent clause*

- My project partner is not supportive, **nor** **is he** concerned about the final presentation.

Exercise 1: Combine the two simple sentences to form a compound sentence by using an appropriate coordinating conjunction.

1. I could not move. I could not cry out for help.

→

2. I have my own opinion. I want to know what you think.

→

(2) Use a **semicolon** (semicolon connects two closely related ideas.)

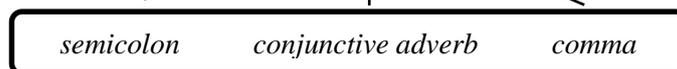
- I have a big test tomorrow; I cannot go out tonight.
- There is mounting evidence of global warming; of course some people will never believe it.

(3) Use a **semicolon + conjunctive adverb + comma**

➤ Some common conjunctive adverbs:

accordingly	additionally	subsequently
consequently	therefore	for example
furthermore	however	similarly
nonetheless	moreover	nevertheless

a. I do not want to break up with my boyfriend; **however**, things are not working out with him.



Exercise 2: Combine two sentences into a compound sentence.

1. I have a midterm next week. I won't be able to hang out with my friends this weekend.
2. The singer did not receive enough votes to stay in Superstar K. She had a great performance.

Attention: *Transitional words (adverbs) vs. Conjunctive Adverbs*

Example: (X) The accountant **however** wanted to check the figures one final time.

Exercise 3: On the line next to the number, write F for a fragment, RO for a run-on, CS for a comma splice.

1. ____ The sun, appearing over the distant mountains.
2. ____ Find your way to the park by noon I will meet you for lunch.
3. ____ The financial crisis is the country's major problem, other countries are looking to see how it is solved.
4. ____ Because it was too difficult to remember what we have done.

B. Information structure

(a) What is information structure?

Exercise: How do you feel about Jaesung?

- 1) Although Jaesung is a nice guy, he drinks a lot.
- 2) Although Jaesung drinks a lot, he's a nice guy.
- 3) Jaesung is a nice guy, but he drinks a lot.
- 4) Jaesung drinks a lot, but he is a nice guy.

(b) Basic principles of information structure

1. Main clause

Example: Even though it's raining, **I am going out for a walk.**

2. End placement

Exercise 1: Which sounds better?

- (1) **This study examined** the relationship between A and B.
- (2) The relationship between A and B **was examined in this study.**

Exercise 2: Which sounds better?

Question: When are you going to take the exam?

Reply (1). I am going to take the exam **next month.**

Reply (2). **Next month,** I am going to take the exam

3. End weight

Exercise: Which sounds better?

- (1) An increase in glucose intolerance in people over sixty-five as well as in people with a high body mass index **is a common assumption in diabetes research.**
- (2) **A common assumption in diabetes research is** that glucose intolerance increases in people over sixty-five as well as in people with a high body mass index.

(c) Understanding information flow

1) Use pronouns

Exercise (from a sample peer review):

Within the study itself on Page 6, the authors state that the patient had the material placed in their ear canal and if the TM was not completely visualized, the physician irrigated the ear with up to 100cc of lukewarm normal saline. However, there was no mention in the study of how much irrigant was used per patient and (this/it) could make a significant difference in interpreting the results. For example, if the majority of patients cleared with the solvent and less than 20cc of irrigant while the other agent required 90 to 100cc of irrigant for a majority of the patients, one could conclude that there was a difference between agents used in the study.

Exercise: The weather in January was much warmer than usual.

- a. *It* was the second warmest on record.
- b. *This* was the second warmest on record.
- c. *This* was even warmer than December.
- d. *It* was even warmer than December.
- e. *It* led to large savings in snow removal costs.
- f. *This* led to large savings in snow removal costs.
- g. *This* may be connected to global warming trends.
- h. *It* may be connected to global warming trends.

2) Use “*this + summary word*” or use “*this + interpretive word*”**Exercise:**

1. Our aim was to assess the mechanisms involved in the beneficial effects of hydralazine on ventricular function in patients who have chronic aortic insufficiency. For this _____, we did a radionuclide study of ventricular function in 15 patients at rest and during supine exercise.
2. From a long time, we are hearing about Samsung's stretchable 9.1-inch OLED panel. This _____ has given birth to so many rumors and leaks online. They have also made other smartphone manufacturers to adopt this _____ in their to-be-launched phones.

3. In recent years, the number of students applying to Ph.D. programs has increased steadily, while the number of places available has remained constant. This _____ has resulted in intense competition for admission.
4. According to a recent survey, 26% of all American adults now smoke, down from 38% 30 years ago. This _____ can be partly attributed to the mounting evidence linking smoking and fatal diseases, such as cancer.

3) Communicate “*old information*” before “*new information*.”

Exercise: Which sounds better?

- a) Younghee spends her Saturday nights at Sweet Bakery. Mr. Kim owns the bakery. He has been making pastries the French way after opening the bakery in 1995.
- b) Younghee spends her Saturday nights at Sweet Bakery. The bakery is owned by Mr. Kim. He opened the shop in 1995 and has been making pastries the French way.

Exercise: Which sounds better?

- a) Jingu Park received his MS degree in computer science from XXX and is now working at the Institute of Computer Technology. He is currently working on information systems as a researcher at the Institute.
- b) Jingu Park received his MS degree in computer science from XXX and is now working at the Institute of Computer Technology. As a researcher at the Institute, he is currently working on information systems.

Exercise: Compare a) and b).

The foldable phone project is being called Project Valley internally, Sam Mobile reported four months ago. This is far from being the first time we've heard that Samsung has plans to release a phone that's completely bendable.

- a) **If a new report turns out to be true**, slim computers that bend and fold may sound futuristic, but they could be coming in just a few months.
- b) Slim computers that bend and fold may sound futuristic, but they could be coming in just a few months, **if a new report turns out to be true**.

4. Stylistic considerations

A. Conciseness

summarize briefly	large in size
consensus of opinion	permeate throughout
a large number of	subsequent to
come in contact with	much better
in the majority of instances	in some cases
for the purpose of	very close to zero
the reason is because	absolutely essential
There were several subjects who completed	It is suggested that a relationship may exist

B. Parallel structure

Exercise:

1. French fries are delicious but bad nutrition.

→

2. Pulse rate decreased by 40 beats/min, systolic blood pressure declined by 50 mmHg, and cardiac output fell by 18%.

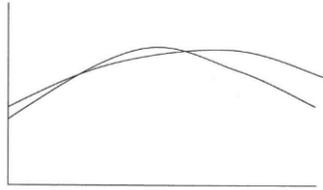
→

3. Journal Abstract: A statistical atlas based approach to automated subject-specific FE modeling

This paper presents a statistical atlas based approach for automatic meshing of subject-specific shapes. In our approach, shape variations among a shape population are explicitly modeled and the correspondence between a given subject-specific shape and the statistical atlas is sought within the “legal” shape variations. This _____ involves three parts. (1) constructing a statistical atlas from a shape population, including the statistical shape model and the FE model of the mean shape, (2) to establish the correspondence between a given subject shape and the atlas, and (3) to deform the atlas to the subject shape based on the shape correspondence. Numerical results on 2D hands, 3D femur bones and 3D aorta demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed approach.

5. Other common mistakes

A. Describing graphs



Compare:

- (1) As can be seen in the figure, **the two curves are very similar.**
- (2) As can be seen in the figure, **the two curves are noticeably different.**

Exercise:

- (X) As can be seen in Fig. 1, the effect occurred in 18% of cases.
 - a. In _____ 18% of cases
 - b. In _____ 18% of cases

B. Reporting verbs

Examples:

- (1) **General Summary:** Table 3 **shows** the most common sources of infection.
- (2) **Informative:** Table 3 **shows** that e-mail attachments are the most common source of infection.

	General Summary	Informative
provide	Y	
give	Y	
present	Y	
summarize	Y	
illustrate	Y	
reveal	Y	
display	Y	
demonstrate	Y	
indicate	Y	
suggest	Y	

Useful References

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[Purdue Online Writing Lab]

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[10 websites to help improve your grammar]

<https://prowritingaid.com/art/111/10-Websites-to-Help-Improve-Your-Grammar.aspx>

[Passive voice in scientific writing]

https://cgi.duke.edu/web/sciwriting/index.php?action=passive_voice

[Verb tense handout]

http://berks.psu.edu/sites/default/files/campus/VerbTense_Handout.pdf

[Lesson: verb tenses in scientific writing]

<https://learn.canvas.net/courses/1505/pages/lesson-verb-tenses-in-scientific-writing>

[Medical terminology: Help & Review]

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