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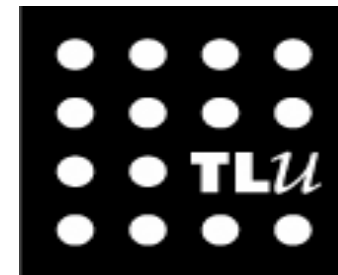
# Sentence Structure

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### **1. Sentence Structure Review**

The Four Basic Sentence Structures

### **2. Making Writing Clear**

Seven Techniques

### **3. Writing with Grammatical Accuracy**

Five Common Grammar Problems

# The Importance of Good Sentence Structure 1

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Lecturers often complain that students' work features poor sentence structure and grammar. These language problems may:

- affect comprehension
- prevent your points from being taken seriously
- suggest carelessness and lack of professionalism
- negatively affect your marks
- limit your employment prospects

# The Importance of Good Sentence Structure 2

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To experience academic success, you must:

- use accurate sentence structures and grammar
- use a range of sentence structures and grammatical items

Your writing should be accurate, clear, concise and interesting

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A clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb.

Clauses are either:

Independent (they express a complete thought)

- Martin has two PhDs.



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## Clauses 2

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or

Dependent (they do not express a complete thought and cannot stand alone)

- because Martin has two PhDs
- although Martin has two PhDs
- that Martin has two PhDs
- if Martin had three PhDs



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# Sentences

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A sentence is a group of words which contains (at least) one independent clause and expresses a complete thought

There are four main kinds of sentence:

1. Simple
2. Compound
3. Complex
4. Compound/Complex



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# Simple Sentences

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A simple sentence contains one independent clause.

- Martin has two PhDs.
- Martin has two PhDs but has absolutely no interest in a third.
- Both Martin and his wife became sick of his endless study.

# Compound Sentences 1

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A compound sentence combines two (or more) simple sentences

These two sentences are clearly related and of equal importance

They can be connected by:



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## Compound Sentences 2

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1. Coordinating conjunctions  
(for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so)
  - Martin enjoyed his first PhD, but he became tired of his second.

# Compound Sentences 3

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### 2. Other linking words

(eg. in addition, however, alternatively, therefore, nevertheless, on the one hand, for example, in other words, indeed, specifically)

- Martin enjoyed his first PhD; however, he became tired of his second.

## Compound Sentences 4

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#### 3. A semi-colon

(if the relationship is so clear that a linking word is unnecessary)

- Martin enjoyed his first PhD; he became tired of his second.

# Complex Sentences 1

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A complex sentence contains one independent clause and one (or more) dependent clauses

The main idea is contained in the independent clause, creating an order of importance

The dependent clause could serve:

## Complex Sentences 2

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1. As a noun:

- Most theorists believe that sales will decrease.

## Complex Sentences 3

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### 2. As an adverb:

- Although this belief is widespread, the market is yet to be affected.

## Complex Sentences 4

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### 3. As an adjective:

- Most theorists expect that the decrease, which is likely to be severe, will begin soon.

# Complex / Compound Sentences

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Complex / compound sentences contain at least two independent clauses and one dependent clause

- Although most theorists believe the decrease will come soon, customer confidence remains strong, and most businesses have not initiated significant restructures.



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# Review

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IC (independent clause)

DC (dependent clause)

IC	Simple Sentence
IC + IC	Compound Sentence
IC + DC	Complex Sentence
IC + IC + DC	Complex / Compound Compound



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## Activity

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**Rewrite this passage so that it contains a range of sentence types.**

**Cut parts that appear repetitive where necessary.**

Melbourne can be a great city in which to live.

Melbourne can be a great city in which to study.

International students can find some aspects of life in Melbourne difficult.

Some international students can feel homesick.

Some international students have difficulty developing different approaches to study.

The culture and educational systems are considerably different.

The experience of living and studying in Melbourne can be extremely rich and rewarding.

# A Word of Warning

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The longer your sentences, the more likely they are to contain grammatical errors.

The standard pattern in English sentences is:

- subject + verb

# Unsure About a Sentence?

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If you are unsure about a sentence:

- begin it with a clearly defined subject
- follow this subject with the main verb
- keep the sentence short
- say the sentence out loud
- explain it to a friend by beginning, “What I want to say is...”



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# Making Your Writing Clear

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## Why is this paragraph so hard to read?

Cardiac resynchronization therapy has signalled a new era in device-based solutions for this condition and 750,000 of the estimated five million Americans with heart failure could potentially benefit from it. Typically a late manifestation of other CVDs, including coronary artery disease, hypertension and valvular disease, heart failure is responsible for more hospitalizations than all forms of cancer combined. As the only major cardiac disorder increasing in prevalence, it is estimated that 550,000 cases of it are diagnosed each year, and approx \$40 billion is spent to manage the condition in the United States each year.



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# Making Your Writing Clear

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## Writing can be unclear if:

- Sentences and vocabulary are overly complex
- Subjects appear too late in sentences
- Noun phrases are positioned badly
- The passive voice is overused
- Abbreviations are used which are unknown or unclear
- Pronouns are used confusingly
- Punctuation is used incorrectly
- There are no clear connections between sentences
- Paragraphs and text structure are weak
- Font, layout and spacing problems exist

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### **Seven ways to make your writing more readable**

1. Use Short and Simple Words
2. Use Abbreviations in Moderation
3. Use Short Sentences
4. Use the Active Voice
5. Put the Subject Early in the Sentence
6. Be Careful with Pronouns
7. Consider the Placement of Noun Phrases

# Use Short and Simple Words

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Imagine you are writing for:

- an intelligent but non-specialist audience, or
- a lecturer who is tired, has just read 20 assignments, and doesn't want to think
- ✗ A considerable multitude of invited participants enquired about the location in which they could purchase beverages.
- ✓ Many guests asked where they could buy drinks.

# Use Abbreviations in Moderation 1

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Abbreviations can include:

- Acronyms (NASA, UNICEF)
- Initialisation (MBTI, UNSW, HRM)
- Shortened forms (Assoc., Feb., Intl, Grad. Dip.)

# Use Abbreviations in Moderation 2

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Abbreviations can be difficult for the reader, even if explained earlier in the text

Abbreviations can sound lazy

Alternatives to abbreviations such as etc, eg, and ie should be used

Abbreviating is not a good way to stick to a word limit

# Use Abbreviations in Moderation 3

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Compare:

- ✘ In Feb, 2008, MMSP of UEB, Ian Appleton, spoke about HRM use of the MBTI.
- ✓ In February, 2008, Associated Management and Marketing Senior Professor of the University of East Borneo, Ian Appleton, spoke about Human Resource Management use of the Myers-Briggs Test Indicator.



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# Use Short Sentences

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Long sentences can be difficult to understand.

This may result in the lecturer not noticing your points. Compare:

- Once an organisation understands its customers' needs, it must establish goals to help ensure good service delivery which are typically set in terms of employee or machine performance such as in a case in which a bank may require all its employees to conform to a dress code and that all incoming telephone calls be answered by the third ring.
- Once an organisation understands its customers' needs, it must establish goals to help ensure good service delivery. These goals are typically set in terms of employee or machine performance. For example, a bank may require all its employees to conform to a dress code. Likewise, the bank may require that all incoming telephone calls be answered by the third ring. (Pride, Elliot, Rundle-Thiele, Waller, Palandino, Ferrell, p. 258)



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# Use the Active Voice

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The passive voice (be + past participle) may make writing sound 'scientific' or 'academic'.

Overuse, however, will make your writing boring and difficult to understand. Compare:

- ✗ It is believed by many lecturers and tutors that inadequate care is put into writing by too many students.
- ✓ Many lecturers believe that too many students put inadequate care into their writing.



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## Put the subject early in the sentence

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It is usually better to make the subject of the sentence clear by putting it early in the sentence. Compare:

- ✘ In his lecture on Engineering Ethics, which he gave on Tuesday the 7<sup>th</sup> of June in the Chisholm Theatre, Dr Dabke addressed why and how humans become professional.
- ✓ Dr Dabke addressed how and why humans became professionals in the lecture on Engineering Ethics which he gave on Tuesday the 7<sup>th</sup> of June in the Chisholm Theatre.



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# Be careful with Pronouns 1

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Sentences that begin with a direct reference to the subject are usually clearer than those that begin with a pronoun. Compare:

- ✘ *His determination to succeed in a challenging competitive environment is what made Richard Branson so successful.*
- ✓ *Richard Branson's determination to succeed in a challenging competitive environment is what made him so successful.*

Richard Branson is the subject.

Don't make the reader work through lots of text to get to his name.



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## Be Careful with Pronouns 2

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Another problem is not ensuring a clear connection between pronouns and nouns. eg:

- ✘ *The list consists of the names of Australian importing companies their addresses, telephone numbers and the person to contact. The details are important for many reasons.*

Compare:

- ✓ *The list consists of the names of Australian importing companies their addresses, telephone numbers and the person to contact. The names of the companies are important for many reasons.*

# Consider the Placement of Noun Phrases 1

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Noun phrases vary in length and complexity

“Light” noun phrases are short and simple

Put light noun phrases before heavy” noun phrases

- *Shares* are on the way up.
- An *investment banker* earns a lot of money



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## Consider the Placement of Noun Phrases 2

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- ✘ A measure of the distance in multidimensional space is known as Mahalanobis distance which is the distance of each observation from the mean centre of the observations.
- ✓ Mahalanobis distance is a measure of observations taken and where they are taken from. To be specific, it is the distance in multidimensional space of observations. This measurement is normally taken from the mean centre of observations.



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# Grammar

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Try to identify your grammatical problems so you can address them

Here are 5 grammatical areas students often find difficult:



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# Grammar

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1. Articles
2. Singular or Plural
3. Subject-Verb Agreement
4. Verb Tenses
5. Word Forms



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# 1. Articles (a / an / the)

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The most common problem is omission.

The second is using the wrong article.

Add a, an or the to the following sentences:

- I have Finance tute in ten minutes in Babel Building.
- I usually come to uni by tram.
- University should not only be for rich.
- I read good text yesterday. Text could be useful for my essay.
- Tonight I need to buy milk, Age, apple and loaf of bread.



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## 2. Singular or Plural

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It's easy to forget to make nouns plural. (✗ Many manager...)

However, don't add 's' to uncountable nouns (✗ informations, knowledges, equipments, etc)

Often, you will need to decide whether to refer to nouns in your text as singular (a manager) or plural (managers).

If you are refer to 'a manager', don't start talking about 'managers'.

## 3. Subject-Verb Agreement

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Make sure verbs agree with subjects.

- He is... / They are... / She lives...

Be careful when:



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## 3. Subject-Verb Agreement

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### **The verb has long modifying phrase which follows the subject**

- The text about the marketing strategies of 10 leading Australian companies is useful.

### **The noun is can lead to confusion about whether it is singular or plural.**

- The Beatles is a great band.
- Everyone wants a good job.

### **Words that indicate quantity are used**

- Each one of the employees is satisfied.
- The number of people in support was 15.
- A number of people were unhappy.

### **Uncountable nouns are subjects**

- The audience was supportive.



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## 4. Verb Tenses

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The English tense system is complicated and very different to tense systems in other languages.

It is essential that tenses are consistent in your writing.

Don't shift unnecessarily between tenses in a paragraph.

When changing tenses in a paragraph, use 'signalling words' or time phrases eg. since then, currently, now, in the past etc

## 5. Word Forms

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Check word forms for consistency and grammatical accuracy:

Find and correct the five word form mistakes

I heard a talk recently on different between male and female ways of communicate. The research had done a study in which she found that males attempt to domination or to be the strongest and loudest speakers in a group whereas the females tendency much more to listen, to share and to take turns.

# Editing and Proofreading

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Of course, other things are also important to make writing clear, eg.

- text structure
- paragraph structure
- spelling
- punctuation
- font
- layout

Always edit and proofread your work carefully!

## Need More Help?

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Consult Academic Writing Books, particularly:

- Writing Academic English (Longman)
- The Essentials of English (Longman)
- Some IELTS texts

Use TLU Services, particularly:

- Workshops
- Individual Consultations
- Helpsheets
- PEP



# Acknowledgement

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