

KK-ENG501 Academic Writing 1
Independent exercises on using electronic tools and resources

This handout encourages you to explore the variety of ways you can use the Internet to develop your English writing skills. Once you have tried out the electronic tools and resources in this handout, you could bookmark the links that are likely to be most useful in the future.

You can work through the exercises below in any order you like:

1. Online dictionaries; exercise on determining word meanings and usage
2. Thesauruses; exercise on replacing words in a passage.
3. How are words used in real texts? British National Corpus and Google Scholar.
4. Prepositions. Exercises on the prepositions *in* and *at*.
5. Resources dealing with academic writing: exercise on reporting verbs.
6. Online writing centres and guides.

1. Online dictionaries (some providing pronunciation):

- Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org>
- Oxford dictionaries:
<http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com>
<https://www.oed.com/>
- Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary: <https://www.merriam-webster.com>
- Dictionary.com: <https://dictionary.com>
- The Free Dictionary: <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>
- Wordsmyth: <https://www.wordsmyth.net>
- Talking dictionary of English pronunciation: <https://www.howjsay.com>
- <https://www.yourdictionary.com/>
- MOT Dictionaries (within University): <https://mot.kielikone.fi/mot/hy/netmot.exe>

The Google search engine (<https://www.google.com>) can also be used as a dictionary. Type in *define* followed by the word you would like a definition for.

Online dictionaries: Exercise

First select an article published in an academic journal related to your field of study

A large selection of journals is available electronically via the University's electronic library. The following guides might help you find a suitable journal: <https://libraryguides.helsinki.fi/?b=s>

- Read through the journal article you have selected and prepare a list of words that you do not know the meaning of.
- Try out some of the dictionaries in the list provided above to determine the meanings of these words.
- Check whether you can find translations into your mother tongue
- Listen to how the words are pronounced by clicking on the small speaker symbol provided in some electronic dictionaries.

If your article includes very few words that you do not understand, try the same exercise with some of the words below. Try, for example, to determine what some of the words below mean, how they are used in a sentence and which words go together with them. These words have been taken from the Academic Word List by Averil Coxhead (<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist>)

| | | |
|-------------|-------------|------------|
| accommodate | hence | quote |
| affect | highlight | refine |
| arbitrary | incentive | restrain |
| cite | indicate | scenario |
| coincide | intense | scope |
| convene | legislate | stress |
| deviate | maintain | terminate |
| diverse | mature | undergo |
| exploit | mutual | unique |
| finite | participate | whereas |
| flexible | pose | widespread |

Which of the dictionaries did you find easiest to use or most helpful in this exercise? Do you use any additional online dictionaries not included in the list of examples?

2. Thesauruses:

These are useful when searching for a synonym for a word that you have already used quite frequently. Good examples include <https://thesaurus.com> and <https://www.synonym.com>

You could also try out the thesaurus incorporated in MS Word. Simply click on the word you are interested with the RIGHT mouse button. A small menu window will open, and by clicking on “synonyms” you will open the thesaurus.

Thesaurus exercise

The following is an adaptation of the introduction to an article in which some of the words have been changed to unsuitable synonyms. What words do you think the authors use in the original text instead of the ones highlighted here? Search for suitable synonyms in the thesaurus included in Word, or try an online thesaurus. **Which tools do you find more useful?**

Oral Sustained Delivery of Paracetamol from In Situ Gelling Xyloglucan Formulations

Shozo Miyazaki et al. (2003)

Paracetamol (acetaminophen) is **expansively** used in the **healing** of mild to moderate pain, and its antipyretic and analgesic **usefulness** has been established in many placebo-controlled **tryouts** in both adults and children. It is usually **handed out** orally in tablet and liquid form, following which its absorption is **speedy**, predominantly from the small intestine. The use of a heat-sensitive melting gel containing k-carrageenan and gelatin as gelling agents for the **by mouth** delivery of paracetamol, which achieved a high (90%) bioavailability in rabbits, has been **told** by Endo et al.[1] In this article, we **weigh up** the potential for the sustained delivery of paracetamol of a xyloglucan formulation that **makes** gels in situ in the stomach.

1. expansively =
2. healing =
3. usefulness =
4. tryouts =
5. handed out =
6. speedy =
7. by mouth =
8. told =
9. weigh up
10. makes =

3. How are words used in real texts? Exercise

Language corpuses are large databases containing extracts of real texts. They are useful for checking word collocations and trends in word usage. A simple search of the **British National Corpus** can be performed without paying:

<http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/using/index.xml?ID=simple>

Alternatively, you can enter phrases into a search engine like **Google Scholar** between speech marks (“ ”) and see how often and in what way they appear in journal articles

(<https://scholar.google.com>)

1. Select a word from the list of new vocabulary you prepared from your article. Find examples of sentences in which the word has or can be used. Can you identify any pattern(s) in the way the words in your list are used in sentences or any other words that collocate with it?

2. Enter any **verb** from your word list into [Thesaurus.com](https://www.thesaurus.com) or [Synonym.com](https://www.synonym.com) and see what synonyms of this verb are provided. For example, the verb “examine” produces synonyms that include analyse, appraise, assay, audit, inquire, investigate, peruse and winnow. However, some of these are rarely used and may therefore be inappropriate to include in your own writing. How could you identify the synonyms that could be used in your field of study?

4. Prepositions

Prepositions cause frequent problems for non-native writers of English. This is especially true for prepositions of time:

- I have a meeting **at** 9 am.
- In Finland, it often snows **in** December.
- Do you work **on** Mondays?
- I'll see you **in** three days.
- I will visit my parents **at** Christmas.
- Where will you be **on** New Year's Day?
- I usually watch TV **in** the evening.
- He was born **in** the 19th century - **in** 1892, to be precise.

Exercise:

The prepositions *in* and *at* are missing in the sentences below. **Which of the writing resources could you use to help you fill the blanks?**

I am only _____ the beginning my project. However, I am already _____ the middle of writing my first article. My article is _____ the early stages of preparation, but I hope to be finished _____ the end of this year.

5. Resources dealing with academic writing:

Lists of words frequently used in academic writing have been compiled by Averil Coxhead and are available at her **Academic Word List** site:

<https://www.wgtn.ac.nz/lals/resources/academicwordlist>

They are also provided in a simple Wiki page together with definitions and pronunciation models:

https://simple.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Academic_word_list

Once you have produced an academic text, try running it through the AWL Highlighter here: <https://www.eapfoundation.com/vocab/academic/highlighter/> The Highlighter marks all those words in your text that appear in the AWL list as well. In other words, your text should have quite a few words in bold face after you have run it through the AWL Highlighter.

The Academic Phrasebank developed at the University of Manchester is a general resource for academic writers. It aims to provide you with examples of some of the phraseological "nuts and bolts" of writing: <http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>

Reporting verbs are very important in academic writing when summarising what other researchers have done, written or said. However, writers often fail to take advantage of the wide variety of reporting verbs that are available, and instead repeated use a small selection of verbs in their text.

Examples of reporting verbs (together with their Finnish translations) are provided [here](#).

Exercise:

Read the passage below, which has been modified from Swales & Feak (1994). The reporting verbs highlighted are very general and repeated. Can you replace them with better alternatives?

The Origins of the First Scientific Articles

The first scientific journal was started in London in 1665. Obviously, the first scientific articles had no direct models to build on, and several scholars have **talked about** possible influences. Ard (1983) and Valle (2000) **showed that** the first articles developed from the scholarly letters that scientists were accustomed to sending to each other. Sutherland (1986) **found that** early articles were also influenced by the newspaper reports of that time. Paradis (1987) **showed** the influence of the philosophical essay. Shapin (1984) **wrote that** the scientific books of Robert Boyle were another model. Finally, Bazerman (1988, 1997) **showed that** discussion among the scientists themselves made its own contribution to the emergence of the scientific article.

6. Online writing centres and further resources: Exercise

Explore the content of the following online writing centres. Which do you think are most helpful for you in your writing? For example, if you need advice about mechanical problems (e.g. articles, prepositions), how to structure your text appropriately, or how to avoid plagiarism, which resources are most helpful?

Purdue University's Online Writing Lab (OWL)
https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html

University of Toronto: Advice on academic writing
<https://advice.writing.utoronto.ca>

LEO: The Write Place Catalogue
<https://leo.stcloudstate.edu/catalogue.html>

Academic Writing in English
<http://sana.aalto.fi/awe/>

Various guides to academic writing are freely available online. The following are examples. Which do you feel are easiest to use and potentially most helpful for you?

Andy Gillett, Using English for Academic Purposes: Academic Writing
<http://www.uefap.com/writing/writfram.htm>

UW-Madison Writer's Handbook
<https://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/>

The Mayfield Handbook of Technical and Scientific Writing
<http://www.mit.edu/course/21/21.guide/>

Grammar, Punctuation, and Capitalization: A Handbook for Technical Writers and Editors:
<https://ntrs.nasa.gov/archive/nasa/casi.ntrs.nasa.gov/19900017394.pdf>

7. Online tools to correct your errors:

In addition to the spelling and grammar tools incorporated into your word processor, various free online tools can help you with error correction. Here are some examples:

- <https://sentencechecker.com>
- <https://www.onlinecorrection.com>

- <https://www.gingersoftware.com/grammarcheck#.WfasVduB1bU>
- <https://smallseotools.com/grammar-checker/>
- <https://www.grammarcheck.net/editor/>
- <https://grammarly.com>

Exercise

The following text contains a variety of grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors. First try to find some of these yourself. Then test how well the online tools can identify errors: are there differences in the types of errors they are able to detect? Which tool or tools appears to provide most help in correcting errors?

Diets links environmental and humans health. Rising incomes and urbanization are driving global dietary transition in which traditional diets is replaced by diets higher in refined sugars, refined fats, oils and meats. By 2050 these dietary trends if unchecked would be a major contributor to estimated 80 % increase of global agricultural greenhouse gas-emissions from food production and to global land clearing. Moreover these dietary shifts are greatly increasing incidence of type II diabetes, coronary heart disease and other chronic non-communicable diseases which lower global life expectancies. Alternative diets which offer substantial health benefits could, if widely adapted, reduce global agricultural greenhouse gases emissions, reduce land clearing and resultant species extinctions, and help prevent such diet related chronic non-communicable diseases. Implementation of dietary solutions to the tightly linked diet–environment–health trilemma is global challenge, and opportunity, of great enviromental and public health importance.

Are there any other academic writing Internet sites that you have found particularly useful and would like to tell your colleagues about? For example, are there sites you use to help you work between English and your mother tongue?