



Academic Writing Strategies for Graduate Students

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Agenda

Building Disciplinary Knowledge

Graduate Writing Strategies

- Using Citation Managers
- Summarizing
- Critiquing

Genres for Graduate Writing

- Abstracts and Conference Proposals
- Data Commentary
- Writing for Publication

Academic Register and Style

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Developing Disciplinary, Subject, and Genre Knowledge

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Disciplinary Knowledge

Familiarity with the field and discourse separates novice (graduate students) and expert members (professors, researchers) of a disciplinary community

- **People**
 - Who are the leading thinkers? What are they know for?
- **Genres**
 - What are the genres or types of writing?
- **Content**
 - What are the leading theories and research practices?
- **Practices**
 - What is common knowledge, controversial topics, and opportunities for future research?

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Reading and Analyzing Genres

A **genre** is a type of writing used to communicate ideas for a particular purpose within a professional community (field, discipline, program, etc.)

Before writing, conduct a **genre analysis** on sample texts. Ask yourself:

- What is the purpose of the genre?
- In what situations would we read or write one?
- Who is the typical writer? Who is the typical reader of the genre?
- What purposes do they have?
- How is it organized? What are the moves or steps?
- Are there any common phrases used to introduce moves?

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Genre Analysis: Cover Letters

What is the purpose of a **cover letter**?

- To introduce yourself and tell your story

In what situations would we read or write one?

- When applying for a job

Who is the writer? Who is the reader?

- Job seeker writes it.
- Person or a hiring committee reads it.

How is it organized? What are the moves or steps?

- Stating the position you want
- Giving your most important qualifications (education, work experience, achievements)
- Requesting an interview
- Providing contact information

Common Phrases

- e.g. I am writing because...; Please feel free to contact me at...

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Graduate Writing Strategies

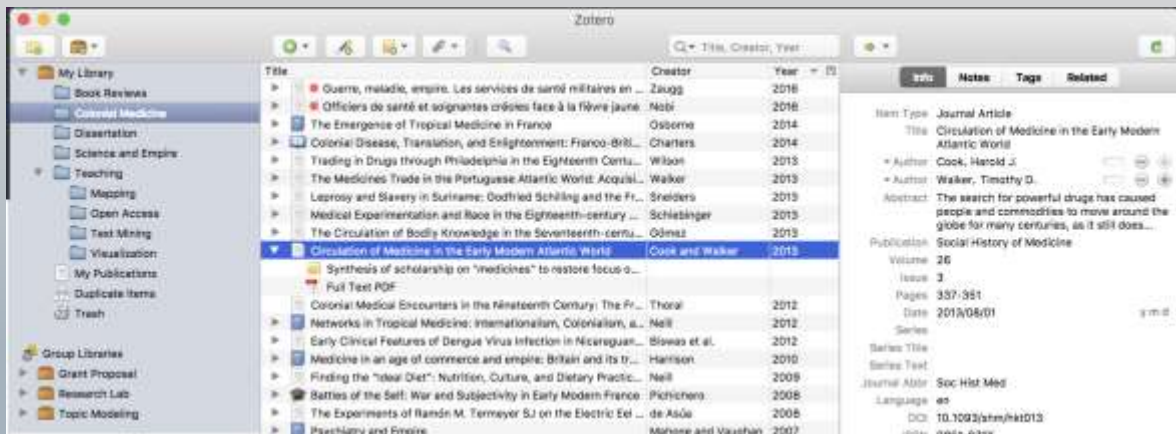
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Citation Managers (Zotero)

- A citation manager (Zotero, ENdNote, Mendelay) is a program that helps you collect, organize, sort and manage sources for your research
- Citation Managers can:
 - Save your sources automatically as you search the library
 - Generate source citations in the documentation style of your choice
 - Allow you to upload pdfs of articles
 - Allow you to read, highlight and summarize articles in Notes
 - Use it to share and collaborate with others on research
 - Use it to create an annotated bibliography
 - Use the Microsoft Word Add-in to 'Cite While You Write' your papers and automatically create your references page

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Zotero (<https://www.zotero.org/>)



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Summarizing

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Summarizing

- Summarizing is an important step for preparing for graduate writing to
 - Writing annotations informally in a citation manager or formally in an annotated bibliography
 - Presenting author's ideas for elaboration and discussion in position papers
 - Synthesizing and compare with other sources for literature reviews
- Purpose
 - To objectively and accurately represent the author's ideas in a text
- Moves
 - Introducing the text (source, main idea, purpose for writing, audience)
 - Elaborating/defining specific terms
 - Explaining how terms relate to author's ideas
 - Extending the ideas of the author

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Summarizing

Summary of Acheson, K., Luna, K., & Taylor, J. (2016). The burnout spiral: The emotion labor of five rural U.S. foreign language teachers. *Modern Language Journal*, 100, 522-537.

Introducing the text

- In the article, "The burnout Spiral," Acheson et al. (2016) interview five foreign language teachers, all women at a rural school in Georgia to determine the extent to which their jobs entail emotion labor and how these responsibilities affect them.

Defining Terms

- Emotion labor, as defined by Acheson et al. (2016), is the effort service workers take to manage their own feelings and expressions when working with customers and clients.

Explaining the author's ideas

- They contend that emotion labor may contribute to foreign language teacher burn out and attrition.

Extending the author's ideas

- Acheson et al. (2016) suggest that community attitudes and resistance might lead to higher teacher burn out and possible attrition

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Using Sources in Writing (Swales and Feak, 2004)

Summaries begin with a sentence that identifies the **source** (author, title, type), **topic**, and **main idea** (What the author wants to say about the topic?)

- According to Fairchild (2011) in the chapter “___”, the main idea is _____.
- Neil Barinaga’s (2009) article, ___ (title), on _____ (topic) discusses _____ (main idea) in order to _____ (purpose).
- In the essay _____ (title), Ho and Durm (2014) **state** **assert** that _____ (thesis in your own words). **maintain**

In order to include additional main points, you may want to use phrases like:

- The author goes on to say/describe that....
- The article further states/maintains that...
- Ho and Durm (2014) also believe that...
- In the second half of the article, Fairchild (2011) presents....

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Simple Present Tense in Reporting

- To state what is already known about a topic and give conclusions
 - The authors **claim** that graduate school **is** crucial for engineering because one’s career trajectory **is** more difficult without a master’s degree.
- To introduce evidence from a previous study without mentioning the researcher (parenthetical citation)
 - Job satisfaction **is** an extensively studied variable in behavioral science (Spector, 1997).
- To discuss a work of art, music, or literature (Historical Present)
 - In his essay, *Salvation*, Hughes (1942) **details** his experience with salvation as a teenager and **discusses** the role of social pressure in ‘being saved’ at church.
- To show agreement with the results of a previous paper
 - A review of studies on the Mozart Effect **suggests** that the effect **is not** what researchers originally speculated (Chabris et al., 1999; Hawes & Thomas, 1997).

From Caplan, N. (2012). *Grammar choices for graduate and professional writers*. University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, MI. pp. 67 – 72.

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Simple Past Tense in Reporting

- To introduce a specific study for the first time while mentioning the researcher (within sentence citation)
 - Probably the most common phenomenon in music cognition **is** the Mozart Effect. Rauscher et al. first **documented** the effect in their 1993 Nature paper.
- To discuss methods and data of a completed experiment (along with passive voice)
 - In the study, a think-aloud protocol **was conducted and analyzed** using thematic coding.
- With any past time marker (in 1997, after the war, at that time, etc.)
 - After World War II, importing and exporting across global borders **reached** new heights.
- To suggest disagreement with the results of a previous paper
 - Barton (2001) **found** that cultural familiarity **was** necessary for successful reading; however, the results of more recent studies **suggest** that familiarity **is** just one of several important variables in reading including language proficiency and motivation.

From Caplan, N. (2012). *Grammar choices for graduate and professional writers*. University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, MI. pp. 67 – 72.

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Present Perfect Tense in Reporting

- To introduce a new topic or give a historical overview (neutral positioning)
 - The percentage of international graduate students **has doubled** in the last 10 years in the United States.
- To summarize previous research from a number of studies or previous findings (no mention of the author)
 - In general , studies **have not found** any differences in gender on timed reading comprehension scores (Pine and Cohen, 1999; Rahan, 1993), but a few studies **have shown** gender differences related to topic familiarity.
- To indicate a connection with the past and now (history or previous findings)
 - The framework we **have developed** for this study can be integrated with assessment.

From Caplan, N. (2012). *Grammar choices for graduate and professional writers*. University of Michigan; Ann Arbor, MI. pp. 67 – 72.

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Other Verb Tenses in Academic Writing

- **Present Progressive** for ongoing activities at the time of writing
 - While there is no vaccine for malaria, research teams **are working** on developing one.
- **Present Perfect Progressive** for activities that start in the past and aren't finished
 - Online sales **have been increasing** since the company changed its marketing strategy.
- **Past Progressive** for activities that were ongoing during a past time and for survey responses
 - At the end of 2006, 39.5 million people **were living** with HIV globally.
 - 69 percent of participants surveyed **were working** full time.
- **Past Perfect** for activities that occurred before another time in the past
 - By the time REM's first album was released, alternative music **had become** the mainstream genre.
- **Past Perfect Progressive** for ongoing activities that occurred for a duration of time before another event
 - The participants were patients who **had been living** with arthritis for at least 7 years.

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Critiquing

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Critiquing

- Critiquing is another important step for preparing for graduate writing for
 - Critical discussion in annotated bibliographies, literature reviews (defining a research gap) and position papers
- Purpose
 - To discuss the limitations of the author's ideas in a text
- Moves
 - Acknowledging the author's viewpoint
 - Conceding the point
 - Stating your view
 - Giving reasons and evidence

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Acknowledging the author's viewpoint

The author argued that home-schooling has negative consequences for children and society as a whole.

Conceding the point

It is true that many studies have reported that home-schooling has negative effects.

Stating your view

However, such reports are inadequate

Giving reasons and evidence

because they do not consider the increasing problems of peer pressure and violence experienced by children in the U.S. public school systems. To explain,

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Common Critiquing Practices

- Critique the **strengths/praise before the negatives**
- Be **soft** when making negative criticism
 - Precede the negatives with a positive (e.g., use connectors of concession)
 - Include **hedging** structures
- **Positioning** to express your own **opinions**
 - Depending on the formality of the writing, use language of opinions
 - (“In my opinion” or “I think that”)
- **Hedging** to qualify claims
 - To make more acceptable to the wider community and avoid sounding biased or all-knowing
- **Boosting** to emphasize and show confidence in claims
 - To emphasize important opinions and position oneself with other researchers or ‘schools of thought’

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Hedging and Boosting Language

Hedging Language includes:

- **Would** – might happen in the future (prediction) but not currently possible
- **Modals**: may, might, can, could, should
- **Other Verbs**: seem, appear, believe, assume, suggest, tend, indicate, propose
- **Adjectives**: uncertain, possible, probable, unlikely
- **Adverbs**: perhaps, possibly, likely, presumably, virtually, in most cases, theoretically, somewhat

Boosting Language includes:

- **Will** – for a strong likely prediction (currently possible)
- **Modals** – must, have to, can, cannot, ought to
- **Verbs**: prove, demonstrate, confirm, claim, deny, argue, insist, assert
- **Adjectives**: certain, likely
- **Adverbs**: of course, certainly, generally, indeed, easily, especially, particularly, significantly, always, invariably

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Other Language for Critiquing

- Modals, Verbs, and Evaluative Adjectives
 - He **seems to imply** that people are **less likely** to call the police in poorer neighborhoods.
- Hypotheticals
 - The results **might have been** more reliable **if** the researchers **had checked** the findings with the participants.
- Comparatives, Superlatives, and Equatives
 - Heart disease is **less frequent** for those who engage in regular exercise.
 - However, some feel that customer service is **not as essential** for some careers.

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Common Publication Genres

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Writing Abstracts for Articles and Conference Proposals

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Article Abstracts

- Yoon, H. (2017). Globalization of the animation industry: Multi-scalar linkages of six animation production centers. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 23(5), 634
- This paper examines the change in animation production over time and analyzes the different scales of internal and external linkages among six animation production centers². Four types of producers were identified based on their roles in the animation industry and their multi-scalar linkages were investigated for similarities and differences. Several factors including production costs, local skills, government policy and domestic markets were found to affect the growth of new production centers. High value-capture occurs mostly in production centers where tacit knowledge is created. The governance of each animation production center was found to have evolved based on its unique development path within the industry's global value chain.
- What is the purpose of the genre?
- In what situations would we read or write one?
- Who is the typical writer? Who is the typical reader of the genre?
- How is it organized? What are the moves?

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Article Abstracts (Swales and Feak, 2009)

- Functions of RA abstracts
 - A short summary of the article's topic, methods, and findings
 - Found in library indexes
 - Readers use it to screen and preview the article

- Abstracts in academic articles generally follow a particular pattern of moves.
 - Introduction to the topic
 - Purpose of the article
 - Methods
 - Results/ Conclusions

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Conference Proposal Abstract (Barton, 2018, TESOL conference proposal)

- Research into work and study abroad experiences for second language teachers has primarily focused on western foreign language teachers in programs abroad and non-native speaking ESOL educator experiences in programs hosted in inner-circle countries like the US, UK, and Canada. Very little research has been done to examine the work and study abroad experiences of native-speaking teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) from inner circle countries like the United States, the UK, and Canada. Nevertheless, because of state-sponsored programs like Fulbright and Peace Corps, ESOL educators from these countries have several pre-service and in-service overseas opportunities available to them.
- 20 participants from the 2018 – 2019 English language fellow program participated in this study. Data collected includes a pre-program survey, interviews, journaling, and classroom observation (via Skype) followed by a stimulated recall interviews. The study found that participation the EL Fellow program did lead to English language teacher development in a number of ways...

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Conference Proposal Abstracts

- Functions of Conference abstracts
 - Used to make a strong appeal and gain acceptance to present at a conference
 - Readers at the conference review committee
 - A short summary of the presentation's topic, methods, and findings
- Moves in Conference Proposal Abstracts
 - Outlining and promoting the research topic
 - Justifying the study
 - Explaining the methods and procedures
 - Summarizing the findings
 - Highlighting important outcomes and results
 - Describing implications, limitations, and future directions)

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Getting Published: Writing for the Peer Review Process

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The Peer Review Process

- Manuscript submission to a journal (Submission Guidelines)
- Quick Review by the Editor
 - Send out for peer review or ‘desk rejection’
- Experts review your article and give feedback
- Editor sends you comments with a decision cover letter
 - Accept (minor revisions)
 - Revise and Submit (address peer review feedback)
 - Reject
- Re-submission requires a response letter to the reviewers

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Manuscript Submission Letter (Swales and Feak, 2011, p. 62)

Letter A

Dear Dr. Carduner,

First of all, let me introduce myself to you. My name is _____, Assistant Professor of Finance, working at _____ University, a leading institution in my country. I have written several articles on microfinancing, and I would now like to contribute the enclosed paper to your distinguished journal. I hope you will be able to include it in a forthcoming issue. Please make any corrections you think necessary.

I look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible

Sincerely

Letter B

Dear Dr. Carduner,

I would like to submit to your journal for possible publication the enclosed paper entitled "Microfinancing in Rural Bangladesh: Causes of Microenterprise Success and Failure." The specific subject of this paper has not been submitted for publication elsewhere: it is partly based upon research performed for the completion of my PhD thesis.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Sincerely

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Responding to Reviewers and Editors (Swales and Feak, 2011, p. 68)

Reviewer's Comment

p. 11. The authors state that "it is neither practical nor economically justifiable to recommend mediastinoscopy for all candidates for surgery." This may be the authors' belief, but many surgeons do find it practical and justifiable to perform mediastinoscopy for all lung cancer patients.

A. p. 11. We have rewritten as follows: "Since it is neither practical nor economical to recommend mediastinoscopy for all candidates for surgery, we developed indication criteria for cervical mediastinoscopy."

B. p. 11. Reviewer 2 objected to our statement about the justifiability of routine mediastinoscopy:

Response: This procedure remains a point of controversy within thoracic surgery. On p. 11 we have qualified our stance by saying: "It is neither practical nor economical in Japan to recommend mediastinoscopy for all candidates for surgery." Regardless of opinions on this issue, we believe everyone would agree that it is better to avoid this procedure if the same information can be obtained non-invasively at much lower cost.

C. p. 11. An all-too-typical response from the American surgical establishment focused, as it is, both on maximizing profits and reducing the chances of expensive malpractice lawsuits. In international terms, we stick to our original position.

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Issues in Academic Style

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Using Old to New Information Flow

- Placing old information from previous sentences provides logical connections between ideas
- *Over the past fifty years and with increasing frequency, **innovative programs** have appeared around the world with the aim of revitalizing languages that are at risk of disappearing due to declining numbers of native speakers.*
- ***The nature of these initiatives** varies as greatly as the languages that are their targets*

(Grenoble & Whaley, 2005 as cited in Caplan, 2019)

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Using Linking Words and Phrases (Swales and Feak, 2004)

Function	Subordinators (with dependent clauses)	Connectors (with independent clauses)	Phrase Linkers (with noun phrases)
Addition		Furthermore, in addition, moreover	In addition to
Adversativity	Although, despite the fact that	However, nevertheless	Despite, in spite of
Cause/Effect	Because, since	Therefore, as a result, consequently, henceforth	Because of, due to, as a result of
Clarification		In other words, that is	
Contrast	While, whereas	In contrast, however, on the other hand, conversely	unlike
Illustration		For example, for instance	
Intensification		On the contrary, as a matter of fact, in fact	

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Being Specific

Avoid general words. Use clear, precise language.

Check the meaning in the COCA corpus or an English – English dictionary, or use terms from sources

Original:

A group in the future will discuss options for store management style improvement.

Revision:

Store managers will meet next month to plan a new approach to management.

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Writing Concisely

Avoid wordiness and overly long noun phrases. Use **verb, gerund or infinitive phrases**.

Reduce dependent clauses and remove prepositions.

Original:

Data is needed so that a determination of redirection is permitted on a timely basis when weather conditions change.

Revision:

The department needs data so that it can quickly determine how to redirect resources when weather conditions change in a timely manner.

(passive → active, noun → verb forms, remove prepositions)

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Using Sentence Variety

Use a **variety of sentences** (simple, compound, complex, compound - complex).

Avoid repeating the same openings, closings, transitions, and other phrases.

Original:

Flooding has been a serious problem in the past few weeks. Flooding has not affected our area so far. The flooding has caused mandatory evacuations of houses in some areas. Ski resorts have suffered from lack of business because of road closures. (all simple sentences with the same opening)

Revision:

Flooding has been a serious problem in the past few weeks. Our area has not been affected so far; however, the increase in water has caused mandatory evacuations of houses in some zones. For example, ski resorts have suffered from lack of business because of road closures. (sentence variety with different sentence openings)

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Avoiding Phrasal Verbs

Choose **single word verbs** (formal, concise) over **phrasal verbs** (informal, wordy).

Original: *The medicine will not get rid of the problem, but it will slow down the symptoms.*

Revision: *The medicine will not alleviate the problem, but it will lessen the symptoms.*

Other examples:

Bring up (raise, present)

Come up with (devise, invent, develop)

Do away with (eliminate)

Find out (determine, observe)

Go up/down (increase, decrease, decline, rise)

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Active or Passive Voice

Use **passive voice** when the subject is unknown or unimportant and in describing processes, methods and results

Original: *Researchers have done a number of studies on this topic.*

Revision: *A number of studies have been done on this topic.*

Use **active voice** to cite authors using reporting phrases and when the specific person or group is known or important

Original: *It is said that people should spend less than half of their income on rent.*

Revision: *Economists agree that less than half of one's income should be spent on rent.*

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Checking Pronoun Agreement

- *Angela wants to be a doctor, so **she** is studying biology.* (Subject pronoun for a female)
- *My friends and I rented a cabin. **Our** cabin was far from the lake.* (1st person pl possessive)
- *The computer wouldn't work. **It** just went blank.* (Singular subject pronoun for objects)
- *All of the popcorn is gone. The kids ate **it** fast.* (non-count noun = singular pronoun)
- *We need to repair the buildings and remodel **them**.* (Plural object pronoun for objects)
- *None of the workers wants **his or her** paycheck today.* (Formal use of none*)

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Checking Pronoun Reference

Check that a pronoun have a clear reference to a noun

Original:

The supervisors told the workers that they would receive a bonus. (Who?)

Revision 1:

The supervisors complimented the workers on receiving a bonus.

Revision 2:

The supervisors told the workers to expect a bonus.

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Avoiding Gender Bias

Original: *Each student must meet with his professor.*

(assumes all students are male!)

- **Revision 1:** *You must meet with your professor. (informal 2nd person use)*
- **Revision 2:** *Each student must meet with his or her professor. (use both 3rd person pronouns)*
- **Revision 3:** *Each student must meet with the professor. (remove all pronoun use)*
- **Revision 4:** *All students must meet with their professors. (Change to 3rd person plural pronouns)*
- **Revision 5:** *One must meet with one's professor. (highly formal use of 'one')*

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Avoiding Contractions and Personal Pronouns

Avoiding Contractions

Original: *Applicants who don't have strong computer skills won't be as competitive.*

Revision: *Applicants who do not have strong computer skills will not be as competitive.*

Avoiding first and second person pronouns (I, we, you).

Original: *We believe vitamin A and cancer may have a link.*

Revision: *Research has shown a relationship between vitamin A and cancer.*

Original: *If you receive less than 80 on the TOEFL, you may not be able to enter some universities.*

Revision: *Applicants who receive less than 80 on the TOEFL may not be able to enter some universities.*

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Avoid Listing

Avoid listing more than 2 – 3 items in one sentence and the use of *etc.*, *and so on*, and *and so forth*. Use one example or explain items separately.

Original:

You should categorize the spending, for example, mortgage, utilities, insurances, internet, TV, phone, clothing, eating out etc.

Revision:

It is important to categorize one's personal spending using names like mortgage, utilities, and car insurance in order to track how the money was spent.

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Useful References

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USP and Other Graduate Student Resources

- Zotero Citation Manger https://www.zotero.org/support/quick_start_guide
- [English Courses for Academic Purposes at Centro de Línguas](#) (also Japanese, French, Portuguese, Spanish language courses)
- [English courses for Academic Purposes at "Aucani Idiomas"](#) (also offers Portuguese for foreigners, Mandarin, Italian, French, etc.)
- [English courses for Academic Purposes](#) at EACH/USP (the East Campus).
- The LLAC - Laboratório de Letramento Acadêmico – LLAC <http://letramentoacademico.fflch.usp.br/>
- Tutoring and conferencing with French and English language graduates. Students must take a piece of writing they are currently working on to the scheduled appointment.
- Undergraduate Academic Writing in English offered by the Department of Modern Languages.
- Graduate Academic Writing offered by the Graduate Program in English Language and Literature (Estudos Linguísticos e Literários em Inglês).
- FLM5577-1 “[Redação Científica em Inglês com Foco na Publicação Internacional: do Texto ao Contexto](#)” More info:

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