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Explaining the numbering system for highlighting writing faults

This text or interactive web tool has been prepared specifically to support my editing strategies with research students, but also to assist academic staff members at ECU, who comment on student work, and their students, particularly those doing Higher Degrees by Research. While this document provides advice on academic writing, the style used in some of the writing is less formal, particularly in some of the examples given for each writing fault.

Staff members face several key challenges:
- finding time to correct writing faults while addressing content problems
- getting students to learn from the editing provided so that future writing improves
- finding that some students may just "accept all changes", if editing is provided electronically, without considering them thoroughly i.e., in such cases academic staff members are unintentionally operating as an editing service rather than as educators. (For this reason, Research Writing Consultants do hard copy editing of Research Proposals, Thesis chapters and draft manuscripts.)

Students also face several key challenges in not:

- understanding why a staff member made a specific change to their draft writing
- recognising the recurring types of errors in their writing;
- getting the opportunity to learn how to improve their writing if comprehensive editing is already provided. (Research Writing Consultants do not comprehensively edit every chapter in a thesis so, if the student does not learn from the editing and feedback strategies, the thesis may have an inconsistent standard of writing - unless it subsequently sent to a professional editing service.)
- being able to read hand-written, comprehensive editing easily (often a problem for international students for whom English is an Additional Language, EAL).

To help meet these challenges, a numbering system that identifies various types of writing faults was developed by the author, workshopped with academic staff and used with some research students who responded positively to it. It allows a staff member to provided electronic feedback for highlighting and numbering the specific faults in the student's draft e.g., 1(f) for an error with a possessive form of a word, without necessarily always providing the detailed solutions.

To work optimally, students and staff need access to the comprehensive list of numbered faults and editing symbols along with a very brief explanation for each item (see below or Maguire, 2014). Beyond that, students may need progressively more comprehensive explanations and examples of these errors, along with solutions and where appropriate web links to other useful explanations and tools. Finally, these examples of faulty text and corrected examples can offer an opportunity to see how writing styles can be improved, beyond just correcting obvious faults, by adopting a more direct approach to writing. This document allows users to move through these steps. Many of the explanations and examples are drawn or adapted from Maguire (2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2012). While initially developed for research students, these resources could also be used by undergraduate and coursework postgraduate students and the staff providing feedback on their writing. A more comprehensive justification of the need for this document is given in Maguire (2008c).

(This approach of inserting writing fault numbers when editing or commenting on research student writing has been used by the author for more than 6 years. The original full list of faults was completed in 2007 and revised significantly on several occasions (Maguire, 2014). This current supporting document was developed in 2008 and underwent its first major revision in this 2014 version. The

revision reflects small changes in the list of faults and also additional material progressively developed for Writing Workshops presented each semester by the author including numerous web links. Feedback from both research students and staff on both the list and this supporting document has been very positive.

This document has been designed so that an individual fault can be explored rather than necessarily reading the whole document. To facilitate this approach, some repetition of information has been allowed and cross-referencing to related faults included.

Numbered faults
(These faults are listed below along with a brief guide to grammar. For recommendations to academic staff on how to indicate which text is of concern, see Maguire 2014.)

Red numbers (1-7); (19-20) indicate specific types of errors that should be fixed, while
Green numbers (8-18), suggest ways of improving style.

1. Incorrect spelling arising from different types of errors (a-h).
2. No subject/verb agreement
3. No noun/clause agreement
4. Mistake with an Article
5. Tenses are mixed unreasonably
6. Parallel structure problem
7. Statement not referenced or there is a referencing error
8. Same word used repeatedly
9. These text sections have the same meaning
10. Self-evident text
11. Made this point already
12. Add (a), delete or revise (b) a link word
13. Add (a), delete or revise (b) a topic or transition sentence (ToTR)
14. Add (a), delete or revise (b) an interpretive summary (ItS)
15. Sequence of paragraphs is not logical.
16. An extra step is needed in this argument
17. Make descriptive text more concise
18. Rewrite the sentence/paragraph more directly
19. Inconsistency in the writing
20. The sentence is incomplete and/or does not make sense

Editing symbols (adapted from Maguire, 2014)
= Insert a space.
⋂ = Delete space (hand write it as longer and narrower and without the arrow head).
∧ = Insert text.
↗ = Combine sentences or paragraphs (as a curved symbol when I hand write it).
U = Link two words as one.
⌐ = Insert a paragraph break (use large symbol without arrow head if hand written).
⇊ = Insert a break into this excessively long sentence at this point (usually as a red symbol).

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A quick grammar lesson (expanded version of Maguire, 2014)
In "The cat ate the rat", "cat" is a NOUN, i.e., it is a thing, person or place, and in this case it is the SUBJECT of this sentence. The word "ate" is a VERB, i.e., a doing word, and "rat" is also a noun but is the OBJECT of the sentence.

In "The hungry cat ate the small rat", the descriptive words "hungry" and "small" are ADJECTIVES. (Nouns can be used as adjectives to more precisely describe other nouns, for example, "a train station". Note that such adjectives are usually singular and can help avoid using possessives e.g., "the dog house" rather than the dogs house (plural) or the dog's house (possessive). Unfortunately, many students make errors with possessives. In "The cat ate the rat slowly", "slowly" is one of the most commonly used of all ADVERBS. These modify a sentence, a verb, adjective or another adverb. Students often confuse adjectives and adverbs e.g., "general" and "generally", respectively; we might say "The general trend is…" or "I was speaking generally..".

In "The cat in Jim's house ate a rat", "in Jim's house" is a PHRASE. Phrases begin with a PREPOSITION e.g., "in", "at", "on", "with", "to" and "for", and do not contain a verb. This phrase is "adjectival" i.e., it qualifies the noun "cat". Some are "adverbial" and relate more to the verb or whole sentence that they do to a noun e.g., "The rat ran in many directions", where "in many directions" is the phrase. Often it is possible to replace an adjectival phrase with an adjective e.g., replace "You should not leave the trails in national parks" with "You should not leave national park trails" (see **Fault 17** below).

In "The cat, which hangs around Jim's house, ate a rat", "which hangs around Jim's house" is a CLAUSE. These often begin with "which", "who", "that", "why", "if", "although", or "when" and contain a verb. A clause is not a stand-alone sentence although many students make this mistake in formal writing. Some of the words which begin clauses can be used to begin a question and these can be stand alone sentences e.g., "Which house does Jim live in?" (or, more appropriately, "In which house does Jim live?"). Many clauses are adjectival i.e., they qualify a noun and that noun dictates whether the verb in the clause is singular or plural (see Fault 3 below). For example, in "The cat which hangs around Jim's house ate a rat", the clause qualifies the singular noun cat and hence the verb in the clause is singular i.e., "hangs". However, as with phrases, not all clauses qualify a noun. For example, "When the time is appropriate, I will retire. The clause "When…..appropriate" relates to the verb "retire". In this case, it is treated as a sentence, not a clause so the subject "time" (singular) dictates that the verb "comes" will also be singular (see Fault 2 below). Similarly, in the main part of the sentence "I will retire", "I" is the subject and is singular and the verb is "will retire". In this case, "will retire" can be singular or plural, e.g. "I will retire" or "They will retire", and, in the latter example, "They" is obviously plural.

If you wish to expand your knowledge of grammar (and punctuation), try a good value book (Davidson, 2005) although in that book the word "clause" is used with a much broader meaning. A more comprehensive and expensive text (held by the ECU Library) is Oshima & Hogue (2006) while Colman (2011) is an easier introduction to grammar and punctuation.

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Fault 1 – Incorrect spelling arising from different types of errors (a-h)

Incorrect spelling (highlight the word). This may be (a) a simple error or (b) confusion between two words with different meanings but similar pronunciation or (c) confusion between Australian/UK and US spelling or (d) confusion among variations on the same word group, depending on whether it is used as an noun, verb, adjective or adverb or (e) the informal version of word(s) in formal writing or (f) an error in the use of possessives or (g) a case where no error has occurred; there are merely different but acceptable ways of spelling the same word to convey the same meaning or (h) a foreign word has been used without a distinctive letter being used appropriately.

Advanced explanation with example(s)
(a) A simple error. For example, I am tempted to misspell "forest" by writing "forrest". Spelling checks in WORD are quite effective for this type of error. The following website categorises the common types of spelling errors:
http://ielts-academic.com/2012/07/25/common-spelling-mistakes-in-ielts/
The next website lists many of the common mistakes on an alphabetical basis and also provides a quiz:
http://www.engvid.com/english-resource/common-spelling-mistakes-in-english/

Other spelling errors are simply typing errors e.g., when revising this document I typed kelp instead of help; however, kelp is a legitimate word (a type of seaweed) and a spelling check in WORD accepted it. I subsequently detected it while proof reading my changes.

(b) Confusion between two words with similar pronunciation but different meanings (homophones). A very common example is "Principal" e.g., the Principal of a school or a major feature such as the principal axis or the principal reason for a decision, being confused with "principle" e.g., "in principle", meaning "in theory", or a general truth or law as in "first principles". As both are acceptable words in their own right, spelling checks in WORD are not effective for this type of error. A more common example is "there" (e.g., "I put it in there.") and "their" (e.g., "I put it in their room.").
The homophone page below for Purdue University (Indiana, USA) web resource provides a useful list of these commonly confused groups of words (the broader Purdue University site for grammar etc. is also very helpful):
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/index.php?category_id=2&sub_category_id=1&article_id=48. The only caveat I should emphasise with this website is that American spelling is used.

(c) Confusion between Australian and US spelling. There are many differences e.g., "colour" and "color", or "burnt" and "burned", or "cancelled" and "canceled", respectively. You can set your spelling preferences in WORD to suit the style you want. Theses written for an Australian University should use Australian English spelling whereas if you are submitting a manuscript to a US-based journal you would choose the US setting (provided the journal requires that convention). The Macquarie Dictionary is a commonly used standard for Australian spelling which largely follows the UK style but has accepted some US conventions.

These differences extend to punctuation but many research students at ECU still follow APA style (American Psychological Association) even though it is primarily a standard used for undergraduate students and in some specialities e.g., psychology. The APA approach, of using "…." for a quote and "…'xxx'…" for a quote within a quote, is widely used at ECU and in Australian media although it is the opposite of that used in the Australian Government Style Manual (AGSM). A useful summary of the AGSM is provided in: http://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/4070/Style-guide.PDF

There are, of course, differences in popular expressions, for example, Australians talk about "chemist shops" whereas those in the US refer to "drug stores". Numerous examples of differences in spelling and expressions are given in: http://www.fionalake.com.au/other-info/other-references/rural-words/australian-american-words

(d) Confusion among variations on the same word group, depending on whether it is used as a noun, verb, adjective or adverb. One of the most common is confusion between "affect" and "effect". For example, you can shorten text by replacing "have an effect on" with "affect". In this case "affect" is a verb and "effect" is a noun. Thus we could say that "when we affect something we produce an effect i.e., a change." The verb "affect" can also mean to put on an appearance or to imitate e.g., to affect an accent. Alas, "affect" and effect" can also be a noun and verb, respectively, in rather specialised cases. The word "effect" can be a verb in one type of circumstance e.g., "the army effected [pulled off or achieved] a coup". Similarly, "affect" can be a noun; the emotion produced by an idea is its "affect".

As indicated above, students often confuse adjectives and adverbs e.g., "lazy" and "lazily", respectively; we might say "The lazy boy went home." or "The boy walked home lazily.".

(e) A case of an informal version of word(s) being used in formal writing. This can be slang, such as the use of "beaut" for "beautiful", or other forms of shortened words e.g., "haven't" for "have not" where the former is acceptable in popular writing but not in academic writing unless it is a direct quote. It is important to note that languages do evolve and some conventions that were strictly adhered to e.g., in which circumstances you should use "owing to" rather than "due to", now seem to be considered much less important or irrelevant. Similarly, the range of accepted words in the English language is growing rapidly e.g. "texting", and it possible that some informal words may become acceptable in formal writing.

(f) An error is the use of possessives. The possessive of the singular word **company** is **company's** and the possessive of the plural word **companies** is **companies'** because the word ends with a single **s**. Sometimes you have to read the whole sentence to determine whether the word should be singular or plural. For example, "The company's relationship with its stakeholders… contains the phrase "with its stakeholders". As each relationship is potentially unique, strictly it should be "The company's relationships with its stakeholders.." or "The company's stakeholder relationships..". This former example highlights the key exception when writing a possessive form i.e., the spelling of **its** which is the possessive of **it** in this phrase. If the spelling **it's** is used it can only mean **it is.** Some other possessive words do not involve an apostrophe e.g., the possessive of **your** is **yours** as in "it is yours". The other exception is the possessive of words that end in **ss** e.g., the word compass ends in **ss** so its possessive form ends in **ss's** as in "A compass's shape is usually round".

A relevant issue with writing style, rather than a serious spelling error, occurs when a sentence ends in a possessive; it is not an attractive style to end with "John's" rather than "John's XXXX" where XXXX could be any specific item or characteristic that John possesses. A potential but uncommon exception would be a quote that ends in a possessive word. The quote should not be revised.

(g) No fault, just two well accepted versions of spelling the same word, to convey the same meaning. An example is "program" and "programme". Both are acceptable although many people incorrectly believe that the latter form is more modern usage whereas "programme" was introduced more recently (several centuries ago!). With the exception of quotes, it is useful to just use one version consistently in the same document.

(h) Use of a foreign word but with a distinctive letter presented inappropriately e.g., the umlaut (¨) above a "u" in German was left out. (Such letters can be found in WORD under INSERT/Symbol e.g., Ü.)

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied

"The Principle of the school first got there attention before he talked to them about the affects, on the schools reputation, of poor behaviour in public." There are four common spelling errors.

The Head of a School is a "Principal" not "Principle" and "there" is used instead of "their" (both examples correct error **1b**). The spelling "affects" is wrong and should be "effects" (as a noun) (corrects error **1c**). Finally, the possessive form of school is school's not schools (corrects error **1f**). It is possible to write the corrected version more efficiently. "The Principal first got their attention before discussing the effects, on the school's reputation, of poor behaviour in public." (19 words instead of 26 words.) Note that the word group "school"/"school's is now only used once (see **Fault 8**.)

I strongly advocate using a more direct writing style which makes the sentence easier to read aloud and involves lower word counts while not changing the meaning of the text unreasonably. Ideally, the writing should also avoid faults which disengage the reader.

Fault 2 – No subject/verb agreement

No subject/verb agreement (highlight both subject and verb). For example, a singular subject ("dog") requires a singular verb ("has" not "have") e.g., The *dog* near my house *has* fleas.

A special case is where there is no verb in the sentence for the subject to agree with e.g., "The music loud." instead of "The music was loud." or where the only verb is in a clause "The loud music which *was played* by a reggae band." (Note, *was played* is the clause's verb.) Clearly, such writing is unacceptable in formal writing. However, stand alone clauses e.g., "Which was played by a great reggae band.", are used in some forms of creative writing.

Advanced explanation with example(s)
The singular/plural status of the subject and the major verb in a sentence must be consistent. The name of an organisation is usually singular but students often match it to a plural verb, possibly because an organisation employs many people. On other occasions the complexity of the sentence defeats students. The trick, in a more complex sentence, is to temporarily delete all of the phrases and clauses so that the basic structure of the sentence becomes clear.

An example which combines both of these challenges is:
"The World Health Organisation of the United Nations argue..". In this case "of the United Nations" is a phrase and, for just the purpose of checking the verb, it can be deleted.

We are left with:
"World Health Organisation argue..". It is clear that Organisation is singular and that the verb has to be singular so we use "argues". There may be potential for using abbreviations if already defined for these organisations i.e., "The UN's WHO argues..".

A less technical example may be easier. "The boy, in the picture, who owns a lot of toys, are…" We temporarily get rid of the phrase "in the picture" and the clause "who owns a lot of toys" and the core of the sentence is left; "The boy are…". There can be no doubt about the appropriateness of using "is" instead of "are". Thus, "The boy, in the picture, who owns a lot of toys, is…" Notice that commas can help isolate the sentence's core although their use varies greatly among experienced writers.

The following is an example from a research field. "Expression of these genes overlap in the central nervous system". If you delete the phrase "of the genes" and "in the central nervous system", you are left with "Expression overlap". It is now obvious that "expression" is singular and hence we should use "overlaps". The correct version is "Expression of these genes overlaps in the central nervous system".

All of these examples highlight a process for achieving "subject/verb agreement". This is probably the most common grammatical error made by students.

There are challenges if the subject of the sentence is "disguised". "Either is correct." Clearly, "Either" infers that there is more than one but we do treat it as singular. It could be read as "Either one is correct". Similarly, "None of the above is correct" can be read as "Not one of the above is correct". "One" is the subject of each sentence even though it could be seen as having been "disguised". Alas this is quite a common challenge in English.

Indeed English can be seen as a perverse language with lots of exceptions. With dual subjects are not linked by "and", the one closest to the verb dictates. Thus, "The **dogs** and the **cat** are hungry" (must be plural because of "and"), cf. "The dogs or the **cat** is hungry" and "The cat or the **dogs** are hungry".

Do we treat "in addition to" or "as well as" as being the same as "and"? In meaning yes it is, but not when Writing Fault 2 is considered. Typically, they occur as a part of a phrase so the noun in that phrase will not be the subject of the sentence. "The **coach**, as well as his players, is anxious." (The word "players" is part of the phrase "as well as his players" and so "coach" is the subject and "is" is correct as both are singular.) "The textbook, in addition to the practical manuals, is too expensive." (This example is correct even if we do not use the commas.)

Some pairs of nouns are treated as a single unit e.g. "R&D is very important for technology companies." (Note that R&D means Research and Development.) Similarly, "Trial and error is often a useful approach". The same can be said for: "Bacon and eggs is a popular breakfast". However, when they do not form a single unit, we adopt a different approach e.g. "Both bacon and eggs are commonly used ingredients in my kitchen".

Collective nouns e.g., **family** may require a singular e.g., argues, or a plural verb e.g., argue depending on whether the collective group is referred to (A) or whether the sentence highlights the fact that the group contains individuals (B).

A - "My **family** always **argues** with the next door neighbour."

B - "My **family** always **argue** among themselves".

The appropriate use of singular and plural words can become complicated as the language evolves. Thus, "Every dog has his day" is a popular and optimistic expression used to indicate that an individual will not always lose. Clearly, **dog** is singular as is **has**. However, is does it make a gender assumption]? Who said that the dog was male? We could write: Every dog has his/her day. However, this is an awkward expression. What is more common now is to use "their" even though it infers "plural". "Every dog has their day." However, in APA style (noted a Fault 1c) this is not the preferred approach and restructuring of the sentence, to convey the same meaning, is recommended as in: "Every individual will eventually experience some good luck".

Again the on-line information provided by Purdue University is very useful for Fault 2 (see Fault 1b).

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
An example of excessively complex writing that includes an error in the verb is given below. I adapted it, in a disguised form, from an even more complex example within a draft thesis. As sentences become longer and the language becomes more complex, it becomes more difficult to detect Fault 2 errors, without using the technique highlighted below.

"The problems and complexities of the duality of doing postgraduate research, which is applied but also attempts to make conceptual breakthroughs, as discussed by Albert (2000) who recognised that industry and academia can have different values, is evident within this project." [41 words]

Delete two phrases: "The problems and complexities of doing postgraduate research, which is applied but also attempts to make conceptual breakthroughs, as discussed by Albert (2000) who recognised that industry and academia can have different values, is evident."

Delete five clause-like sequences: "The problems and complexities is evident."
Clearly, the subject "problems and complexities" is plural so the verb "is" should be made plural i.e., "are". "The problems and complexities are evident."

However, we can write the complete statement much more directly. My suggested version is: "This applied postgraduate research poses the dual challenges of being useful to industry and making the conceptual breakthroughs valued in academia (Albert, 2000)." [It contains 23 words and is easier to read.]

There are several ways of rewriting this complex sentence; my version is an improvement but other versions may be better. The key is for the author to consider the proposed editing; it might be possible to improve on the editing or, more seriously, the editing may have changed the meaning intended by the author.

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Fault 3 – No noun/clause agreement

No noun/clause agreement (highlight both the noun & verb in the clause). An adjectival clause qualifies a noun in a sentence and the verb in the clause must be consistent with the noun in terms of being singular or plural e.g., "The *dog* which *lives* near my house has fleas". Note that "which *lives* near my house" is a clause and cannot be used as a stand-alone sentence in formal writing as there would be no appropriate noun for the clause to qualify.

Advanced explanation with example (s)
Two examples below, one simple and the other complex, highlight the rule that when a clause qualifies a noun then the verb(s) in that clause must be consistent with the singular/plural status of that noun. Clearly, this rule has similarities to noun/verb agreement i.e., Fault 2.

Example 1: "The young footballers from the AFL Grand Final which were played in Perth in 2012 were exhausted".

The clause "which were played in Perth" qualifies the noun "Final" not "footballers". The noun "Final" is singular therefore the clause must have a singular verb ("was"). Note that there is also a factual error in that sentence; AFL Grand Finals are always played in Melbourne. Thus, "The young footballers from the AFL Grand Final which was played in Melbourne in 2012 were exhausted".

Example 2: "For instance, as Jones (2001) reports, men who wish to limit their car size face gender norms that equate size of car with virility and discourages men from making sensible consumer choices".

The relevant noun and clause are "norms" and "that equate size of car with virility and discourages men from making sensible consumer choices." (Strictly, this is made up of two clauses but for ease of reading we leave out the second "that" in "that equate size…..and that discourages men from…".

First, temporarily delete the phrases from the clause(s):
"norms that equate car size and discourages men from making sensible consumer choices …."

The noun "norms" is plural and the first verb "equate" is correct as it is plural but the second verb "discourages" is singular and should be "discourage".

As highlighted in the grammar lesson earlier in this document, some clauses do not qualify nouns and are often adverbial e.g., in: "When my sons have mastered the necessary skills, they will do their own tax returns.", "When my sons have mastered the necessary skills" is a clause that relates more to the main verb in the sentence "will do". In such cases we treat the clause as a sentence and follow the rules for Fault 2. The subject is "sons" and, quite correctly, the verb "have mastered" is plural. Note also the internal consistency in the sentence as a whole i.e., "sons", "have mastered", "they", "their", and "returns" are all plural (avoids Fault 19). In this case "will do" can be singular or plural and it is just a coincidence that a plural word "skills" was used as it might have involved only one skill and the singular version would have been used i.e., "skill".

One way of distinguishing adjectival and adverbial clauses, is that the former can easily be read as a question (without changing the sequence of words) e.g., "Who wish to limit their car size?", whereas

this is highly unlikely with an adverbial clause e.g., "When my sons have mastered the necessary skills".

Examples with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
Example 1: "The young footballers from the AFL Grand Final which was played in Melbourne in 2012 were exhausted." (17 words)

We can turn the phrase "in 2012" into an adjective "2012" (**Fault 17**) and the clause "which was played in Melbourne" into a phrase "in Melbourne" because if it was an AFL Grand Final it is self-evident (**Fault 10**) that it "was played".

Thus: "The young footballers from the 2012 AFL Grand Final in Melbourne were exhausted." (13 words)

Example 2: "For instance, as Jones (2001) reports, men who wish to limit their car size face gender norms that equate size of car with virility and discourage men from making sensible consumer choices."

I adapted this example from a student's writing, changed the research topic and added any country, in this case Brazil. The example also serves a purpose in highlighting that research results can depend on the culture and attitudes within the country in which it was conducted. The introductory words "For instance" are self evident (Fault 10) and the use of "men" was repetitive (Fault 8) so we use "they" on the second occasion. Clearly, choosing a car is a consumer choice so we do not need the word "consumer" (again, Fault 10).

We are left with: "One Brazilian study found that men considering using smaller cars face gender norms that equate size with virility and discourage sensible choices (Jones, 2001)." [This comprises 24 words instead of 32. No offence is meant to Brazilian men!] This approach to writing conforms to the recommendations associated with Fault 18, i.e., it is now written in an easily read, direct style.

Fault 4 – Mistake with an Article

Mistake with an Article (fix some of the "the/a/an/no article needed" problems for the student and highlight others).

Advanced explanation with example(s)
It is difficult to comprehend the severity of the challenges that some EAL (English as an Additional Language) writers face e.g., some languages do not use the equivalent of "the" or "an". Strictly, these are definite and indefinite articles and they refer to an item either specifically or non-specifically, respectively.

The definite article is for something quite specific e.g., "the legs of the table in my office". They are not just any legs but are quite specifically the legs on the table in my office. Presumably, there is only one table in my office.

The indefinite article is used when the item belongs to a broader group. "I have to see the course coordinator for English 101 as I have a timetable clash." I might have several timetable clashes so this one could be part of a group. In another example, "I have to leave home early today, as I have an appointment at the University." It is quite possible that I have several appointments that day so this one could belong to a group of appointments. Because appointment begins with a vowel (see below), we use "an" not "a". In the preceding example, "timetable" begins with a consonant, so we use "a". Similarly, in the explanation of EAL above we use "an" in "English as an Additional Language" because the person might speak several languages including one of a huge group of native languages e.g. Spanish, French, Mandarin, Vietnamese etc. This highlights that the use of "a" or "an" is dictated by the word that immediately follows it in the sentence, in this case the adjective "Additional" rather than the noun "Language".

If we need to use the words "a" or "an", "an" should be used in front of words beginning with a vowel i.e., "a", "e", "i", "o" or "u". For almost all other words, "a" should be used. However, there are some exceptions e.g., we talk about "an honour, because the "h" is silent but when the "h" is emphasised as in "a historic agreement" we use "a". Some words begin with a vowel but phonetically the correct pronunciation involved a sound that begins with a consonant e.g., we say "a university" because we say the word as you-niv-err-sit-ee which begins with a y; note that the more formal phonetic version of "university" is "ju:nI'v3:sItI).

The following example is adapted from Maguire (2008a) and highlights article errors and their resolution. It includes a case of words that indicate ownership i.e., possessives, and this example also has a case of a lack of uniformity in the tense of the verbs (see Fault 5). As such, it includes some of the most common challenges for students dealing with English as an Additional Language.

 "Toms mother gave him an choice of the last two pieces of fruit. He chose an apple rather than banana because it fit better in lunchbox."

In the first sentence Tom has to choose between two pieces of fruit and it is highly specific as they are the last two pieces. In this case the definite article "the" was used correctly in "the last two pieces of fruit".

Toms is the possessive form of **Tom** and must be written as **Tom's (**relates to Fault 1f). There is only one apple and one banana available. He did not just choose "an apple"; he chose "the apple" (i.e., specific rather than non-specific). Similarly it has to be "the banana" not "banana". If there was no limitation on the number of each fruit available, we could say that "he chose an apple rather than a banana."

The text "in lunchbox" poses two more problems. It is "in Tom's lunch box" or "in his lunch box) i.e., a word has been inappropriately deleted and lunch box itself is two words. Reading the sentence aloud may have revealed that the word "his" was missing; however, depending on your native language, it may not seem wrong.

The text "fit better in his lunch box" relates to the word "apple" which is singular; the singular version of "fit" is usually "fits" e.g., "This piece of evidence fits the pattern seen in some other crimes". The specific problem is the sentence about Tom is that we need to be consistent with tense. The sentence begins with "He chose" which is past tense so we use the past tense of the verb fit i.e., fitted (relates to Fault 5). This verb can be singular or plural so there is no problem from that perspective i.e., we can say "He fitted through the space" or "They fitted through the space". (It is useful to note that in the U.S., "fit" can be past tense.)

Some writers may have a preference for "into his lunch box".

If we just fix these problems the text would be:

"Tom's mother gave him a choice of the last two pieces of fruit. He chose the apple rather than the banana because it fitted better in his lunch box."

Other qualifying words may be considered as articles e.g. "some" as in "Please give me some breakfast." We would not usually ask "Please give me a breakfast."

Numerous examples of how articles can be used correctly are provided in:
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/540/01/

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
"Tom's mother gave him a choice of the last two pieces of fruit. He chose the apple rather than the banana because it fitted better in his lunch box."

We again have the problem of two short, related sentences which probably can be merged.

"From the two pieces of fruit offered by his mother, Tom chose the apple because it fitted into his lunch box." [This uses 21 words rather than 27 words in the original sentence. We have lost the word banana but is it important? If it is, we could say "chose the apple not the banana". Do we need fitted "better"? – probably not. Does it matter that they were "last two pieces of fruit"? If it does not, the sentence could be "Tom chose the apple from the fruit his mother offered because it fitted into his lunch box."]

Fault 5 – Tenses are mixed unreasonably

Tenses are mixed unreasonably (highlight relevant words). For example, "The dog has long hair which needed combing" (has is present tense and needed is past tense; needs would be correct unless the specific combing event was indeed in the past).

Advanced explanation with example(s)
Unless you have a good reason not to, keep the tense consistent within a sentence.

There are many tenses but some of the common tenses are:

- **Simple Present:** They contribute*
- **Present Perfect:** They have contributed
- **Simple Past:** They contributed
- **Past Perfect:** They had contributed
- **Future:** They will contribute
- **Future Perfect:** They will have contributed

* This suggests that their preference is to contribute; if they are putting that into practice, they are contributing. This indicates how similar expressions can have subtle differences in meaning.

In the above list, the examples are plural and there are compound verbs i.e., more than one word e.g., "will contribute". Compound verbs can pose challenges when you compare singular and plural forms, for example, "he contributes" and "they contribute" but "he will contribute" and "they will contribute".

See: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/601/01/

"Johnson et al. (2000) found that retaining a higher proportion of speculative stocks fosters.." is not consistent for tense as "found" is past tense and "fosters" is present tense so we replace "fosters" with "fostered" which is past tense. Hence, it should be "Johnson et al. (2000) found that retaining a higher proportion of speculative stocks fostered..". It should be noted that many authors do not apply this rule when they are referring to the literature. The choice of verb partly reflects personal preferences; in this case "found" has been used in association with a group of authors and unfortunately it tends to be over-used for this purpose so that the writing style becomes very predictable and disengaging. The verb "concluded" (which is still in **simple past tense**) might be an appropriate alternative in this case.

Usually we write academic material in the past tense but some statements can be very powerful in the present tense e.g., in a journal article "We assert that the most commonly used methodology in this field is inappropriate". In general, "we" should be used sparingly in academic writing or it loses its impact. Indeed, some academic staff members totally disagree with its use in academic writing. The word "we" would not be used often in most theses i.e., only the candidate's work is being assessed. Conversely, for a thesis with publication at ECU, "we" may have been used in a paper published with co-authors and would be retained in the thesis if that paper formed part of the thesis (see the following link to explain this type of thesis: http://www.ecu.edu.au/GPPS/policies_db/policies_view.php?rec_id=0000000297). The use of "we" is completely acceptable in mathematical proofs e.g., "If we substitute equation 23 into this formula, the following equation is generated".

Some explanations are also written in the present tense. "This methodology is based on the assumption…".

In my career I have tended to not be as committed as many other academics to using "past tense" or "passive writing". An example of passive writing is where we write "the stone was thrown by the boy" instead of "the boy threw the stone". A related style problem is the use of a "third person" style i.e., "One does not need to always transform data prior to using XXXX statistical test" instead of "Data does not necessarily require transformation prior to using XXXX statistical test". In these cases, using passive tense or a third person style consumed more words. Moreover, "third person" is not a modern style although some authors can justify its use.

In general, I look for effective writing. Past tense or passive tense is less interesting to read but you will rarely be criticised for using past tense in a thesis. (In contrast, readers prefer present tense in popular writing.) Moreover, there are times when past tense is essential. One student in 2007 cited a study by Smith (2004) and presumably used the data in that paper to write about the population and age distribution of a particular country. The student used the present tense **is** whereas it would have been more appropriate to use past tense **was** because the population would have changed from the year covered by this data set i.e., it may have been 2002 data if the paper was published in 2004.

Thus "The population of Country X in 2002 **was** 13,921,285 (Smith, 2004)…"

The following text provides examples of appropriate use of past and present tense in academic writing. "Jones and Smith (1996) found that job satisfaction was a key predictor of staff retention." Clearly, this was written as past tense. However, it we are writing a summary statement or an assertive statement, the style may change. For example, "Job satisfaction is a key predictor of staff retention (Jones and Smith, 1996; Smith and Williams, 2002)." Clearly, if you quote a whole sentence by another author, changing the tense is not appropriate.

Examples with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
"The problem that the administrator found with network security procedures was that internal clients are using covert channels." Clearly, "are" should be "were". The more direct version is "The administrator found that use of covert channels by internal clients was compromising network security." (This uses 15 words rather than 18 words.)

The Jones and Smith (1996) example above (15 words) can also be written more directly while again avoiding over-use of "found". "Jones and Smith (1996) identified job satisfaction as a key predictor of staff retention." (14 words)

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Fault 6 – Parallel structure problem

Parallel structure problem (highlight relevant words). Internal consistency is required with the form of words in a sentence or short series of dot points e.g., "The pathway to a sound financial position is via saving, budgeting and spending sensibly" not "via saving, a budget and spending sensibly". Similarly, a short list of dot points should all begin with the same type of word. However, the long list of faults in this document does not conform to parallel structure i.e., some points begin with a verb and others with a noun, because it is often awkward to achieve in a long list.

Advanced explanation with example(s)
Parallel structure requires that words, which have similar status within a sentence, be in a consistent form. An example is "His aims were to be operating by June, reaching 60% occupancy by August and make a profit by December." The word "make" should be consistent with "operating" and "reaching". The sentence becomes:

"His aims were to be operating by June, reaching 60% occupancy by August and making a profit by December."

Parallel structure can also relate to clauses (these are covered in Fault 2).
An example is: Before you ask someone else to read your draft academic writing, make sure that you have spellchecked the document, number all pages and that you have carefully proof read the document.

The technically correct but overly long version is: "Before you ask someone else to read your draft academic writing, make sure that you have spellchecked the document, that you have numbered all the pages and that you have proofread the document carefully."

In the example above, "number all pages" is not a clause (whereas that you have numbered all the pages is a clause) and the verb "number" is not consistent with "have spellchecked" and "have proofread". Unfortunately, this solution has created repetition of "that you have" (used three times). Typically we would only include the first usage, leading to "Before you ask someone else to read your draft academic writing, make sure that you have spellchecked the document, numbered all the pages and proofread the document carefully." Some authors would also drop out the definite article "the" in "numbered all the pages" as "numbered all pages" conveys the same information.

The topic "parallel structure" is covered in greater detail at:
https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/623/1/

Parallel structure is required when you list a series of items, in a sentence, after a colon e.g., "The most common writing faults I see in drafts from research students are: getting possessives wrong, making the verb inconsistent with the subject, incorrect references, and writing in a repetitive style."
The correct version is:
"The most common writing faults I see in drafts from research students are: getting possessives wrong, making the verb inconsistent with the subject, citing references incorrectly, and writing in a repetitive style.

The dot point list in the Fault 7 section is an example of conforming to parallel structure.

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied

The correct version from above is:

"The most common writing faults I see in drafts from research students are: getting possessives wrong, making the verb inconsistent with the subject, citing references incorrectly, and writing in as repetitive style. (32 words)

This could be written more directly as:

"Research student drafts commonly exhibit several faults: possessives errors, subject-verb inconsistency, mis-cited references, and repetitive writing. (16 words) [Parallel structure is maintained but with an adjective beginning each item; note that I have used a plural adjective in "possessives errors and this is unusual but the exception seems appropriate. I have dropped the reference to me; this could be addressed by beginning with "Drafts from my research student clients.." (3 extra words and note that student is used as a singular adjective).]

Fault 7 – Statement not referenced or there is a referencing error

Statement not referenced or there is a referencing error (highlight relevant statement or reference).

Advanced explanation with example(s)
The two issues here are whether a statement should be referenced and how should it be referenced.

For the first issue, using a quotation or slightly modified text, without referencing it and highlighting which sequences of words are being borrowed, can constitute plagiarism. ECU makes it very clear on its website and in its individual course materials that plagiarism is a serious academic offence (see: intranet.ecu.edu.au/__data/assets...27233/Academic-Integrity-Plagiarism.docx

Strong general statements still need to be supported by references, preferably reviews. Some students argue that such referencing is akin to "self-evident text" in that they believe that all readers would acknowledge the truth of some general statements. For a thesis, I recommend the more conservative approach i.e., include the reference. What you believe to be a general truth may be influenced by your cultural framework e.g., Australia is a country with an aging population whereas some developing countries are experiencing the exact opposite. Similarly, Australia has experienced relatively high birth and population growth rates, for a developed country, in recent years. Conversely, excessive numbers of references can be a problem. For example, do you really need twelve references to support one sentence?

For the second issue, the key point is to be thorough and follow the required style. For a Higher Degree thesis at ECU, the choice of referencing style is a matter for you and your Supervisors. You might choose the style for the journal in which you plan to publish or have published. It does not have to be APA (American Psychological Society) on which the ECU Referencing Guide is based (unless you are a psychology researcher). See: http://www.ecu.edu.au/centres/library-services/workshops-and-training/referencing/related-content/downloads/refguide.pdf

For a more comprehensive coverage, consult the latest Edition of the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Society (held by the Library). APA is used for most undergraduate work at ECU.

Using ENDNOTE is a great idea and it has benefits beyond ensuring that you have provided the publication details, for each study cited in your text, in an appropriate and consistent style. You can download references from much larger data bases e.g., NISC in biology, and create your own customised data base. However, always check that the details you download into, or type into, your ENDNOTE Library are correct i.e. check against the hard copy or e-copy documents not just someone's data base entry. I used to include the Abstracts as they make this searchable ENDNOTE Library more useful. Modern versions of the software now allow storage of PDF versions of the whole reference document. ECU runs courses on ENDNOTE and there is a good introductory document on the ECU Library website.

Some of the common referencing errors are:
- citing just the first author without following the conventions for co-authors
- getting the punctuation wrong for "et al." (note some journals require "*et al.*")
- providing the wrong year of publication
- making spelling errors in the title of say a journal article or the name of the journal

- being inconsistent with the abbreviated Christian names e.g. using Maguire, Greg B. and Maguire, G.B.
- confusing Christian names and surnames
- citing the editor(s) of the book involving chapters by different authors rather than citing the chapter author(s) and, later in the full reference, the editor(s)
- abbreviating some journal names but giving others in full without good reason (comprehensive listings of accepted abbreviations are available e.g. http://images.webofknowledge.com/WOK46/help/WOS/A_abrvjt.html
- being inconsistent with how your present page numbers e.g., in one reference using pp. 215-227 and a more compact style, in other references e.g., pp. 215-27
- neglecting to provide all references cited
- relying excessively on secondary references e.g., Jones (1998) cited by Smith (2004). (I find that the secondary references can often be obtained through Google Scholar. Relevant Librarians generally have a range of e-tools available that search with greater efficiently. The key is to develop a working relationship with the Librarian allocated to your School.)

Within the text of your article or chapter, it is convenient to refer to an author, after you have just used the formal reference e.g., Brophy (1998) in that paragraph, as she (or he as the case may be); however, you have to be correct with the gender.

A reference is often associated with a quote which may be arranged as "…….." (Jones, 2007, p.16); regrettably, when I check such quotes from the original source, they often turn out to be inaccurate quotes i.e., the word sequence, tense or use of articles has been altered. Occasionally the page number provided will be incorrect.

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
Independent variable 1 influences several growth and developmental responses by this taxonomic group (followed by 12 references).

The problem here is that this is an excessive number of references to support a relatively general statement. Moreover, the reader does not know which references relate to different growth and developmental responses. A more useful approach would be to specify the individual growth and developmental responses (GDRs) and to provide the relevant references for each response immediately after it is mentioned.

Thus: For this taxonomic group, Independent variable 1 influences GDR 1 (3 refs), GDR 2 (4 refs), GDR 3 (2 refs), and GDR 4 (4 refs). Clearly, the names of each GDR, the Independent variable 1 and the taxonomic group would be specified in a thesis or manuscript.

If there are nine GDRs, it would be more useful to create a table with a set of column headings and nine rows of GDRs. The table could include additional columns e.g., the scientific name of the species involved could be provided for each row. Similarly, if some references provide information on several GDRs, each of the references used in the table could be identified with an individual superscript in a footnote. Then, in another column, the relevant references for each row could be provided by using the appropriate superscripts.

The original sentence above could still be used as an introductory sentence that is unreferenced or lightly referenced with review papers i.e., used as a topic sentence (see Fault 13a). That sentence would be followed by the more detailed, referenced sentences or the table. Overall, my recommended

approach will involve additional words but will also convey more information in a very efficient way that links specific information to specific references.

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Fault 8 – Same word used repeatedly

Same word used repeatedly (highlight each usage of that word). (A specialised case of this comes up in spelling check in WORD; if the same word is used as consecutive words, the spelling check recognises this as an error although this is not always the case e.g., the correct name for the Australian town of Wagga is Wagga Wagga.)

The major issue with the general problem of repeated use of the same word is that it is annoying and can distract the reader from the key points in your writing. The problem can occur within a sentence or across consecutive sentences. For example, one student used the word 'managers' several times within a sentence. The word 'they' can be substituted to provide variety. Beginning consecutive sentences with "I" is an annoying habit when writing a letter to someone. Similarly, in a sequence of sentences in a thesis, all involving the same group of co-authors, their names can also be substituted with "They" in the second sentence or if a whole paragraph relates just to one publication, the authors' names can just be given at the end of the paragraph or at the beginning and end but not in every sentence.

A related problem is using the same formula for writing every sentence e.g., beginning each sentence with an author's name. The writing becomes annoyingly predictable and may indicate that the student is not being sufficiently interpretive e.g., needs to look for commonalities between studies so that they are discussed as a group of references to make a specific point.

Advanced explanation with example(s)
One obvious way of overcoming the repeated use of an individual word is to replace it with words that have the same meaning i.e., synonyms. This can be done by right clicking the word and selecting the synonyms option in WORD. However, care is needed as there can be subtle changes in meaning when similar words are used. For example, in a statistical statement if the synonym for "meaningful" was selected as "significant", a different message would be conveyed to readers as they would assume that it means "statistically significant", based on a particular probability value.

The following is another statistical example. "The data were analysed with data analysis software and the analysis revealed that the data were not normally distributed so the data were transformed prior to further data analysis." Clearly, the words "data" and "analysis" are used too frequently in this case. (Note that many journals do accept "data is" rather than "data are" on the basis that the singular form of data i.e., datum, is rarely used as a noun.) The above example could be simplified as "Data that proved to not be normally distributed were transformed to meet this requirement prior to parametric analyses using SPSS v.19." (This revision assumes some statistical knowledge; it also provides more detailed information than the original sentence.)

If words are repeated in consecutive sentences, my initial reaction is to combine these sentences. One adapted example from student writing is:

"This forest has been impacted by environmental changes, both natural and man-made. These changes can occur over a range of scales and can be detected with remote sensing equipment including XYZ." Combining the sentences and using more appropriate academic language leads to: "This forest has been impacted by environmental changes, both natural and anthropogenic, which can occur over a range of scales and be detected with remote sensing equipment including XYZ." This avoids the repetition of the words "changes" and "can". If shorter sentences are preferred, another solution is: "This forest has been impacted by environmental changes, both natural and anthropogenic. These can occur over a range

of scales and be detected with remote sensing equipment including XYZ." As the two sentences are closely related, I prefer the combined sentence; however, excessively long sentences should be avoided. Efficient editing can sometimes allow three consecutive short or verbose sentences, which share multiple words, to be combined to form one sentence of manageable length.

Jargon can be the exception when dealing with repeated use of a word. It is quite acceptable to use jargon, without defining it, provided that there is general agreement on its meaning and that all of the readers you wish to "capture" understand the jargon. If there is any doubt, I prefer to define each "piece" of jargon. Having defined it, we then tend to reuse it in that document without further definition. However, you should not use synonyms for that jargon even though repetition makes for less interesting reading. One research student defined four important but somewhat similar terms and then proceeded to invent at least three very similar, undefined synonyms for each of those terms and utterly confused me. In formal writing, clarity should not be sacrificed for "colour".

If a thesis contains a wide range of quite specialised jargon, it may be useful to provide a Glossary, as an Appendix, that explains each item.

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
"The framework is developed based on the three strategic priorities in the field of strategic analysis claim that that the platoon's strategic position, internal resources and potential for support from other units e.g., air cover." One specific problem with this sentence is that the word "strategic" is used three times in the space of 14 words.

Clearly, the complexity of this sentence has also confused the writer so that the word "claim" does not do anything but disorient the reader. (Reading drafts aloud helps avoid such problems.) This example can be written more directly (by combining it with the preceding sentence).

"The first purpose of this chapter is to construct a strategic framework, for tactical advantage within a small army unit's operations, based on three priorities; the platoon's combat position, its internal resources and the potential for support from other units, for example, air cover."

Having established in the first line that this was a strategic framework, it was not necessary to remind the reader of what was being attempted here e.g., we did not need to say "strategic priorities". The army is not, of course, my field of expertise and there could be debate over the use of words such as "tactical" and "operations".

Note that in formal writing for some journals, such as those that follow American Psychological Association (APA) guidelines, Latin abbreviations such as e.g., cf., i.e., viz., and vs. are given in full, for example, ", etc." is written as ", and so forth.", unless used in a quote or in certain specialised situations. However, other journals allow the use of these abbreviations. This highlights the need to read the Guide to Authors for your target journal.

Fault 9 – These text sections have the same meaning

These text sections have the same meaning (highlight each section). As with repeated words, it can become annoying to the reader. Some journals impose page charges on authors so excessive repetition of ideas can be financially costly.

Advanced explanation with example(s)
Within a sentence you should not have two phrases/words that mean the same thing. For example, "The sentiment is echoed in other literature with Jones et al. (2000) also reiterating.." can be shortened to "Jones et al. (2000) also emphasised….."

"The sentiment is echoed in other literature" means "also" in the context of a literature review and the word "reiterate" means "to say or do again", so the same meaning has been conveyed three times in this example. However, the use of "is echoed in" does contribute to a more interesting style.

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
"Australia has a rapidly growing number of viruses than affect fisheries and aquaculture (OIE, 2008). Along with other developed nations, such as Japan, the US and Norway, Australia's rapidly expanding viral diversity presents significant problems for, and issues relevant to, the future of the nation's seafood production (OIE, 2008). (49 words)

In this example, Australia is mentioned twice (potential Fault 8) and this suggests that the sentences can be combined. Similarly, "nation" is used twice at least in some form, as is the only reference used "(OIE, 2008)". There is also a potential case of Fault 9. Specifically, it can probably be argued that "growing number of viruses" conveys similar information as "expanding viral diversity" although the latter might infer by how much the viruses differ. Finally, "seafood production" is just achieved through "fisheries and aquaculture" so including it is a potential fault 10 (self-evident text), depending on the audience.

One potential revision is: "Along with other developed nations, such as Japan, the US and Norway, Australia's rapidly expanding viral diversity presents significant problems for fisheries and aquaculture and could affect the nation's future seafood production (OIE, 2008). (34 words)

More exhaustive editing might lead to: "Along with other developed nations, such as Japan, the US and Norway, Australia's rapidly expanding viral diversity presents significant problems for its future fisheries and aquaculture production (OIE, 2008). (29 words)

If we assume that the "expanding viral diversity" will cause similar problems in each country" another version could be "In developed nations, such as Australia, Japan, the US and Norway, rapidly expanding viral diversity presents significant problems for their future fisheries and aquaculture production (OIE, 2008). (27 words)

(A technical point should be noted is that diversity may not necessarily be expanding; it could be that a number of viruses, that presumably have existed for a long time, are now being identified by scientists. However, it is clear that new strains of some viruses are evolving.)

Fault 10 – Self-evident text

Self-evident text (highlight the text) e.g., "The Introduction introduces the reader to the topic." In another simple example is "The brothers and sisters in my family…" where "family" is self-evident and we can write "My brothers and sisters…." It should be noted that in a rather personal style this might refer to "My brothers and sisters in the environmental movement.." but that would be apparent from the context of the document. In editing the current document "Explaining the numbering system for highlighting writing faults", I initially cross referenced faults by saying (potential Writing Fault 8) for the preceding writing fault. However, given the title of this document, it was self-evident that these are writing faults and so I shortened the cross reference to (potential Fault 8)

Advanced explanation with example(s)
An example of text that may not be needed is "Available literature indicates that" when it is within a literature review. The reader will assume that the information comes from "Available literature". This again highlights the need for authors to considering the type of document needed and the target audience. In an article written for a highly specialised audience, explaining basic jargon may be considered as self-evident text; however, a journal that specialises in reviews may want more of the jargon defined as its readership may be much broader. Similarly, making reference to "past research" is pointless because, if you can refer to it, it was done in the past!

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
A compound example, which involves self-evident text, obvious failure to use an already defined abbreviation within a sentence, and indirect writing, is given below.

"There is a clear need to be more sympathetic to the needs of those who produce rather than just move product through the supply chain. The Naples programme of action goes further than this with calls for the overturning of the current economic order (Massey et al., 1992) in a bid to protect the rights of primary producers." [58 words]

Here it is self-evident that the very assertive second sentence "goes further". The sequence, "In order to", is an example of text that can usually be substituted by one word, in this case, "to" (see Fault 17). Similarly, the text "in a bid to protect the rights of" simply means "to protect" (see Fault 18). The revised version is:

"We need to support producers more than other supply chain members. The Naples POA wants the current economic order overturned to protect primary producers (Massey et al., 1992)." (28 words). You could use "calls for" instead of "wants" if you are concerned with a programme of action, rather than a human being, "wanting" something. See Fault 5 for a discussion of the use of "We" in academic writing.

Fault 11 – Made this point already

Made this point already (put a line through the sentence/paragraph). The repeating of some information in different sections of this document would be an example of this fault; however, here it may be acceptable so that users can explore individual faults rather than the whole document.

Advanced explanation with example(s)
This fits into a category of wasteful or repetitive writing and can be irritating to the reader (see Faults 8-10). You can legitimately reinforce a point by discussing a different study e.g., "Similarly, Jones and Smith (2004) concluded that…". The alternative approach is to combine the statements, which make the same point, into one sentence provided that it is not necessary to provide more detail for each study. Sometimes those details will be necessary. The key point is that the writer should be aware of the options available and then make the appropriate choice of writing style.

A common problem in Research Proposals, prepared as planning documents prior to the thesis project being undertaken, is that research students repeatedly explain the purpose of the proposed research. If done to extreme, it infers quite unreasonably that the readers, and specifically the Proposal Examiners, are unintelligent. The guideline here is to consider who will read it and only provide the level of assistance they will need. However, some level of help is useful e.g., if you are using numerous abbreviations or acronyms for technical terms and you do not provide a Glossary, it is helpful to repeat the explanation of the acronym if only used very occasionally in a large document. Similarly, your Proposal may have both scientific and business model components and the Proposal Examiners might come from those two different research fields. As such they will need more background provided for the other field. However, this is not a luxury that can be accommodated easily in a manuscript that has to fit within tight word count limits.

Another structure that often underestimates the comprehension of the reader is where a point is made in one sentence and the next sentence begins with "In other words". In this structure, the same point will be explained twice for the benefit of the reader, albeit with different words. It cannot be justified if the target audience does not need this level of assistance. If you are making subtle changes in meaning for the second sentence, it is no longer a case of "In other words".

Another common problem in structured academic writing occurs when relatively long headings or sub-headings are used and the first sentence largely repeats that heading.

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
A long example, which involves Fault 9 and various other writing faults, is discussed below. It is based on draft from a research student but, appropriately, the topic is heavily disguised to avoid identification of the specific research topic.

"Popular polymer XX production methods have usually been divided into two categories: General Method 1 (GM1) and General Method 2 (GM2). Usually, GM2 creates much lighter polymers than GM1. The type of polymer being investigated in this study has been produced by two versions of GM2 type Z (v1 and v2) for specific applications A, B, C and D. Compared to GM2 type Z, the most popular laboratory method, another General Method (GM3) has advantages in commercial manufacture, such as Adv1, Adv2, and Adv3. While previously less popular, GM3 has evolved through various iterations over the past forty years. Now, GM3 has prevailed over GM1 methods in preparing functional polymers, whose qualities can be comparable to polymers produced by GM2 methods. Its advantages, including Adv1 and Adv3, make this technique very promising for commercial purposes." [136 words;

note, that for convenience, references have been removed from this paragraph but would be included in the final version.]

Fault 11 is evident in the provision of information about Adv1 and Adv3 for "commercial manufacture" or "commercial purposes", particularly given that this occurs within a relatively short paragraph. The obvious solution is to just have one sentence that mentions "commercial" once and includes Adv1 and Adv3 as well as Adv2. It is difficult to justify second use of "General Method". Similarly, GM1 and GM2 are mentioned in each of the first two sentences (Fault 8), which can probably be combined, and as there were only two general methods, the comparison "than GM1" is self-evident (Fault 10). Similarly, GM3 occurs in three consecutive sentences and the word "polymers" is used too often, thus inviting further editing. Sentence 6 includes two inappropriate choices of prepositions, both being "in", while another case occurs in sentence 4.

The revised version is:
Popular polymer XX production methods have usually involved General Methods 1 (GM1) or 2 (GM2) with the latter yielding much lighter polymers. The polymer type being investigated in this study has been produced by two versions of GM2 type Z (v1 and v2) for specific applications A, B, C and D. Another General Method (GM3), while previously less popular, has evolved through various iterations over the past forty years. Now, it has prevailed over GM1 methods for preparing specific polymers, whose qualities can be comparable to those produced by GM2 methods. Moreover, its advantages (Adv1, Adv2 and Adv3) over GM2 type Z, the most popular laboratory method, make GM3 commercial attractive. (111 words)

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Fault 12 – Add, delete or revise a link word: (*a*) *Need a link word e.g., "however" (indicate position with an arrow head).* (*b*) *Delete or revise this link word (highlight the word).*

Advanced explanation with example(s)
An appropriate comment to a student could be "It is pleasing to see that you have incorporated 'linking words/sequences' to provide continuity; however, they are used excessively." Examples of 'linking words/sequences' include "However", "Despite this", "Regardless", "Conversely", "Similarly", "Moreover" and "In addition". They are widely used in this document. When used appropriately, these words may indicate that the student has a clear basis for the sequence of sentences used in a paragraph and understands some of the agreements and disagreements in the literature. Try to avoid using the same "linking word" too frequently; synonyms are available e.g., "Nevertheless" for "However". Some of these words can be used mid-sentence, typically after a semi-colon; however, punctuation styles can vary among authors and publications. When placed at the beginning of a sentence, typically they are followed by a comma. It is unusual to begin a paragraph with a linking word and it may indicate an opportunity for combining adjacent paragraphs.

Linking words can be overused in some cases, for example, you could write a paragraph depicting two contrasting viewpoints as a sequence of sentences each of which will begin with "However," In contrast" or "Conversely". Read aloud, this will sound like a description of a tennis match as the ball passes back and forth between the opponents. It may be more useful to characterise each viewpoint separately. If considerable detail is needed to characterise the contrasting viewpoints, a table could be included.

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
Original version: "The Australian live cattle export industry faces many challenges including: fluctuating availability of marketable stock in Australia particularly during extended periods of low rainfall; negative publicity driven by animal welfare activists, and lengthy delays in unloading stock at their destination is response to concerns by the intended receiving country because their health staff have rightly or wrongly identified disease problems. Moreover, demand from export markets has been high, thus leading to better prices for exporters. (74 words)

Fault 12b is apparent here because the two sentences provide contrasting information yet "Moreover" is used instead of "However". An additional problem is that the first sentence is far too long (60 words reduced to 43 words) and should be written in a far more direct style (see Fault 18). Finally, both "Australia" and "Australian" are used in that sentence (Fault 8) when it is self-evident (Fault 10) that the cattle are being sourced from Australia. Similarly, the concluding words "for exporters" are awkward because "export" also occurs in that sentence; moreover, they are probably self-evident.

Revised version: "The live cattle export industry faces many challenges including: fluctuating availability of marketable stock in Australia particularly during drought periods; public opposition from animal welfare activists, and lengthy delays in unloading stock at their destination is response to real or perceived disease risks. However, demand from export markets has been high, thus leading to better prices. (56 words)

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Fault 13 – Add, delete or revise a topic or transition sentence (ToTrS) (a) *Add a ToTrS to lead into the next topic (mark position with arrow).* (b) *Delete or revise this ToTrS (delete text).*

Advanced explanation with example(s)
Topic or transition sentences are used to avoid too large a discontinuity (or jump) in the subject matter in a section of text. They are typically used at the beginning (topic) or end (transition) of a paragraph or subsection. They can be useful, particularly for undergraduates, but as your writing skills develop you may find that you will rely less on them. This is because you develop a "natural flow" in your writing that minimises abrupt jumps. The problem I have with topic sentences is that they often require the reader to spend time reading a sentence that contains very little information.

The last sentence in section 4.10, which is adapted from Maguire (2007), is an example of a transition sentence that still conveys useful information.

"4.10 Summarising conferences or workshops
This role can be verbal, written or both. Unless there are concurrent sessions, you should attempt to attend every presentation. The challenges are to identify themes or outstanding contributions……If the written summary is to be included in the conference proceedings, it should be delivered promptly.

5. Editing –when, why, limits and style
5.1 Turn-around time for editing
As a general guide, I aimed for 2 weeks during my research career; however, theses often took longer."

While research students should not use topic sentences unless they are needed, extreme discontinuities should be avoided. One research student jumped sharply from discussing the general characteristics of a particular disease to a new section dealing with the biochemistry of a specific protein. I drafted a topic sentence to bridge these topics by briefly highlighting the role of this protein in the occurrence of that disease. Intelligent researchers and examiners can deal with a reasonable step, in the type of information between paragraphs or subsections, without the need for a topic sentence. However, if you find regular use of topic sentences helpful at this stage in the development of your writing skills, then by all means include them.

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
Suppose a paragraph ends with
"… The dietary protein requirements of marine fish are usually considered to be 30-50% of the dry weight of the feed, depending on the species and access to natural food items in the production system (Ref.). Furthermore, the next paragraph begins with:
"For most commercial feeds the limiting amino acid is usually Lysine (Ref.)."

Depending on the specialised knowledge of the audience, we could insert a topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph: "As proteins are made of amino acids, only some of which fish can synthesise, it is also necessary to consider their essential amino acid requirements (Ref.)."

Alternatively, we could combine the topic sentence with the original first sentence in the new paragraph.
"Strictly, marine fish do not require protein itself but do need enough of several constituent amino acids and in commercial feeds the limiting essential amino acid is usually Lysine (Ref.)."

This more direct style has avoided the need for an extra (topic) sentence but has provided meaningful continuity.

Fault 14 – Add, delete or revise an interpretive summary (IS): *(a)* *Add an IS to highlight issues and conflicts in a major section of text (mark position with arrow). (b) Delete or revise this IS (delete text).*

Advanced explanation with example(s)

This issue has similarities to the perceived need for topic sentences (Fault 13). Do you need to summarise throughout a document? Most journals will not give you the print space to add summaries in every section; however, an interpretive statement that provides a synthesis of the commonalities and conflicts in the literature is not only acceptable, it is desirable. Again, frequent use of summaries is a more undergraduate style and can be overdone to the point of annoyance. Some years ago, I read a short one paragraph subsection in a research student's literature review and was then supplied with a summary of that one paragraph. Examiners of Higher Degree theses will find this excessive. However, if you feel that you need to use summaries to give structure to your writing then so be it but hopefully your writing will evolve into a style that flows better and is more interpretive than just providing summaries as listings of key points. Remember, you generally have an Abstract even in published review papers.

This is a contrived example of an interpretive summary that includes a listing of items (from the field of applied genetics). "Clearly, several selective breeding strategies for animals are available including: intuitive mating plans based on breeding history and performance; mass selection; family lines; controlled inbreeding and outbreeding; marker-based selection; manipulation of the number of chromosome sets, and transgenic techniques; the most appropriate choices depend on the species, the size of the organisation e.g., a family farm or stud through to an agribusiness corporation, and the sophistication of the breeding goals."

As an editor, you might suggest the need for topic sentences or summaries if you find yourself asking "where is this article/review heading?" i.e., there is a need for some form of "road map". Similarly, a Table of Contents or an equivalent list is very useful in a multi-section article and Maguire (2007) (see Fault 13) is a good example of that need as it covers two large topics and has many specific components in each. However, the acceptability of a contents list depends upon the publication or School to which you are submitting writing.

Example with a fault corrected and a more direct style applied

The genetics example in the preceding subsection poses several challenges: the sentence is too long; the sequence of breeding techniques does not conform to parallel structure (Fault 6) as all but one item begins with an adjective, and it is difficult to read because of that long list. These problems are addressed below by splitting it into two sentences, imposing parallel structure and using a dot point approach that also simplifies the punctuation. The content has also been improved by noting potential legal issues with transgenic techniques.

"Clearly, several selective breeding strategies for animals are available including:
• intuitive mating plans based on breeding history and performance
• mass selection
• family lines
• controlled inbreeding and outbreeding
• marker-based selection
• chromosome set-number manipulation
• transgenic techniques.

The most appropriate choices depend on the species, the size of the organisation e.g., a family farm or stud through to an agribusiness corporation, the sophistication of the breeding goals, and any legal restrictions on the use of transgenic techniques."

Fault 15 – Sequence of paragraphs is not logical

Sequence of paragraphs is not logical. (Indicate the appropriate sequence e.g., a, b, c, d.) (The student will have to deal with any continuity issues e.g., jargon was used in paragraph a, but is now defined in paragraph b.)

Advanced explanation with example(s)
The important issue when writing a paragraph is that there should be a clear reason why it has ended and a new paragraph has begun i.e., there should be logical connections between the material included in one paragraph. I recently edited a section of a draft thesis in which three different theoretical perspectives were explained across two paragraphs. This was not logical in this case; you need one paragraph or three paragraphs unless there was a strong link between two of these perspectives. As the material for each perspective was quite detailed, I suggested three paragraphs. Similarly, there should be a logical pattern to the sequence of paragraphs, for example, if you introduce a section by highlighting four key issues in a particular sequence, the paragraphs devoted to those issues should follow the same sequence.

Example with faults corrected and the strategy explained
The justification for the sequence used in this long example of two paragraphs is given below.

"In general, there is an overemphasis on very short paragraphs so that it follows a newspaper or popular magazine style, where the writer cannot assume that the reader is able to concentrate on a longer coherent paragraph, e.g., for a newspaper that might be read on a crowded train. You should be able to make that assumption for an academic reader. Similar advice would often apply to use of very short sentences; however, some short sentences are very effective e.g., 'A Credit Union is not just another bank'.

The important issue when writing a paragraph is that there should be a clear reason why it has ended and a new paragraph has begun i.e., there should be logical connections between the material included in one paragraph. I do not support artificial breaks in a paragraph but if I do draft a long paragraph, I then challenge myself to see if there is a logical break point in that paragraph. If I cannot identify one, I retain the long paragraph."

Most of the material above relates to paragraphs but I have separated the material on linking short paragraphs and sentences into one paragraph while the material on what constitutes a logical breakpoint between paragraphs is covered in the second paragraph. I could reasonably have reversed the sequence of paragraphs and gone from the general to the specific. However, I wanted to highlight the common tendency for research students, particularly students for whom English is as an Additional Language (EAL), to use a style more suited to newspapers. Changing the structure of the writing, in this case looking at an example and then discussing more general issues, can make the writing less predictable and hence more interesting. Having said this, academic writing does tend to follow a more conservative structure.

Fault 16 – An extra step is needed in this argument

An extra step is needed in this argument e.g., a significant assumption was made by the student but this was not included in the text. (Mark position with arrow).

Advanced explanation with example(s)
This problem goes beyond the challenge of arranging the paragraphs in a logical sequence; in this extreme case a whole paragraph is missing.

In devising an example, I have chosen to compare Australia and Iceland as contrasting countries given that Australia is highly multi-cultural and that Iceland is mono-cultural even though the latter country includes both Nordic and Celtic influences and hosts a modest number of citizens from other countries. Its population is also less than 2% of Australia's total (statement not referenced). Let us assume that we are sampling the people of these two countries for their attitudes to law and order issues.

"The same number of individuals will be interviewed in each country and the samples will have similar age distribution and gender balance.

This design will allow a comprehensive analysis of the differences between the two countries and specifically will allow an analysis of the two most likely influences on attitudes to law and order issues i.e., age and gender."

While this WORD document or interactive web document largely deals with issues of grammar and style, this fault relates more to content. It could be argued that a step is missing in this sequence of sentences/paragraphs i.e., the writer has failed to consider the obvious difference between the two countries, namely their relative ethnic diversity. This could be influential in determining attitudes to law and order issues. (Naturally, such an assessment would require specialist expertise. This is merely a contrived example. A counter-argument could be that the issue of ethnic diversity could emerge in the discussion of the results and could indeed be used to explain differences in attitudes which might have emerged in the study.)

Example with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
The example below involved an assertion being made that was in fact correct; however, it was not well accepted by some key readers because, to be convincing, four key claims had to be argued not just one. Such issues can arise if writer do not remember which audience they are addressing and instead write for themselves; they know the statement is correct but neglect to provide the sequence of supporting arguments that would convince the relevant audience. This would involve a logical sequence of steps in the argument.

The claim made is that: *Marron will gain little direct benefit from detritus, in stock watering dams in the Wheatbelt area of Western Australia, because they cannot digest cellulose.* This is probably true because to obtain direct benefit from detritus (fragmented pieces of organic matter), marron (a type of freshwater crayfish) would have to be able to digest insoluble cellulose (fibre) rather than just obtaining indirect benefit (via bacteria in the dam digesting the cellulose in the detritus first and then transferring more digestible material along the food chain so that eventually marron could benefit).

The logical set of arguments is:

1. Most of the detritus is from crop stubble e.g. wheat plant stalks left behind after harvesting (Reference set 1).
2. Accordingly, the detritus contains very high levels of insoluble cellulose (Reference set 2).
3. Freshwater crayfish can digest soluble complex carbohydrates (soluble fibre) with enzymes called endoglucanases (Reference set 3).
4. However, they cannot digest insoluble cellulose because they lack the enzymes cellobiohydrolase and beta-glucosidase to complement their endoglucanases (Reference set 4).

(Possession of this complete set of enzymes is quite a rare event for more complex organisms as is the possession of large chambers in the gut that are colonised by bacteria that can digest the cellulose. Ruminants including cattle do have this type of gut structure.)

Clearly, this is a complex example that requires specialised knowledge. However it is consistent with the argument that: *"To turn a claim into an argument, we need evidence."* (McWilliam, 2006).

Fault 17 – Make descriptive text more concise

This descriptive text could be shortened by adopting strategies such as using an adjective or verb to replace a clause, phrase or other words (highlight the text) e.g., "The happy dog…" instead of "The dog which is happy…".

Advanced explanation with example(s)
An appropriate example of using an ADJECTIVE instead of a CLAUSE is "..by using a strategy which is more profitable.."

REPLACE with:
"..by using a more profitable strategy..".

Another example looks like a PHRASE i.e., "in poor health", instead of a CLAUSE and highlights our tendency to drop out words. "A cat in poor health should be taken to a veterinarian" could be written as "A cat which is in poor health should be taken to a veterinarian" and can be shortened to "An unhealthy cat should be taken to a veterinarian".

In **Fault 1(d)** in this document, "have an effect on" was replaced by the verb "affect". My colleague, Dr Jo McFarlane highlighted examples of using a VERB to replace a VERB, NOUN and part of a PHRASE. Instead of writing "undertake the measurement of" we can just write "measure". There is a whole family of such examples. Thus words with the form "xxxxment of" can often be replaced by "xxxx" e.g., "You should arrange confinement of .." can be replaced by "You should confine..". Another related family takes the form "xxxxion of" and can be replaced by "xxxx", sometimes with a minor change in spelling. For example, "when we get to the completion of the project.." can become "when we complete the project..".

The major advantages are that the text is both shorter and easier to read; moreover, it is less likely to annoy an Examiner/assessor.

Examples with faults corrected and a more direct style applied
There are many common expressions that are unnecessarily verbose (involve using more words than necessary) and replacing these with more concise, descriptive expressions can improve your writing as well as help meet strict word limits for journals or conference abstracts. Some examples include:

- on the other hand" = conversely). (Some authors also argue that "on the other hand" should be preceded by "on one hand".)
- a number of previous works = several studies
- in spite of the fact that = despite
- all kinds of = various
- at the same time = concurrently
- at the time of = during
- leads to some challenges = creates challenges
- make it as good as possible = optimise
- an excessive number of = too many
- the good news is that = fortunately
- slow down the process = slow the process

Many more examples are highlighted at http://web.uvic.ca/~gkblank/Wordiness/Kim_Blanks.html; he manages to reduce a 46 word sentence to 12 words by using these economical strategies!

Fault 18 – Rewrite the sentence/paragraph more directly

Rewrite sentence/paragraph more directly (highlight key information words e.g., in bold and use a contrasting highlight for less important words). (Complement this by rewriting some of this text for the student.)

Advanced explanation with example(s)
While writing styles should not be too predictable, it can be useful to use a more concise style. Direct writing involves minimising the number of words used while still conveying the information in text that can be read aloud easily. It improves the clarity of the writing and also simplifies a sentence so that it is more likely that any grammatical errors will be noticed e.g., using long complex sentences with multiple clauses and phrases increases the risk of Fault 2 errors. Because there are so many verbs and nouns in the sentence, it is easy to "lose track" of which noun and verb form the core of the sentence i.e., the sentence minus the clauses and phrases.

Example: In an attempt to underline an effective role for governments to play in the promotion of the use of tax agents, this study explored and compared the Tax Offices of Brazil and Argentina. Especially, it focused on an examination of the current government taxation advice units at the national level (namely, the BXX and the AZZ), as well as financial influences on their procedures. [65 words]

Revision: (A) To devise an effective role for governments in promoting the use of tax agents, this study compared the Tax Offices of Argentina and Brazil. It focussed specifically on examining current national taxation advice units (the AZZ and the BZZ), and their financial constraints. (43 words) **OR**

(B) In this study, the Tax Offices of Argentina and Brazil were compared to devise an effective role for governments in promoting tax agents. It focussed specifically on their taxation advice units (AZZ and BXX respectively), and associated financial constraints. (39 words)

Rationale: It is probably self-evident that if you "compared" you also "explored" (Fault 10). Again, there is excessive use of a word i.e., "governments" (Fault 8), while "nation", "Brazil and Argentina", and "B" & "A" in BXX and AZZ provide similar information (Fault 9). The phrase "on their procedures" is probably self-evident (Fault 10). The text "In an attempt to identify" can be conveyed more directly (Fault 18). I could have said "tax agents' usage" but it is awkward to read aloud (thus conflicting with one of the aims of "direct writing").]

Example with a fault corrected and a more direct style applied
Below is another example from Maguire (2008c). Other examples can be found in Maguire (2007a,b).

Example of a title for a journal: "How effective are overseas-based telephone information centres for helping and informing Australian consumers?" (13 words)

I do not mind the use of a question as a Title; however, it can be shortened greatly to:

Revision: "Efficacy of offshore telephone information centres for Australians". (8 words)

Rationale: The use of "Efficacy" is obvious. Telephone information centres are set up to help and inform so we do not need to say this (Fault 10). Similarly, Australians using these services are potential consumers so again we do not need the word "consumers". If the topic specifically covered permanent residents or newer arrivals, the title may have to be revised i.e., who is an Australian? This example

serves the dual purpose of highlighting short direct Titles and giving some indication of how to edit text, without losing important content. Rarely do we need sequences such as "A study of…" for a journal article or a thesis or even "A review of …" if it is being submitted to a journal that obviously specialises in reviews e.g., Reviews in Aquatic Sciences. (To shorten it further, could "telephone information centres" be replaced with "telecentres"? – perhaps not.)

Fault 19 – Inconsistency in the writing

This can take many forms. For example, the text does not match the table/figure e.g., an average of 22.3 was given in the text but 23.2 was used in the table. (Give table number (X) and highlight those data in text/table.)

Advanced explanation with example(s)

Avoiding or detecting such errors simply relies on careful document planning, writing and proof reading. Pasting sections into a document from earlier drafts or other documents can cause some the problems below.

Other examples include inconsistency in the:

- number of lines of space left before the next major heading or subheading
- font and style e.g. italics, used within each level in the hierarchy of heading styles (this is important when automatically generating Tables of Contents with relevant page numbers included)
- format for tables or figures and their relevant styles for captions or numbers e.g. moving from Table II to Table 3
- singular or plural status of relevant words within a sentence (but not a Fault 2 or 3); see the example below
- language style i.e., by switching to a third person style without any apparent need e.g. one should not do this ("one" is used instead of "writer", "author", or "researcher")
- abbreviation or acronym for specific words within the same document
- use of "like" or "including" followed by a list of items and then "etc." or "and so on" (the first two terms do not indicate exhaustive lists so the last two terms are unnecessary additions that disrupt the flow of the sentence)
- in-text referencing style (strictly this is Fault 7)
- application of U.S. and Australian spelling styles when not using a quote (strictly this is Fault 1c).

Example with a fault corrected and a more direct style applied

"These data provided a basis for estimating variation among samples taken from the same individual whereas previously all data collected has been based on variation among individuals."

The inconsistency here is that the beginning of the sentence "These data" establish that "data" is being used as a plural word (if not it would have been "This data"). Conversely, in the latter part of the sentence, "data" is used as a singular word ("data …. has been based"). The solution is to be consistent and to follow the style of the journal to which the paper is to be submitted. For example, journals following the APA guidelines (discussed under Fault 7) treat data as plural.

To just correct this inconsistency, the sentence would be revised to: "These data provided a basis for estimating variation among samples taken from the same individual whereas previously all data collected have been based on variation among individuals." (27 words)

However, the sentence can also be written more directly: "In contrast to previous data sets, these samples reflect variation within an individual rather than among individuals." (17 words)

Fault 20 – The sentence is incomplete and/or does not make sense

The sentence is incomplete and/or does not make sense e.g., a sentence without a verb. (Highlight the sentence.)

Advanced explanation with example(s)
There are several reasons why a sentence could be dysfunctional. The wrong word may have been selected or, when self-editing, words may have been added without the words they were meant to replace being deleted. (Because of my workload, I rarely have time to read documents after editing them for clients; hence, this is an error I can make.) Again, reading your text aloud can help detect such problems and some writers find text to voice software useful as well. If proof reading is not one of your stronger skills, consider multiple readings of drafts in which you focus on a different type of error. Clearly, effective use of spelling and grammar checks in word processing software should be a normal part of your routine, especially after you have done some editing.

One emerging problem is that English as an Additional Language (EAL) writers sometimes use expressions that may be acceptable to other EAL readers but not to a native English speaker.

Alternatively, if written for a highly specialised audience, a draft may be beyond the Research Writing Consultant's comprehension, even with the help provided via the Internet with explaining jargon and technical terms. It could also arise if these terms are used for the first time in the document but are only explained on subsequent pages i.e., an illogical sequence (see Fault 15).

Examples with strategies for correcting the fault
The first problem highlighted in the preceding paragraph may not be resolved until there is direct communication between the consultant and the author over the intended meaning of the text. Without this information it is very difficult for the consultant to revise text in a direct writing style and still be confident that the intended meaning has been retained. The specialised knowledge held by research student supervisors is also very useful for assessing whether the problem is a technical one, either via inadequate information or the limited specialised knowledge of the consultant, or is a writing skills issue.

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