

That

Use "that" when using a restrictive clause that would change the meaning of the sentence without it.

Example-Books that big can't fit into my bag.

Example-The librarians at Monmouth that have hybrid cars get better gas mileage.

Who v That

In general, use "who" when referring to a person and "that" when referring to an object.

Contemporary writing often switches these, but older writers like Chaucer did as well. Use your best judgment.

Example-Dr. Bluemel was the professor who was teaching The Wife of Bath this semester.

Example-Missy's new boots were the ones that were purchased by Tony.

That, This, and It

Whenever you use these words, make sure there is a noun right before or after. It is difficult to know what the writer is talking about otherwise.

Example-Professor Lenard believes that her class will work harder if she brings them pizza each morning. She proceeds to prove this.

(theory? What is this?)

Keep the same rule in mind for "it." You won't be following "it" with a noun, but always make sure the closest noun to "it" is what "it" is referring to. For example:

Example-Professor Tompkins looked at it with disgust.

(The book? The paper? The projector?)

Which

Use "which" when dealing with a nonrestrictive clause, which is something that can be left out of the sentence without changing the meaning. It is just supplemental information.

Example-Dr. Tompkins' class, which is very large, had a great discussion of Measure For Measure today.

Example #2-Dr. Kinsella gave the first grammar exam today, which is always very difficult. (If you leave this out it doesn't change the meaning of the sentence)

In general "which" can be removed.

Infinitives

Unmarked form of a verb.

Example-Go, Run,

Full Infinitives

Add "to"

Example-To Run, To Go

Through or Thru

Thru is an informal spelling of through. Due to this, I would avoid using it in academic writing.

Abbreviation

Shortened version of a word.

Example-Etc.

Acronym

Specialized shortened version of a word.

Example-OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries)

Initialism

Specialized shortened version of a word that cannot be pronounced.

Example-FBI

Affect

Affect is a verb that means "to influence" someone or something.

Example-The grade Dr. Brosh gave Toni affected her mood.

Effect

Effect is a noun that is a bit more subtle than "affect," but basically it means "as a result."

Example-The cell phone ban in the library effected the noise level in the stacks.

"" v "

Double quotes signify some sort of specialness about the word. Often this is "scare quotes" signifying the author doesn't believe the statement.

Example-Debbie's grandmother thought women were more "equal" once they received the right to vote.

Example-Alice The Cat is very "concerned" about our complaints.

Single quotes are used to cite dialogue within dialogue.

Example-"Arianna turned towards Kimberly and said 'prepare her for the operation.'"

Then v Than

Then is used when something is "versus" something else. Than is used for a comparison.

Example-Next Lauren called Kristen, then she prepared for their date on Friday night.

Example-Sean is a better gamer than Nicole.

Woman v Women

Woman=single word, equal to man. You would not write "a men are working on the health care bill." Do not write "A women is working on the health care bill."

Imply v Infer

A writer or speaker implies something. Readers or listeners infer.

Example-At the conference, Jane McGonigal implied that gaming can assist those dealing with post concussion syndrome.

Example-Listeners to the podcast could infer that Jason Calacanis does not like Cory Doctorow.

There v Their v They're

There contains "here" and, thus, indicates location. Their conveys possession. They're is a contraction of "they are."

Example-Alice The Cat is sleeping over there.

Example-Henry and Angela collaborated on their conference presentation over Skype.

It's v Its

It's is an abbreviated verb form which means "it is" while its is a possessive pronoun.

Example-It's going to be very hot today in Pemberton.

Example-The team protected its player's martial infidelities from the media.

Whether v If

Whether involves yes/no situations (two outcomes). If is for more generic situations and open-ended possibilities.

Example-Patrick and Veronica couldn't decide whether to record the new episode today or tomorrow.

Example-Chris didn't know if he would get to watch his favorite show on Hulu this weekend.

Also remember to watch for whether or weather.

Toward v Towards

They are the same thing and interchangeable.

Between v Among

Between=Two Among=More than two

Example-Jessica couldn't decide between grilling asparagus or eggplant.

Example-From among her many friends, Elizabeth chose Megan to be her maid of honor.

Hung v Hanged

Objects are hung. People are hanged.

Example-Alexa hung the drapes in her new apartment.

Example-Starbuck hanged the Cylon traitor late last night.

Two Words

The following words are always written as two words:

a lot

each other

high school

in turn

no one

in which

all right

Numbers

Please spell out any number under 10. Once you reach two digits, you may use numerals. Never begin a sentence with a numeral.

Opinions and Beliefs

When writing, never use the phrase "In my opinion, I believe...." This is rather redundant! Be careful even when using one of these; you will sound apologetic for your views.

Imperatives

Do not give commands in your writing.

Titles

Please refer to your Wadsworth handbook for proper use of italics, underlining, and quotation marks for titles of books, television shows, albums, newspapers, etc.

Names

Please make sure you double check the names of authors, historical figures, etc. For example, T.S. Eliot only has one L in it, not two. By the way, please do not refer to the author by their first name.

Once you have introduced an author/character/etc you do not need to type out their full name anymore.

Think, Feel, Believe

Make sure you are using the appropriate word in your writing. Each has a different meaning.

Further v Farther

Farther is used for physical distance. Further is used for figurative/metaphysical distance.

Example-Toni ran farther than before with her new running shoes.

Example-"Further," Buffy exclaimed, "I am tired of his crap!"

Bad v Badly

Bad is used for emotions. Badly is an adverb that modifies a verb.

Example-I feel bad that so many students do not share my love of appositives.

Example-I eat badly when I am on vacation.

Lay v Lie

You lay on a bed. You lie to your friends.

Example-Dawn lay down on the bed with Celia.

Example-Jenni got caught in a lie by her professor.

Transitions

Transitional words and phrases will help guide your ideas as you move from idea to example in your paragraphs. There are many different ways and reasons to transition. Here are some examples for the more common ones:

To Signal Sequence or Addition

Again | Also | Besides | First...Second...Third | Furthermore | In Addition | Moreover | One...Another | Too

To Signal Time

Afterward | As Soon As | At First | At The Same Time | Before | Earlier | Finally | In The Meantime | Later | Meanwhile | Next | Now | Soon | Subsequently | Then | Until

To Signal Comparison

Also | By The Same Token | In Comparison | Likewise | Similarly

To Signal Contrast

Although | But | Despite | Even Though | However | In Contrast | Instead | Meanwhile | Nevertheless | Nonetheless | On The Contrary | On One Hand... | On The Other Hand... | Still | Whereas | Yet

To Introduce Examples

For Example | For Instance | Namely | Specifically | Thus

To Signal Narrowing Of Focus

After All | Indeed | In Fact | In Other Words | In Particular | Specifically | That Is

To Introduce Conclusions or Summation

As A Result | Consequently | In Conclusion | In Other Words | In Summary | Therefore | Thus | To Conclude

To Signal Concession

Admittedly | Certainly | Granted | Naturally | Of Course

Pronoun Case

Subjective

I | He, She | It | We | You | They | Who/Whoever

Objective

Me | Him, Her | It | Us | You | Them | Whom/Whomever

Possessive

My | Mine | His, Her | Hers | Its | Our/Ours | Your/Yours | Their/Theirs | Whose

Although v While

Although should be used when there is some sort of concession involved. While is used when you are expressing an "at the same time" idea. Many contemporary Grammarians and Grammatical Organizations argue they can be used interchangeably.

Example-Although Alice never dated Shane, she did have a crush on her.

Example-While Alabama plays Clemson in football their men's gymnastics teams are also competing.

Active Voice v Passive Voice

You should try to write in active voice as often as possible. Active voice is when the subject of your sentence is doing a direct action.

Example #1-Steve loves Amy.

Example #2-I Heard It Through The Grape Vine.

Misplaced Modifiers

Modifiers are words or phrases that modify. Misplaced modifiers modify what you didn't want to modify.

Example #1-I graded only Alexa's paper. (nothing but Alexa's paper)

Example #2-I only graded Alexa's paper. (did nothing else with it except grade)

Make sure you are using modifiers in an appropriate manner because it will change the meaning of your writing!

Good v Well

In general, well is an adverb (modifying a verb) and good is an adjective (modifying a noun)

Example #1-Rosemary did well tweeting during the panel.

Example #2-"I am good," he replied to Dr. Berube.

I.e. v e.g.

These are abbreviations for Latin terms. I.e. (id est) means "that is" and E.g. (exempli gratia) means "for example."

Example #1-Brent starred on many science fiction shows, e.g., Star Trek: The Next Generation and Enterprise.

Example #2-I only like the good Star Trek series, i.e., the original series, The Next Generation, and Deep Space Nine.

Less v Fewer

Both means "the opposite of more" but normally less is used with mass nouns (things that can't be

counted alone) and fewer is used with counting nouns (something that can be counted).
Example #1-If Aubrey took less classes, she wouldn't qualify for financial aid.
Example #2-Jennifer ran fewer days during the winter.

Dashes

Dashes are a sudden break in thought. Use them when a comma isn't forceful enough.
Example-Amanda was shushed ---forceably--- by a few curmudgeons for live tweeting the panel.

Bring v Take

You ask people to bring, You take things somewhere.
Example #1-William told Jennifer to bring a few copies of her CV to the interview.
Example #2-Jennifer took a few copies of her CV to the interview.

Option v Alternate v Alternative

There are always more options than there are alternatives. If there are four options for your paper topic, there are three alternatives.

Example-Meghan considered the three options for the argumentation paper. Quickly, after scanning the first one, she began considering the alternatives.

Backward v Backwards

"Backward," as opposed to "backwards" (used by the British), is standard usage according to most American grammarians. Even when using it as an adjective, the plural (s) is never added.

Example-The politician was losing the election due to his backward views on women.

Due to v Because

"Due" is an adjectival form of "to be." Only use when it has something to modify. "Because" is much less formal and more grammarians agree to use it instead of "due."

Example #1-Class' cancellation was due to the snowpocalypse. (see how formal that sounds?)

Example #2-Class was cancelled because of the snowpocalypse.

Since v Because

This is very controversial among grammarians! Some will argue that since and because are synonyms which can be use interchangeable. However, grammarians would be correct to point out that technically "since" signifies time and should only be used in that regard.

Example #1-Because (Since? Hmm...) I love you, let's get married!

Example #2-Since last year, I have been in love with you!

Ideas v Ideals

An idea is a thought or concept. An ideal, when used as a noun, is something you reach for or, when used as an adjective, is equivalent to "perfect" more or less.

Example #1-Rebekah had an idea for her final paper.

Example #2-The senator did not share the ideals of his constituents, but they still elected him to seven terms.

Example #3-The ideal grade for the grammar exam is 50/50, which translates to 5/5.

Who v Whom

Use who when referring to a subject; use whom when referring to an object.

Example #1-Who am I?

Example #2-To whom is she referring to when discussing object case?

All Right v Alright

Most grammarians agree that "alright" is not a real word. Use "all right," meaning "decent or adequate" instead.

Example-The current batch of grammarians studying the history of semicolons were doing an all right job.

Comprise v Compose

Comprise means "to contain." Compose means "to make up." For compose, normally usage will involve something that involves a group of parts which make up a whole.

Example #1-The exam comprised of five parts: commas, semicolons, run on sentences, tense, and subject/verb agreement.

Example #2-The United States is composed of many different ethnic groups.

Historic v Historical

Historic is an adjective which involves something important from history. Historical is an adjective which involves anything from history, important or not.

Example #1-President Obama's inauguration was a historic event.

Example #2-The local historical society reenacts a battle that took place in our town during the Revolutionary War each year.

Myself

Myself is what is known as a reflexive pronoun. A grammarian friend of mine gets very irritated by the misuse of myself in memos on his campus. They will say something like "please contact Dr. Smith, Dr. Jones, and myself for more information. Since this is the object case, "me" should be used instead of myself.

Example-Please contact Dr. McCadden, Dr. Alexander, or me for more information about the event.

One v You

Both of these words are indefinite pronouns and, for the most part, can be used interchangeably. However, note that most grammarians feel one is much more formal. Avoid its overuse.

Example #1-One shouldn't try to pass ENG101 with that many absences.

Example #2-You won't be able to pass the class with a quiz average like that!

Principal v Principle

Principal can mean a number of things in the business world, but most of us know the word from our time in school. This primary definition can also stand for someone in a leading role. Principle involves laws or some sort of doctrine.

Example #1-Mr. Smith is the new principal of the school.

Example #2-Matt Smith and Karen Gillan are the principal actors in the new Doctor Who series.

Example #3-He held up his principles even when faced with many temptations.

Shall v Will

Will is used primarily in both ruled based and conversational English. In British English, shall is used in regards to the future. Most American grammarians find this to be extremely pretentious. In America, for the most part, you will find shall in legal documents. Also, you will see it political speeches (Martin Luther King, Barack Obama, Abraham Lincoln, Malcolm X etc) or in the Hebrew Bible.

Example #1-You will attend each class if you want to pass ENG101.

Example #2-I shall watch Doctor Who at a quarter past six this evening.

Example #3-And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid. I still believe that We Shall overcome!

Use v Utilize

Utilize is a very formal word. For the most part, you can avoid using it. You will still see it used in scientific writing. Use is the more common expression.

Example #1-Plants utilize the energy from the sun.

Example #2-Ned often used drugs during the final years of his playing career.

Where v In Which

Both of these terms are relative pronouns (ala "that") but, however, "in which" is much more formal than where. Remember, relative pronouns introduce dependent clauses so use these words appropriately. Most grammarians I know use where in most settings; although, in more formal settings like law proceedings "in which" may be more appropriate.

Example #1-Melissa did not know where corsets were sold in the area.

Example #2-The faulty steps at the store in which Melissa bought the corset was the subject of a lawsuit.

Assure v Ensure v Insure

You assure a person. Events, or some kind of condition, are ensured. Insure only involves financial concerns.

Example #1-William assured Tom that he would come to the Lit/Lang Bash early to help set up.

Example #2-Carmilla ensured Mina that Lucy would be fine.

Example #3-Due to the rising number of arson fires in the area, many residents of the sleepy shore town were insuring their homes for fire damage.

Bi v Semi

Bi means "two" and semi means "half." You wouldn't say "Brooke liked both men and women; therefore, she was semisexual."

Example #1-Brooke liked both men and women; therefore, she was bisexual.

Example #2-The Gay/Straight Alliance met in N204 on a semimonthly basis.

Can v May

This is all about permission. May is used in formal instances. These days, however, many grammarians argue that can is acceptable even in formal instances. Your 19th century Victorian lit professors may disagree.

Example #1-Can you take the files to our department's administrative assistant?

Example #2-May I take Bethany to the dance?

Although v While v Though

Although and while, to me, have very different meanings. Although means “in spite of” and while means “at the same time.” Grammarians like Mignon Fogerty and Eric Partridge agree with me. However, other sources, like Fowlers and the Oxford English Dictionary, feel they are more interchangeable. Be consistent in your usage.

Though can be used interchangeably with although.

Example #1-Although Bethany is in Pennsylvania this summer, we still speak via Skype each Sunday.

Example #2-While Tom is researching the use of semicolons in text messaging, I will be interviewing a neighbor's child about their views on participles.

Example #3-Though Argentina is leading 1-0, Nigeria only needs one goal to tie the score.

Dragged v Drug

For the most part, “dragged” will be the appropriate usage in your writing. “Drug” is primarily only used by those with a southern dialect.

Example #1-Kate dragged Locke's body down the hall.

Example #2-The cheerleader drug the piano behind her truck.

Also:

- Not every full length work of literature is a novel.
- Do not overuse words like unique. Not every idea in your paper is unique.
- Avoid vague, wordy, phrases like centers on, deals with, involves, revolves around, has a lot to do with, is primarily concerned with, in order to, etc
- One space between sentences!