



## **ESSAY GUIDANCE, PUNCTUATION AND SPELLING RULES AND EXERCISES**

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**Brunel Language Centre**

Accredited by the



for the teaching  
of English in the UK

### **Correcting My Assignments**

**How can I avoid common mistakes in my assignments?**

#### **An Essay Writing Process**

1. Research
2. Plan – organisation and content
3. Research
4. Plan – organisation and content
5. Draft – Content
6. Craft - Content and Organisation
7. Proofread – punctuation, spelling and grammar

**Before proofreading in detail check overall essay:**

<p><b>Content</b>          Relevant and keeps to the point?          Interesting, appropriate, analytical?          Appropriate range and balance (ideas/arguments)?          Can hear the writer's voice?          Tackles title?          Hooks reader from the beginning, argument is clearly advertised throughout</p>	<p><b>Structure</b>          contains required elements:  <b>introduction:</b> background to topic, limitation, definition, aims, outline , thesis statement  <b>Secondary Research:</b>  <b>Background/Literature review main paragraphs:</b> topic sentence, addition/detail, examples/evidence, references, analysis/comment/argument/ explanation concluding sentences          Do paragraphs have unity?          Logical link to primary research?  <b>Primary Research:</b>          Is the primary research clearly linked to the secondary research?          Well-developed paragraphs.          Aims (why?)/ Method (how, where, when?)/Sample (who?)/Findings/ Discussion  <b>Conclusion:</b> restatement of argument or rephrasing of thesis statement or brief summary, limitations of research, brief food for thought: wider implications and future recommendations or implications: leave the reader with something to think about, eg a question</p>
<p><b>Language &amp; Vocabulary</b>          Wide range of vocabulary?          Appropriate mix of simple and complex structures?          Sentences and paragraphs linked?          Appropriate academic register and style?          Accuracy?          Reads without difficulty?</p>	<p><b>Academic Conventions (incl refs)</b>          All sources, including images are appropriately referenced in text and in final list of references.          Exact words/phrases appear in quotation marks          Sources are appropriate          Work is correctly presented (Title page, layout and visuals, reference list, appendices)          No evidence of plagiarism</p>

### **When proofreading, check for:**

- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Verb Tense/Form
- Verb
- Contractions and apostrophes
- Numbers
- Correct Pronouns Form/Singular Plural
- Correct articles
- Correct prepositions
- Correct punctuation (especially for complete sentences)
- Spellings and word pairs
- Capital letters
- Missing words
- Style
- In text references and bibliographies

### **How to proofread:**

- Spell check and grammar check first
- Print off to check hard copy
- Know what your particular errors are
- Check for one kind of error at a time
- Read aloud – you may hear your errors
- Have spelling and punctuation guidance to hand
- Some people read backwards.

### **Which works best for you?**

How many mistakes can you find reading forwards, backwards, aloud?

**As long as they are not actually harming other, people should allowed to say what he want.  
To think what they want, and does what they wants.**

- **Hard Work Has It's Rewards.**
- **Untied Methodist Church.**
- **Remember in prayer the many who are sick of our congregation.**
- **For those of you who have children and don't know it, we have a nursery downstairs.**

**Santa Monica College. No Date. *Proof Reading Techniques*. Accessed at:  
[www.smc.edu/tutoring/english.../Proofreading%20Techniques.ppt](http://www.smc.edu/tutoring/english.../Proofreading%20Techniques.ppt) (11/02/10)**

**When you have found as many mistakes as you can, please check with the correct version at the bottom of the next page.**

## PUNCTUATION: COMMAS

### WORKSHEET:

Insert commas below where they are needed.

1. He appreciated that I was in a hurry.  
I did not believe what he said.  
Let us know where you will be.  
She asked who was coming to the party.
2. Pele who played for Brazil will always be remembered for his genius.  
The person who guesses the correct weight of the jar will win the sweets.  
Did you enjoy the music that they performed at the concert last night?  
We lunched at the Savoy where we bumped into Marjorie.
3. As soon as I get there I will telephone you.  
I will telephone you as soon as I get there.  
(similar: 'when', 'if', 'providing', 'until', etc)
4. She rocked back and forth and laughed out loud.  
She looked up and Simon gave her an extremely enthusiastic wave.  
He was interested but did not want to commit himself at this stage.  
He asked me to marry him but I did not know what to do.
5. He wanted the job. He was however unable to attend the interview.  
They were strange though it may seem unprepared for her reaction.  
She looked in a funny kind of way like Madonna.  
She was not that it really matters now quite pleased.
6. He was pointing at the man who was wearing glasses.  
He was pointing at David Beckham who was wearing glasses.  
He came first in the race which was unusual for him.
7. The judge a methodical person slowly wiped his glasses.  
Prince Charles heir to the throne has strong views about architecture.
8. Firstly we should examine the issues.  
(similarly: secondly, next, etc,)

**The correct version: (or is it)? 😊**

**As long as they are not actually harming others, people should be allowed to say, think and do what they want.**

**Hard work has its rewards.**

**United Methodist Church.**

**Remember in prayer the many who are sick in our congregation.**

**For those of you who have children and don't know about our nursery, it is downstairs.**

Santa Monica College. No Date. *Proof Reading Techniques*. Accessed at:  
[www.smc.edu/tutoring/english.../Proofreading%20Techniques.ppt](http://www.smc.edu/tutoring/english.../Proofreading%20Techniques.ppt) (11/02/10)

## PUNCTUATION: COMMAS

### ANSWER SHEET:

Notice how the commas are used and decide what the rules of when and when not to use a comma are.

1. He appreciated that I was in a hurry.  
I did not believe what he said.  
Let us know where you will be.  
She asked who was coming to the party.  
(Note: none of the above sentences should have a comma).
2. Pele, who played for Brazil, will always be remembered for his genius.  
The person who guesses the correct weight of the jar will win the sweets.  
Did you enjoy the music that they performed at the concert last night?  
We lunched at the Savoy, where we bumped into Marjorie.
3. As soon as I get there, I will telephone you.  
I will telephone you as soon as I get there.  
(similar: 'when', 'if', 'providing', 'until', etc)
4. She rocked back and forth and laughed out loud.  
She looked up, and Simon gave her an extremely enthusiastic wave.  
He was interested but didn't want to commit himself at this stage.  
He asked me to marry him, but I did not know what to do.
5. He wanted the job. He was, however, unable to attend the interview.  
They were, strange though it may seem, unprepared for her reaction.  
She looked, in a funny kind of way, like Madonna.  
She was, not that it really matters now, quite pleased.
6. He was pointing at the man who was wearing glasses.  
He was pointing at David Beckham, who was wearing glasses.  
He came first in the race, which was unusual for him.
7. The judge, a methodical person, slowly wiped his glasses.  
Prince Charles, heir to the throne, has strong views about architecture.
8. Firstly, we should examine the issues.  
(similarly: secondly, next, etc,)

## PUNCTUATION: COMMAS

### RULES SHEET:

Check your understanding by comparing the rules with the examples in the answer sheet.

1. **'Head'** (realise, wonder, know, etc) and **'mouth'** (say, tell, mutter, etc) verbs introducing an idea (ie noun phrase): there is no comma.
2. **Extra information** versus **necessary information**:  
Information that is *necessary to explain* who or what we are talking about does not have commas either side.  
*Extra* information has commas either side, which act a bit like brackets. The information is extra because we know who or what we are talking about (often we have a name).
3. **Time words** (when, as soon as, etc) and **conditional words** (if, provided, on condition that):  
If the time/condition words come at the beginning of the sentence, use a comma at the end of the first section. Do not use a comma if the time/condition words come in the middle.
4. Do not use a comma before **'and'** or **'but'** if there is only one word or short phrase following. If a different person is operating in the second half of the sentence, a comma may be used. The more complex the sentence parts, the greater is the need for a comma.
5. **Commentary words/phrases** (adverbs) that comment on a *whole sentence* have commas either side of them when they are in the middle of a sentence. When they are the first word(s) in a sentence, such commentary words are followed by a comma.
6. If the **second half of the sentence** gives information on only one part of the first half of the sentence and the information is *necessary to explain* what or who that part is then no comma is used (this is rule number 2).  
  
If the **second half of the sentence** gives information on only one part of the first half of the sentence and the information is *extra information* then a comma is used (this is rule number 2).  
  
If the **second half of the sentence** comments on *the whole* of the first half of the sentence, then a comma is used.
7. If two words or phrases that **refer to the same person or thing** are next to each other, the second one has commas around it.
8. Words, which describe the **order of a list** are followed by commas.

**PUNCTUATION: COLONS (:), COMMAS(,), SEMI-COLONS (;), DASHES (-)**

**WORKSHEET:**

**Insert the correct punctuation below.**

1. The most famous quotation from Shakespeare is probably 'To be or not to be. That is the question.'
2. I did not enjoy the concert it was not my kind of music.
3. I still had many things to buy an alarm clock spare batteries matches a torch not to mention all our food.
4. I gave him plenty of advice I told him to eat properly to get plenty of sleep to plan relaxation time and to study only six hours a day.
5. We could make an example of him on the other hand I think we should wait and see what he has to say for himself.

## PUNCTUATION: COLONS (:), COMMAS(,), SEMI-COLONS (;), DASHES (-)

### ANSWERS:

Notice how the punctuation is used and decide what the rules are.

1. The most famous quotation from Shakespeare is probably: 'To be or not to be. That is the question.'
2. I did not enjoy the concert: it was not my kind of music.
3. I still had many things to buy: an alarm clock, spare batteries, matches, a torch, not to mention all our food.
4. I gave him plenty of advice: I told him to eat properly; to get plenty of sleep; to plan relaxation time; and to study only six hours a day.

OR

I gave him plenty of advice: I told him to eat properly, to get plenty of sleep, to plan relaxation time and to study only six hours a day.

5. We could make an example of him; on the other hand, I think we should wait and see what he has to say for himself.

### RULES:

Check your understanding by comparing the rules with the examples in the answers above.

1. Use a colon to **introduce quotations**. (Compare with the use of a comma for direct speech in a novel. Notice also the use of single quotation marks for quotations and double ones for direct speech).
2. Use a **colon** to introduce an **explanation** (it can replace 'because').
3. Use a **colon** to **introduce a list**. If the majority of **parts** in the list are **short**, ie one or two words, separate them with **commas**.
4. As with 3, use a **colon** to **introduce a list**. However, if the majority of **parts** in the list are **long**, ie clauses or long noun phrases, you may choose to separate them with semi-colons.
5. Use a semi-colon to connect two clauses which are close in meaning. Here a full stop would be too harsh a separation while a comma would not be sufficient.
6. Writers who do not have an established reputation may be deemed to be ignorant if they use dashes: the reader may feel that the writer is unable to punctuate properly. It is, therefore, advisable to avoid using them.

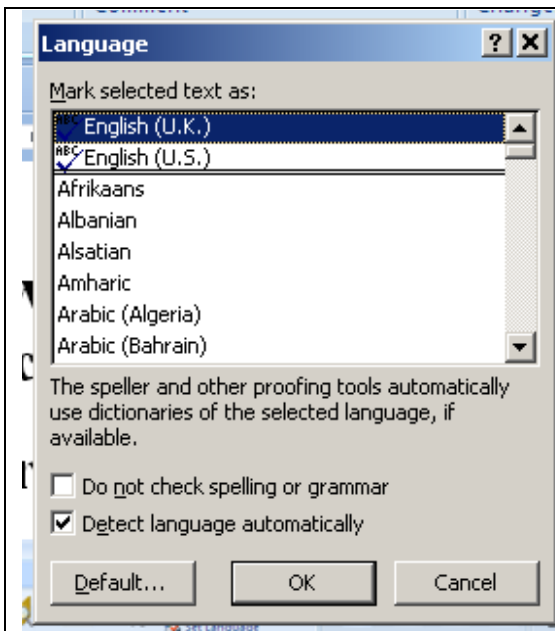
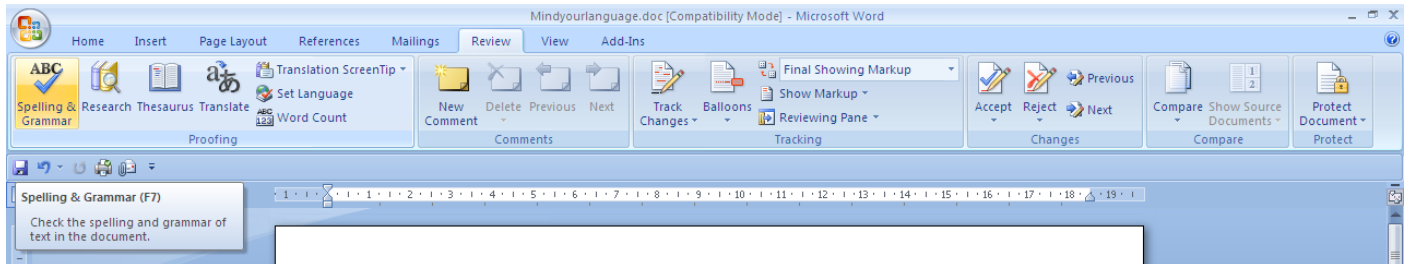


## SPELLING AND THE APOSTROPHE:

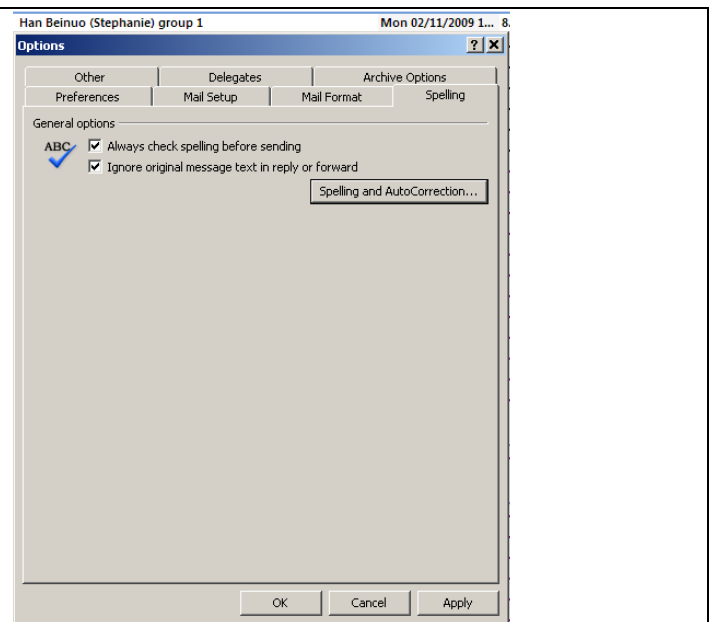
### INFORMATION AND RULES PAGES:

#### How to ensure you spell correctly:

#### 1. Use a spell check.



**Word:** Review/Set Language  
**Tick:** Detect language automatically



**Outlook:** Tools/Options/Spelling  
**Tick:** Always check before sending

#### 2. Check the rules.

Have them with you until you know them.

#### 3. Learn the rules.

See next page for most commonly misspelled words according to World English.  
Available at: <http://www.world-english.org/misspell.htm> (2/11/09)

acceptable	equipment	library	referred
accidentally	exhilarate	lightning	reference
accommodate	exceed	maintenance	relevant
acquire	existence	manoeuvre	religious
acquit	experience	memento	restaurant
a lot	fiery	millennium	ridiculous
amateur	foreign	miniature	rhythm
apparent	fourth	mischievous	sandal
argument	gauge	noticeable	schedule
atheist	generally	occasion	scissors
believe	grammar	occasionally	sensible
calendar	grateful	occur / occurred	separate
category	guarantee	occurrence	special
cemetery	harass	official	success
changeable	height	parallel	to / too / two
collectible	hierarchy	parliament	tomorrow
committed	ignorance	pastime	their / they're / there
conscience	immediate	pigeon	twelfth
conscientious	independent	possession	tyranny
conscious	indispensable	preferable	until
definite(ly)	intelligence	principal / principle	vacuum
disappear	its / it's	privilege	vicious
discipline	judgement	questionnaire	weather
drunkenness	knowledge	receive	weird
embarrass	leisure	recommend	you're / your

## Rules

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## Rules

### A THE APOSTROPHE:

1. An apostrophe shows that something/someone belongs to something/someone. If the first thing is **singular** (or **an irregular plural**), the apostrophe goes **before the 's'**.

**Singular:** A Master's degree, the lecturer's seminar, a student's lecture notes, one month's notice

**Irregular plurals:** Women's rights, men's rights,

2. If the word with the apostrophe is **a regular plural**, the apostrophe goes **after the 's'**.

**Regular plurals:** Masters' degrees, the students' party, students' lecture notes, three months' notice

3. Do NOT use an apostrophe for dates/abbreviations if **no belonging** is indicated.

*He was born in the 1960s.*

*There were six VCs at the meeting.*

*Many MPs would lose their seats.*

4. ONLY use an apostrophe if **belonging** is indicated.

*The VC's diary was full. (One vice-chancellor)*

*The VCs' diaries were full. (More than one vice-chancellor)*

*The MPs' seats were at risk. (More than one MP)*

**B1 It's, you're and they're** are shortened forms of **it is, you are and they are**. The apostrophe replaces a missing letter.

*It's (it is) not difficult if you think about it.*

*You're (you are) studying at Brunel.*

*They're (they are) training for 2012.*

**B2 Its, your and their** mean something **belongs** to *it, you* or *them*.

*Its functions are quite limited. Your mobile is ringing. Their lecture has started.*

**B3 There** introduces an idea, object or place, etc.

*There is (there's) a fly in my soup. There is a house in New Orleans.*

## C To, too and two

**C1 To** is a small 'to' to **connect** an action or a place or thing, etc.

*I want to **do** it. I went to **Brighton**. I look forward to **seeing you**.*


**C2 Too** has an extra 'o' and means **extra** (and indeed more than necessary or what we want).

*I've eaten **too much** cake. It's **too cold** in here.*

**C3 Two (2)** is a **number** as is twenty (20) and both have a 'w' in them.

*It's **two miles** away. I have **twenty** pages to read.*

## D practice, advice, licence, device

<b>ICE is a noun (thing)</b>	A noun can be a thing/person/place/idea)
	<i>He needed a lot of <b>pract<u>i</u>ce</b>.</i> <i>She asked me for some <b>adv<u>i</u>ce</b>.</i> <i>I lost my driving <b>licen<u>ce</u></b>.</i> <i>That is a complicated <b>devic<u>e</u></b>.</i>

**'ise/se' is the correct spelling for actions:**

*He **practised** playing the violin three times a week. I **advised** her to work hard.*

*The restaurant had not been **licensed** to sell alcohol. Together, we **devised** a cunning plan.*

## E dependent/dependant

**Dependent** is an adjective that describes a person or situation, etc.

*He is not an **independent** thinker: he is **dependent** on his friends to analyse situations for him.*

**An ant** is an insect (noun) a **dependant** (noun) is a person.

*Many students at Brunel live here with their **dependants**.*

## **F stationery/stationary**

*Stationery is for the office.*

*If you stand still, you are stationary.*

## **G principle/principal**

A principle can be a theory or belief, etc.

*He was a good man and stuck to his principles.*

*She wouldn't sell the Art on principle*

*The principal solution is the main solution. The Principal of a school is the Head teacher.*

## **3e) effect/affect**

An effect is a result.

*She explained the effects of the experiment.*

To affect something or someone is to make a difference.

*The constant coughing affected her performance.*

Practice on this is on the next page:

## Spelling: similar word pairs and apostrophes

### A apostrophes 's / s / s'

#### Add 's or s or s' as appropriate

1. He is studying for a Master\_\_ degree.
2. Brunel offers a wide range of Master\_\_ degrees.
3. We try to promote both women\_\_ rights and men\_\_ rights.
4. The lecturer\_\_ seminar was interesting. (one lecturer)
5. The student \_\_ party was a great success. (more than one student).
6. He gave me one month\_\_ notice to leave the flat.
7. He should have given me three month\_\_ notice.
8. *He was born in the 1960\_\_ .*
9. *There were six VC\_\_ at the meeting.*
10. *Many MP\_\_ would lose their seats.*
11. *The MP\_\_ seats were at risk. (more than one MP)*
12. *The VC\_\_ diary was full. (one VC)*
13. *The VC\_\_ diaries were full. (more than one VC)*

#### Fill in the blanks with the correct spellings.

### B its/it's, your/you're, their/they're, there.

#### its/it's

14. \_\_\_\_\_ not difficult if you think about it. \_\_\_\_\_ functions are quite limited.

#### your/you're

15. \_\_\_\_\_ mobile is ringing. \_\_\_\_\_ studying at Brunel.

#### their/they're/there's

16. \_\_\_\_\_ a fly in my soup.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ training for 2012.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ lecture has started.

### C to, too and two

19. It's \_\_\_\_\_ miles away.
20. I've eaten \_\_\_\_\_ much cake.
21. I went \_\_\_\_\_ Brighton.
22. I look forward \_\_\_\_\_ seeing you.
23. It's \_\_\_\_\_ cold in here.
24. I want \_\_\_\_\_ do it.

**D practice/ise, advice/ise, licence/license, device/devise**

25. He needed a lot of \_\_\_\_\_. **practice/ise**
26. He \_\_\_\_\_ playing the violin three times a week. **practice/ise**
27. She asked me for some \_\_\_\_\_. **advice/ise**
28. I \_\_\_\_\_ her to work hard. **advice/ise**
29. The restaurant had not been \_\_\_\_\_ to sell alcohol. **licence/license**
30. I lost my driving \_\_\_\_\_. **licence/license**
31. Together, we \_\_\_\_\_ a cunning plan. **device/devise**
32. That is a complicated \_\_\_\_\_. **device/devise**

**E dependent/dependant**

33. Many students at Brunel live here with their \_\_\_\_\_.
34. He is not an in \_\_\_\_\_ thinker: he is \_\_\_\_\_ on his friends to analyse situations for him.

**F stationery/stationary**

35. If you stand still, you are \_\_\_\_\_.
36. \_\_\_\_\_ is for the office.

**G principle/principal**

37. The \_\_\_\_\_ solution is the main solution.
38. She wouldn't sell the Art on \_\_\_\_\_.
39. He was a good man and stuck to his \_\_\_\_\_.
40. The \_\_\_\_\_ of a school is the head teacher.

**H effect/affect**

41. She explained the \_\_\_\_\_ of the experiment.
42. The constant coughing \_\_\_\_\_ her performance.