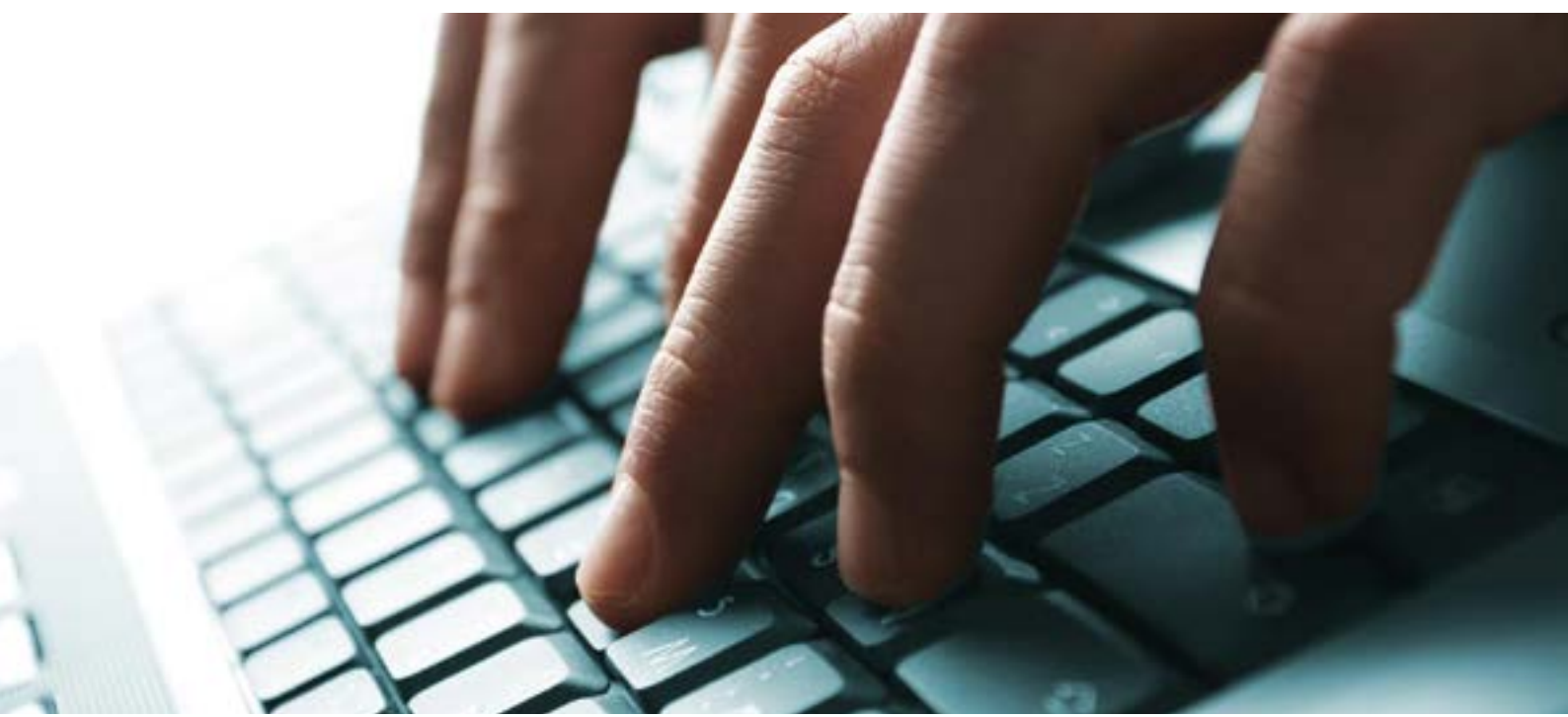


Writing Guide



Assignment Writing
Mechanics of Writing
Helpful Tips for Writing Style

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Want more information?
974 8000 ext 6045
twist@eit.ac.nz

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Assignment Writing

- The information in this guide outlines some important academic writing conventions. Information regarding a tutor's specific preference or expectation relating to presentation of your work should be sought from the tutor.
- Clarification of points in this guide can be sought from Academic Learning Advisors. To make an appointment, ask at the library desk or complete the electronic form on the Library and Learning Services website.

Paragraph Structure

A paragraph is a unit of **thought**, not of length. It is a series of sentences about a single topic or idea. All the sentences in a paragraph must relate to this idea.

- The first sentence of a paragraph is called the topic sentence. Its purpose is to introduce the reader to the main idea of the paragraph.
- The sentences that follow the topic sentence then explain, develop, and illustrate the main idea. These supporting sentences must follow a logical order of development. If the topic or idea changes, then a new paragraph should be started.
- Clearly show the beginning of a paragraph by indenting five spaces or by double-double spacing between paragraphs. The visual division between paragraphs helps the reader to understand the structure of the writing and therefore to process the ideas more easily.
- There are no set rules about paragraph length. A paragraph is seldom only one sentence, because you cannot develop an idea in one sentence.

Sentence Structure

- Sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark (a full stop, a question mark, or an exclamation mark).
- Each sentence should consist of a complete thought and be able to stand alone and make sense.
- Each sentence must have a **subject** (the person or thing doing the action).
- Each sentence must have a predicate with at least one **verb** (doing word).

A sentence is a group of words that is a complete thought on its own. Every sentence must have a **subject** and a **predicate**. The **subject** is who or what the sentence is about, while the **predicate** is what is said about the subject. The **subject** is always a noun, pronoun, or group of words that functions in the same way as a noun. The **predicate** must contain a *complete* verb, but it can also contain any amount of extra information that gives more meaning to the verb.

Subject	Predicate (includes a <i>complete verb</i>)
My daughter	<i>arrived</i> home today.
He	<i>bought</i> a new car yesterday.
Mary and John	<i>went</i> on a camping holiday in the South Island.
Dancing	<i>is</i> good for the soul.
The room	<i>had been cleaned</i> recently.
Moving house	<i>can be</i> very stressful.
Collecting wood for the fire	<i>took</i> a long time.
Looking after the animals	<i>was</i> Jane's responsibility.
Operators of machines	<i>should be given</i> further training.

The above sentences are called **simple sentences**.

A **compound sentence** is one in which two or more simple sentences are joined together, often by the words *and* or *but*.

For example:

My daughter is coming home today *and* the two boys will arrive tomorrow.

Drivers think cyclists are a menace on the roads, *but* cyclists think drivers do not give them enough room.

A **complex sentence** is one in which one or more *subordinate clauses* (giving extra information) are added to the sentence.

For example:

The old man, *who was looking very ill*, limped slowly along the footpath.

Although they are bad for me, I love eating chips.

Make your writing more interesting for the reader by using a variety of sentence structures.

Ask yourself these questions to determine whether a group of words is a sentence:

1. Do the words make sense on their own?
2. Are the words a complete thought?
3. Does the sentence begin with a capital letter and end with an appropriate punctuation mark?
4. Finally ask yourself: Are the grammar and punctuation correct?

Mechanics of Writing

Capitals

Capitalise:

1. The first letter of the first word of a sentence.
The woman entered the room.
2. The pronoun I.
John and I are going to the movies.
3. Abbreviations and acronyms, which are words formed from the first letters of certain words.
BNZ USA FBI EIT AIDS YMCA WHO IBM
4. All proper nouns, which include the names of people and their titles, specific places and organizations, and the names of months and days.
Dr Mary Jones, Napier, France, the White House, Tuesday, Students' Association.
5. Headings (refer to page 8).
6. The first word of a sentence that follows a colon.
Both parties agreed on the final result: **There** would be increased participation in meetings by all those involved.

Punctuation

Punctuation helps the reader make sense of what has been written. When we speak, we use not only words but also body language, voice tone and emphasis, and pauses to convey our message. When we write, on the other hand, we need to use punctuation marks to help the reader understand our meaning.

The comma

Use the comma to separate ideas in a sentence, in order to make the meaning clearer:

1. When joining two sentences with a **conjunction**:

For example:

The sun was shining, **so** we went to the river.
I went shopping yesterday, **but** I did not buy anything.

2. When adding extra information to the basic sentence:

For example:

At the beginning

Yesterday morning, I went for a bike ride.
Unfortunately, I fell off and hurt my knee.

In the middle

The woman, who was feeling tired, went home.
The Gentle Annie, an inland route from Napier to Taihape, offers amazing scenery.

At the end

Margaret passed all her exams, to her surprise.
I enjoy eating, especially chocolate.

3. When listing a series of items:

For example:

Marcus made a chocolate cake, a fruit tart, and a ginger slice.
While on holiday, Kiri did a yodelling course, practised the ukulele, and walked the Milford Track.

The semicolon

The semicolon, which can be considered as halfway between a full stop and a comma, has two main uses:

1. Joining two complete sentences that are closely connected in meaning:

For example:

Tania drank her coffee black; Robert preferred his with milk and sugar.
Cats are independent creatures; dogs require more looking after.

2. Listing complex items that contain commas:

For example:

Heather enjoys cooking, at which she excels; cycling, though she goes very slowly; and reading, especially detective stories.

Before going on a long road trip, you should check your car's oil and water, which may need topping up; the tyre pressure, including that of the spare tyre; road conditions and availability, for example, the Manawatu Gorge; and your emergency supplies, which should include a torch that works, first aid kit, and warm clothing and blankets.

The colon

The purpose of the colon is to introduce something:

1. A list:

For example:

To make an excellent chocolate cake, you will require the following ingredients: butter, flour, milk, eggs, cocoa, and vanilla essence.

2. An explanation or illustration:

For example:

Both parties agreed on the final result: There would be increased participation in meetings by all those involved.

3. A quotation:

For example:

During the Oxford Union debate in 1985, Lange made the following well-known statement: "And I'm going to give it to you if you hold your breath just for a moment. I can smell the uranium on it as you lean forward!"

NB: When a sentence follows a colon, start the sentence with a capital.

Apostrophe

The apostrophe has two main uses:

1. Contraction, to show that letters have been left out of a word:

didn't = did not	doesn't = does not	I'll = I will
isn't = is not	wasn't = was not	it's = it is
who's = who is	can't = cannot	

NB: Contractions are not used in academic writing.

2. Possession, to show that something belongs to someone or something:

- For singular nouns, add 's

Christine's computer	= the computer belonging to Christine
the boy's bike	= the bike belonging to the boy

- For plural nouns with final s, just add '

all the dogs' leads	= the leads belonging to all the dogs
the two buildings' windows	= the windows belonging to the two buildings
the students' results	= the results belonging to the students

- For plural nouns constructed in other ways, add 's

the women's coats	= the coats belonging to the women
the children's bikes	= the bikes belonging to the children

- For nouns that do not change their spelling whether they are in the singular or plural, add 's

the sheep's wool	= the wool belonging to one or to many sheep
------------------	--

NB: Do not use the apostrophe with possessive personal pronouns (see p. 21):

his, hers, its, theirs, yours, ours

For example: The car is yours.

The cat washed its face.

That house is theirs.

Parts of Speech

Nouns

Nouns are “**name**” words. They can be names for:

Things:	car, grass, book
Places:	EIT, Taradale
People:	Mary, man, child
Periods of time:	day, month, year, morning, afternoon, evening
Qualities:	kindness, beauty
Ideas:	communism

Nouns can be countable or uncountable.

- Some nouns you can count, e.g., one book or two books
- Others you cannot count, e.g., music. You cannot say musics

Many nouns can be used as countable or as uncountable nouns.

For example:

paper I bought a paper (= a newspaper - countable)
I bought some paper (= material for writing – uncountable)

Some nouns are uncountable in English but are often countable in other languages.

For example:

advice	furniture	weather	information
traffic	news	bread	behaviour

Pronouns

A pronoun is used in place of a noun or nouns.

Subjective Pronouns

A subjective pronoun acts as the subject of the sentence; they are:

I, we, you, he, she, it and they.

For example:

I have lost my keys.

He spends a lot of time on the computer.

They were late for the concert.

Objective Pronouns

An objective pronoun acts as the object of a sentence; they are:

her, him, it, me, them, us and you.

For example:

Sophie gave **me** a gift voucher.

I showed **them** my ipad.

Possessive Pronouns

A possessive pronoun tells you who owns something; they are:

hers, his, its, mine, ours, theirs and yours.

For example:

Mine is on the desk.

His was the best exhibit.

This book is **yours**.

Their flowers are as good as **ours**.

Demonstrative Pronouns

A demonstrative pronoun points out a noun; they are:

that, these, this and those.

For example:

That is a good idea.

These books belong to Jan.

This is the meat I bought from the supermarket.

Interrogative Pronouns

An interrogative pronoun is used in a question; they are:

what, which, who, whom, whatever, whichever, whoever and whomever.

The interrogative pronoun may look like an interrogative adjective, but it is used differently in a sentence. It acts as a pronoun, taking the place of a noun.

For example:

Who left the door open?

What are you doing?

Where are you going?

Who told you to do that?

Indefinite Pronouns

An indefinite pronoun refers to an indefinite or general, person or thing; they include:

all, any, both, each, everyone, few, many, neither, none, nothing, several, some and somebody.

An indefinite pronoun may look like an indefinite adjective.

For example:

Something smells good.

Many like salad with their dinner.

Somebody must have seen the accident.

**Relative
Pronouns**

A relative pronoun introduces a clause, or part of a sentence that describes a noun; they are:

that, which, who and whom.

For example:

The girl, **who** likes swimming, competed at the Commonwealth Games.

You should buy the car **that** you love most.

Hector is a photographer **who** does great work.

**Reflexive
Pronouns**

A reflexive pronoun refers back to the subject of the sentence; they are:

herself, himself, itself, myself, ourselves, themselves, and yourselves.

For example:

I learned a lot about **myself** at summer camp.

They should divide the chocolates among **themselves**.

John made the cake **himself**.

**Intensive
Pronouns**

An intensive pronoun emphasises its antecedent (the noun that comes before it); they are:

herself, himself, itself, myself, ourselves, themselves, and yourselves.

Unlike reflexive pronouns, intensive pronouns are not essential to the basic meaning of a sentence.

For example:

I **myself** do not play sport.

The chef **herself** came to our table.

Adjectives

These **describe/qualify/give more information** about a noun

For example: big, green, beautiful, old, crazy, hungry, noisy

Verbs

They are doing, being, or having words. These words tell what the noun is doing.

For example:

write	I <u>write</u> a lot.
dance	They <u>dance</u> well.
talk	We <u>talk</u> about the news.
remember	Do you <u>remember</u> that?
love	I <u>love</u> learning.
hit	The hammer <u>hits</u> the nail.
own	I <u>own</u> a car.

Adverbs

These words **describe/modify/give more information** about verbs, other adverbs and adjectives.

For example: happily, loudly, slowly, neatly, very, fast

Conjunctions

These link words, or parts of sentences

For example: and, but, because, if, although, or, until, since

Prepositions

These link nouns/pronouns to other words in a sentence. Prepositions go before the noun or pronoun.

For example: to, with, near, of, at, from, under, during, through

Articles

The three articles in English are **a**, **an** and **the**.

Before singular countable nouns you can use **a/an** and **the**.

Instead of an article, uncountable nouns can be preceded by a determiner such as **some/any/much/this/his**.

Interjections

These are words of exclamation and are usually followed by an exclamation mark

For example: Wow! Hey! Ugh! Oops! Ouch!

NB: Interjections are not used in academic writing unless used within the transcription of speech.

Helpful Tips for Writing Style

Sentence Starters and Transitional Words

It can sometimes be difficult to start a sentence or find words to show the relationship between ideas. Below is a list of possible sentence starters, transitional and other words that may be useful.

To introduce	This essay discusses ...	... is explored ...	... is defined ...
	The definition of ... will be given	... is briefly outlined ...	... is explored ...
	The issue focused on ....	... is demonstrated ...	... is included ...
	In this essay, ...	... is explained ...	... are identified ...
	The key aspect discussed ...	... are presented ...	... is justified ...
	Views on range from ....	... is evaluated ...	... is examined ...
	The central theme ...	... is described ...	... is analysed ...
	Emphasised are ...	... is explained and illustrated with examples ...	
To conclude	In summary, ...	To review, ...	In conclusion, ...
	In brief, ...	To summarise, ...	To sum up, ...
	To conclude, ...	Thus, ...	Hence, ...
	It has been shown that ...	In short, ...	
To compare and contrast	Similarly, ...	In the same way ...	Likewise, ...
	In comparison ...	Complementary to this ...	Then again, ...
	However, ...	This is in contrast to ...	In contrast, ...
	And yet ...	Nevertheless, ...	Conversely, ...
	On the contrary, ...	On the other hand, ...	Notwithstanding ...
	Whereas ...	In contrast to ...	That aside, ...
	While this is the case ...	... disputes ...	Despite this,...

<p>To add ideas</p>	<p>Also, ... Futhermore, ... Next ... More importantly, ... Then, ... Then again, ...</p>	<p>Equally important ... Moreover, ... Another essential point ... In the same way ... In addition, ... Firstly, ... secondly, ... thirdly, ... finally, ...</p>	<p>Subsequently, ... As well as ... Additionally, ... Another ... Besides, ... To elaborate, ...</p>
<p>To present uncommon or rare ideas</p>	<p>Seldom ... A few ... Rarely ...</p>	<p>Few is uncommon ... is rare ...</p>	<p>Not many is scarce is unusual ...</p>
<p>To present common or widespread ideas</p>	<p>Numerous ... Several ... Most is prevalent ...</p>	<p>Many ... Almost all ... Commonly is usual ...</p>	<p>More than ... The majority ... Significantly ... Usually ...</p>
<p>To present inconclusive ideas</p>	<p>Perhaps ... There is limited evidence for could ...</p>	<p>... may be is debated may include ...</p>	<p>... might be is possibly ...</p>

To give

examples

For example, ...
An illustration of ...
Specifically, ...
Such as ...
For instance, ...

... as can be seen in ...
... as demonstrated by ...
... is shown ...
As an example ...

... supports ...
... is observed ...
... exemplifies ...
To illustrate, ...

To show relationship

or outcome

Therefore, ...
Hence, ...
After examining ...
... supports ...
The outcome is ...
The relationship ...
The connection ...
... affects ...
... influences ...
... informs ...
... demonstrates ...
The evidence suggests/shows ...

As a result, ...
Otherwise, ...
It can be seen that ...
Subsequently, ...
The result ...
The link ...
... interacts with ...
Thus it is ...
... predicts ...
... presupposes ...
... impacts on ...
These factors contribute to ...

For that reason, ...
Consequently, ...
With regard to ...
It is apparent that ...
The effect is ...
The correlation ...
the convergence ...
Both ...
... causes ...
... leads to ...
...emphasises ...
Considering ... it can be concluded that...

**To present prior or
background ideas**

In the past, ...	Historically, ...	Traditionally, ...
Customarily, ...	Beforehand, ...	Originally, ...
Prior to this, ...	Earlier, ...	Formerly, ...
Previously, ...	Over time, ...	At the time of ...
Conventionally, ...	Foundational to this is ...	In earlier...
Initially, ...	At first, ...	Recently ...
Until now, ...	The traditional interpretation ...	

**To present
others' ideas**

As explained by ...	... states that ...	... claims that ...
However, ... stated that ...	... suggested ...	... concluded that...
Similarly, ... stated that ...	... for example, ...	... agreed ...
Based on the ideas of ...	... defined ... as ...	... relates ...
As identified by ...	... disputed that ...	... contrasts ...
... argues ....	... highlights ...	... demonstrates ...
... found that ...	... identifies ...	... wrote ...
... demonstrated ...	... also ...	... reported
... pointed out that ...	... maintained that ...	... asserts
... identified ...	... also mentioned ...	... emphasises ...
... challenges the idea ....	... showed that ...	... concluded that ...
... proposed that ...	... confirmed that ...	... hypothesised that ...
... explored the idea ...	Based on the findings of ..., it can be argued ...	... goes on to state/suggest/say ...
... expressed the opinion that ...	With regard to ... argued that ...	

Paraphrasing

Definition: The same thought but in different words.

Purpose

- To make clear the meaning of a passage.
- To show understanding of a passage by using your own words and sentence structures.
- To avoid using direct quotations.

How to paraphrase

- Read the passage until you have a sense of the meaning – you understand the passage.
- Identify the main idea.
- Look up the meaning of unfamiliar words.
- Break up long sentences into shorter ones.
- Restate the whole passage; do not just replace some words with synonyms.
- Check back with the original – have you captured the meaning?
- Note down the reference details.

Some tips

- Keep it simple.
- You can start by using the author's name in the sentence: *Wylde (2010) states that...*
or by using different sentence starters: *The issue focuses on...*

A good paraphrase

- conveys the same ideas as the original,
- uses mostly different words with a different sentence structure,
- is relevant to your work,
- is linked to the rest of the text, and
- is referenced.

10 Easy Ways to Improve your Writing

If you would like clarification of any of these writing tips, please make an appointment to see an Academic Learning Advisor.

1. Understand the difference between written and spoken language

When we speak, we use not only words but also body language, voice tone and emphasis, and pauses to convey our message. In contrast, when we write, we need to use clear language and the correct grammar and punctuation to help the reader understand our meaning.

2. Use parallel structure

When you start a sentence using a certain grammatical structure, you must keep to that same structure throughout the sentence.

Correction: X I love eating pizza, reading thrillers, and to ride my bike.
✓ I love eating **ing** pizza, reading **ing** thrillers, and riding **ing** my bike.

X The students learned that the timetable had changed and about the different classroom.
Correction: ✓ The students learned **that** the timetable had changed and **that** they would be in a different classroom.

3. Be consistent in your use of tenses

Do not move between the past and present tense.

X I **stayed** up all night finishing my assignment, and then Susan **gives** us all an extension.
Correction: ✓ I **stayed** up all night finishing my assignment, and then Susan **gave** us all an extension.

X The student **gives** an amazing performance and **collapsed** on the floor.
Correction: ✓ The student **gave** an amazing performance and **collapsed** on the floor.
OR The student **gives** an amazing performance and **collapses** on the floor.

2. The fragment adds extra information to the main sentence and often begins with **which**; it has a subject and a verb but does not make sense on its own. Sometimes, just the **punctuation** needs to be changed and a **capital** letter put into **lower case**.

X The student had misunderstood the question and needed to rewrite her assignment. **Which** is why she was not at the party on Saturday night.

Correction: ✓ The student had misunderstood the question and needed to rewrite her assignment, **which** is why she was not at the party on Saturday night.

X When the concert had finished and the applause had died away. **Everyone** hurried out of the theatre and climbed into the waiting buses.

Correction: ✓ When the concert had finished and the applause had died away, **everyone** hurried out of the theatre and climbed into the waiting buses.

7. Avoid comma fault/run-on sentences

Comma fault (also known as comma splice and run-on sentence) refers to the joining of two sentences by a comma, instead of using a full stop.

X We look forward to seeing you, this will be an excellent opportunity to share ideas on teaching and learning.

Correction: ✓ We look forward to seeing you. This will be an excellent opportunity to share ideas on teaching and learning.

X Please let me know if you can help in this matter, I would appreciate your reply as soon as possible.

Correction: ✓ Please let me know if you can help in this matter. I would appreciate your reply as soon as possible.

NB: Each group of words is a complete sentence and therefore needs to be separated by a full stop.

- Sentences can be joined together using a comma and a conjunction (linking word), such as

and, but, or, nor, so, yet, because, although, e.g.,

It was a beautiful day, **so** we went to the beach.

I went to town yesterday, **but** I didn't buy anything.

- When two sentences are closely related or reflect each other, they can also be joined together by a semicolon, instead of using a full stop.

X I find writing essays difficult, this is because I usually leave them to the last minute.

Correction: ✓ I find writing essays difficult; this is because I usually leave them to the last minute.

X Drivers think cyclists are a menace on the roads, cyclists think drivers don't give them enough room.

Correction: ✓ Drivers think cyclists are a menace on the roads; cyclists think drivers don't give them enough room.

NB: The group of words on either side of the semicolon must be able to stand alone as a sentence. Remember, before the words **however** and **therefore**, you must use a semicolon or a full stop.

8. Use the comma correctly, especially in the following ways:

- After an introductory word or group of words, e.g.,

However, the line of argument is clear and consistent.

When he had finished his assignment, Marcus watched a DVD.

In 1969, man landed on the moon for the first time.

- Between the two parts of a compound sentence (one in which two or more simple sentences are joined together), e.g.,

Drivers think cyclists are a menace on the **road**, **but** cyclists think drivers don't give them enough room.

Women live longer than **men**, **and** they visit the doctor more often.

The tutor gave the students a month to complete their **assignments**, **yet** many had not finished by the due date.

9. Use clear language

Be careful using the following pronouns: **it**, **they**, and **this**.

- X Education is essential for all children, and financial stability is important for everyone. The Government should provide **it**.

What should the Government provide, education or financial stability?

Correction: ✓ The Government should provide both of these essentials.

- X The boss asked the workers to tidy up before the visitors arrived, so that **they** would enjoy the experience.

Who would enjoy the experience, the workers or the visitors?

Correction: ✓ The boss asked the workers to tidy up before the visitors arrived, so that the visitors would enjoy the experience.

- X Rob worked hard and achieved his degree, supported throughout by his wife. This has led to his gaining a new job in the farming sector.

What has led to the new job: hard work, achieving a degree, or his wife's support?

Correction: ✓ Rob worked hard and achieved his degree, supported throughout by his wife. All three factors have led to his gaining a new job in the farming sector.

10. Use the correct word

- **Your** means *belonging to you*, e.g., **Your** slip is showing.
- **You're** is a contraction of *you are*, e.g., **You're** a genius.

- **Whose** means *belonging to whom*, e.g., **Whose** car has its lights on?
- **Who's** is a contraction of *who is*, e.g., **Who's** going to make the coffee?

- **Their** means *belonging to them*, e.g., **Their** car was stolen last night.
Their is NEVER followed by *is, are, was, were, will, should, would, or could*.
- **There** is used before the above words, e.g., **There** was an earthquake this morning.
There often refers to a *place*, e.g., John lives **there**.
- **They're** is a contraction of *they are*, e.g., They're coming for dinner.

- **Its** means *belonging to it*, e.g., The cat ate **its** dinner.
- **It's** is a contraction of *it is* or *it has*, e.g., **It's** a beautiful day. **It's** been done.

- **Being** is a present participle and follows *is, are, was, and were*, e.g., She **was being** silly.
- **Been** is a past participle and follows *has* or *have*, e.g., They **have been** well taught.

- **Where** is to do with *place*, e.g., Home is **where** I can relax.
- **Were** is the past plural of the verb 'to be', e.g., The children **were** cheerful and relaxed.
- **We're** is a contraction of *we are*, e.g., We're now living in Otaki.

- **Affect** is a *verb*, meaning to influence or cause to change, e.g., Rain **affects** my mood.
- **Effect** is a *noun*, meaning the influence or the result, e.g., The **effect** of divorce on children can be huge.

- **Lose** is a *verb*, meaning to be unable to find something or to have something taken away, e.g., I often **lose** my car keys. I may **lose** my job.
- **Loose** is an *adjective*, meaning not firmly held or fixed in place, not fitting closely, e.g., These trousers are the wrong size for me as they are too **loose**.

A comprehensive list of easily confused words can be found at www.grammar-monster.com

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