

Adrian Wallwork

English for Academic Research

Grammar, Usage and Style

Second Edition

English for Academic Research

Series Editor

Adrian Wallwork, English for Academics SAS
Pisa, Italy

This series aims to help non-native, English-speaking researchers communicate in English. The books in this series are designed like manuals or user guides to help readers find relevant information quickly, and assimilate it rapidly and effectively. The author has divided each book into short subsections of short paragraphs with many bullet points.

Adrian Wallwork

English for Academic Research: Grammar, Usage and Style

Second Edition

 Springer

Adrian Wallwork
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Introduction

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

All those in academia (students, researchers, professors) who use English to write research papers, proposals, letters, CVs etc.

EAP teachers, scientific editors who revise papers written by non-native researchers.

ENGLISH LEVEL REQUIRED

Upper Intermediate to Advanced.

WHAT IS NEW WITH RESPECT TO THE FIRST EDITION?

Four new chapters: ChatGPT (Chapter 18), machine translation (Chapter 16), online applications (Grammarly, Reverso, QuillBot, Ludwig) for checking your English (Chapter 11), usage of personal pronouns: *he, she, they* (Chapter 10). For the sake of brevity, I have sometimes used the term ‘bot’ to refer to ChatGPT and similar tools.

Layout: **correct** and **incorrect** examples are now in **blue** and **red** fonts.

STRUCTURE OF BOOK AND CHAPTERS

This book is divided into 18 chapters each covering a broad area of English usage. You can also search by using the Index at the back of the book.

Contents

1	Abbreviations, acronyms, and punctuation	1
1.1	Abbreviations	1
1.2	Acronyms: main usage	2
1.3	Acronyms: grammar and punctuation	4
1.4	Apostrophes (')	4
1.5	Capitalization: days, months, countries, nationalities, natural languages	5
1.6	Capitalization: sections and headings	6
1.7	Capitalization: academic titles, degrees, subjects (of study), departments, institutes, faculties, universities	6
1.8	Capitalization: <i>figure, table, section</i> etc.; <i>step, phase, stage</i> etc.	7
1.9	Capitalization: keywords	8
1.10	Colons (:)	8
1.11	Commas (,): usage	9
1.12	Commas (,): non usage	10
1.13	Dashes (—)	11
1.14	Hyphens (-)	11
1.15	Parentheses ()	13
1.16	Periods (.)	13
1.17	Quotation marks (' ')	14
1.18	Semicolons (;)	14
2	Adverbs and prepositions	17
2.1	<i>above (below), over (under)</i>	17
2.2	<i>across, through</i>	18
2.3	<i>already, still, yet</i>	18
2.4	<i>among, between, from, of</i> (differentiation and selection)	19
2.5	<i>at, in, to</i> (location, state, change)	20
2.6	<i>at, in and on</i> (time)	21
2.7	<i>at, to</i> (measurement, quality)	22
2.8	<i>before, after, beforehand, afterwards, first</i> (time sequences)	22

2.9	<i>beside, next to, near (to), close to</i> (location)	23
2.10	<i>by</i> and <i>from</i> (cause, means and origin)	23
2.11	<i>by, in, of</i> (variations); <i>by</i> and <i>within</i> (time)	24
2.12	<i>by now, for now, for the moment, to date, until now, so far</i>	25
2.13	<i>during, over</i> and <i>throughout</i> (time)	26
2.14	<i>for, since, from</i> (time)	26
2.15	<i>in, now, currently, at the moment, historically</i>	27
2.16	<i>in, inside, within</i> (location)	28
2.17	<i>of</i> and <i>with</i> (materials, methods, agreements)	28
3	Articles: <i>a / an / the / zero</i> article	31
3.1	Indefinite article: <i>a</i> versus <i>an</i>	31
3.2	Indefinite article: <i>a</i> vs <i>an</i> , use with acronyms	32
3.3	Indefinite article: <i>a / an</i> vs <i>one</i>	33
3.4	Indefinite article vs definite article: generic vs specific	34
3.5	<i>a / an, the</i> , possessive pronoun: parts of the body	35
3.6	Definite article (<i>the</i>): specific vs general	36
3.7	Zero article: main usage	37
3.8	Zero article vs <i>a / an</i>	38
3.9	Definite article vs zero article: measurements	39
3.10	Months, years, decades and centuries	40
3.11	Nationalities, countries, languages	40
3.12	Other uses of the definite article	41
3.13	Other uses of the zero article	42
3.14	Cases where the definite article is used in English but perhaps not in your language	42
4	Genitive: the possessive form of nouns	43
4.1	Very general rules for the genitive	43
4.2	Periods of time	43
4.3	Position of the 's with authors and referees	44
4.4	Names + theories, instruments etc	45
4.5	Companies and politicians	46
4.6	Universities, departments, institutes etc	46
4.7	Animals	47
4.8	Inanimate objects	47
5	Infinitive versus gerund (-ing form)	49
5.1	Infinitive	49
5.2	<i>in order to</i>	50
5.3	Gerund (-ing form): usage	51
5.4	Ambiguity with the gerund	51
5.5	<i>by</i> vs <i>thus</i> + gerund to avoid ambiguity	53
5.6	Prefer <i>which</i> or <i>that</i> to the -ing form	54
5.7	Verbs: infinitive vs gerund	55

5.8	Verbs that take both infinitive and gerund, but with a difference in meaning.	56
5.9	Verbs that require person / thing + infinitive	57
5.10	Active and passive form: with and without infinitive	58
5.11	Imperative form	58
6	Link words	61
6.1	<i>about, as far as ... is concerned</i>	61
6.2	<i>also, in addition, as well, besides, moreover</i>	62
6.3	<i>also, as well, too, both, all: use with not</i>	63
6.4	<i>although, even though vs even if</i>	63
6.5	<i>and, along with – avoiding ambiguity</i>	64
6.6	<i>as versus as it</i>	64
6.7	<i>as vs like (unlike)</i>	65
6.8	<i>because, why, due to, owing to, since, as</i>	65
6.9	<i>both ... and, either ... or</i>	66
6.10	<i>e.g., i.e., and etc.</i>	66
6.11	<i>e.g. vs for example</i>	67
6.12	<i>for this reason vs for this purpose, to this end</i>	68
6.13	<i>the former; the latter</i>	69
6.14	<i>however, although, but, yet, despite, nevertheless</i>	69
6.15	<i>in contrast with vs compared to, by comparison with</i>	70
6.16	<i>instead, on the other hand, whereas, on the contrary</i>	71
6.17	<i>that, which, who, whose</i>	72
6.18	<i>that vs which and who</i>	72
6.19	<i>thus, therefore, hence, consequently, so, thereby</i>	73
7	Measurements and numbers, abbreviations, symbols, comparisons, use of articles	75
7.1	How to write and say numbers.	75
7.2	Words vs numerals: basic rules	76
7.3	When 1–10 can be used as numerals rather than words	78
7.4	Making numbers plural	78
7.5	Singular or plural verbs with numbers	79
7.6	Decimals and whole numbers	80
7.7	Abbreviations, symbols, percentages, fractions, and ordinals	80
7.8	Abbreviations and symbols in the humanities	81
7.9	Measurements: adjectives, nouns and verbs	82
7.10	Comparatives and superlatives: <i>-er, -est</i> , irregular forms	82
7.11	Comparisons of (in)equality	83
7.12	Ranges of values and use of hyphens.	84
7.13	<i>once, twice vs one time, two times</i>	85
7.14	Ordinal numbers, <i>-nd, -rd, -th</i> , Latin numbers.	85
7.15	Dates	86

8	Modal verbs: <i>can, may, could, should, must</i> etc.	87
8.1	Present and future ability and possibility: <i>can</i> versus <i>may</i>	87
8.2	Impossibility and possibility: <i>cannot</i> versus <i>may not</i>	88
8.3	Ability: <i>can, could</i> versus <i>be able to, manage, succeed</i>	89
8.4	Deductions and speculations about the present: <i>must, cannot, should</i>	90
8.5	Deductions and speculations: <i>could, might (not)</i>	90
8.6	Present obligations: <i>must, must not, have to, need</i>	91
8.7	Past obligation: <i>should have + past participle, had to, was supposed to</i>	92
8.8	Obligation and recommendation: <i>should</i>	92
9	Nouns: countable vs uncountable, plurals	95
9.1	Countable nouns: use with articles	95
9.2	Singular countable nouns: with and without <i>a / an</i>	96
9.3	Uncountable nouns: general rules	97
9.4	Uncountable nouns: specific rules	98
9.5	Regular plurals	99
9.6	Irregular plurals	100
9.7	Nouns ending in <i>-s</i>	100
9.8	Nouns indicating a group of people	101
9.9	<i>person</i> vs <i>people</i>	102
9.10	Number-verb agreement	102
10	Personal pronouns, names, titles	105
10.1	<i>he/him/his, she/her/hers</i> vs <i>they</i>	105
10.2	<i>he/she</i> vs <i>they</i> in academic texts	106
10.3	Pronouns in emails, social media (e.g. LinkedIn), Zoom etc	107
10.4	CVs: names and preferred pronouns	107
10.5	Pronouns in the main text of a CV and in social media profiles	108
10.6	Non-binary pronouns	109
10.7	What to expect if your pronouns are <i>they / them / theirs</i>	111
10.8	Using pronouns to reveal your gender when your gender may not be clear from your name	112
10.9	Be careful when spelling other people's names	113
10.10	Checking a person's given name vs family name	113
10.11	Anglo names	114
10.12	Showing respect by learning how to pronounce someone's name	114
10.13	Titles	115
10.14	Addressing a group of people, addressing unknown people	116
11	Proofreading tools: checking the correctness of your English	117
11.1	QuillBot	117
11.2	Ludwig Guru	122

11.3	Grammarly	123
11.4	Reverso	124
11.5	Google Scholar	126
11.6	Check for sexist language	128
11.7	Microsoft Word’s Spelling Checker	129
11.8	British (UK) vs American (US) spelling	132
11.9	Misspellings that spell-checking software does not find	133
12	Quantifiers: <i>any, some, much, many, much, each, every</i> etc.	135
12.1	Quantifiers used with countable and uncountable nouns	135
12.2	<i>any</i> vs <i>some</i>	136
12.3	<i>any</i> vs <i>no</i>	137
12.4	<i>a little, a few</i> vs <i>little, few</i>	137
12.5	<i>much, many, a lot of, and lots of</i>	137
12.6	<i>each</i> vs <i>every</i> , <i>every</i> versus <i>any</i>	138
12.7	<i>no</i> vs <i>not</i>	139
13	Readability	141
13.1	Maximum two ideas per sentence	141
13.2	Information should be in chronological order	142
13.3	Avoid redundancy	142
13.4	Always use the same key words: repetition of words is not bad style or redundant	143
13.5	Prefer verbs to nouns	144
13.6	Avoid ambiguity with <i>which</i>	144
13.7	Avoid ambiguity when using <i>the former / the latter, which,</i> <i>pronouns, etc.</i>	145
13.8	Avoid ambiguity when using <i>as, in accordance with,</i> <i>according to</i>	145
13.9	Be specific referring to other parts of the manuscript	146
13.10	Use the same forms throughout your document	146
13.11	Be careful with the phrase ‘in a previous paper’	147
13.12	Avoid informal words and contractions	147
13.13	Use verbs + adjectives, rather than verbs + nouns	148
14	Tenses: present and past	149
14.1	Present simple vs present continuous	149
14.2	Past simple vs present perfect	150
14.3	Present perfect: Abstracts	150
14.4	Present perfect: Introduction	151
14.5	Present perfect: referring to the literature	152
14.6	Present perfect: Conclusions	153
14.7	Present perfect: rebuttal letter	153
14.8	Present perfect: problem areas	153
14.9	Past simple vs present simple: aims and procedures	155
14.10	Present simple vs past simple: Results and Discussion	156

14.11	Past continuous and past perfect vs simple past	156
15	Tenses: future, conditional, passive	159
15.1	<i>will</i> for making predictions	159
15.2	Zero and first conditional	160
15.3	<i>if</i> vs <i>when</i>	160
15.4	Second conditional	161
15.5	Present simple versus <i>would</i>	161
15.6	<i>would</i> – other uses	162
15.7	Third conditional	162
15.8	The passive: form	163
15.9	The passive: usage	163
15.10	The active: usage	165
15.11	Dangerous ambiguity with the passive	165
16	Translation	169
16.1	Translation resources	169
16.2	Pre-editing: preparing your text for machine translation	171
16.3	Learn English while you type	172
16.4	Improving your English through machine translators	174
16.5	General mistakes made in machine translations	176
16.6	Typical mistakes made in machine translations of emails	178
16.7	Warning! The quality of machine translations also depends on the source language	182
17	Word order	185
17.1	Subject then verb	185
17.2	Do not delay the subject	185
17.3	Avoid long subjects that delay the main verb	187
17.4	Put direct object before indirect object	187
17.5	Avoid parenthetical phrases	188
17.6	Deciding which noun to put first in strings of nouns	189
17.7	<i>noun + noun</i> and <i>noun + of + noun</i> constructions	190
17.8	Strings of nouns: use prepositions where possible	191
17.9	Adverbs of frequency + <i>also, only, just, already</i>	191
17.10	Adverbs of probability	192
17.11	Adverbs of manner	193
17.12	Adverbs of time	193
17.13	Adverbs with more than one meaning	194
17.14	<i>first(ly), second(ly), then</i> etc.	194
17.15	Adjectives	195
17.16	Use <i>which</i> or <i>that</i> when adjectives follow their nouns	196
17.17	Be clear which noun an adjective refers to	196
17.18	Multiple adjectives	197
17.19	<i>the more ... the more</i>	197

- 17.20 Past participles 198
- 17.21 Shift the negation word (*no, not, nothing* etc.) to near the beginning of the phrase 199
- 18 ChatGPT and Generative AI 201**
 - 18.1 Checking your English at a sentence level. 203
 - 18.2 Checking grammar rules 204
 - 18.3 Cases where ChatGPT gives the wrong answer or the wrong grammatical explanation 206
 - 18.4 ChatGPT to help you write a paper 208
 - 18.5 ChatGPT to help you write a bio, CV or cover letter 210
 - 18.6 ChatGPT to help you write a rebuttal letter. 213
 - 18.7 ChatGPT: Help with presentations. 214
 - 18.8 ChatGPT: Write perfect emails!. 216
 - 18.9 Aspects of writing that ChatGPT will probably not help you with 219
- Full Introduction 221**
- Index 231**

1 Abbreviations, acronyms, and punctuation



1.1 Abbreviations

An abbreviation is the short form of word (example: *etc.* for *etcetera*).

Only use abbreviations (or symbols) for words such as *figure*, *table*, *appendix*, and *percentage* when such words are associated with a number.

See the **figure** / **Figure** / **fig.** below.

See the **Figure** / **Fig.** / **fig.** 6 below.

This value is always expressed as a **percentage** / **%**.

The value fell by **10%**.

Abbreviations of academic degrees are not required when listing the names of the authors of your manuscript.

Psycholinguistics as a teaching aid J Win, **PhD**; A Yang, **EdD**; P Li, **MA**

Psycholinguistics as a teaching aid J Win, A Yang, P Li

For details on the abbreviations used for academic degrees in the UK and USA see:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_degree_abbreviations;

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Academic_degree#Canada_and_United_States.

1.2 Acronyms: main usage

The first time you use an acronym, write the word out in full, followed by the acronym in brackets. The next time it is used within the same section (Introduction, Methods etc.), just use the acronym. But when you start a new section, repeat the full form again before reverting to the acronym. This is because you don't know which section of your paper the reader will read first.

Orders are dealt with on a **first in first out (FIFO)** basis. Blah blah blah. As mentioned earlier, given that we are using a **FIFO** queuing system, we ...

Note that in the above example *first in first out* is recent without initial capitalization. In fact, it is NOT a rule that each word has to begin with a capital letter..

Orders are dealt with on a **First In First Out (FIFO)** basis.

We used Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to ...

We used analysis of variance (ANOVA) to ...

Check with Google Scholar (**11.5**) to see whether initial capital letters are required for your specific case.

On the other hand, each letter of the acronym itself is usually capitalized, except when one of the letters in the acronym is a preposition (typically *of*).

Users require a **personal identification number (PIN)** to access any **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** files.

The quality-of-service (**QoS**) requirements for ...

The written full form of an acronym may or may not require initial capital letters. There are no rules for this, again check on Google Scholar.

We are part of a **NASA / Nasa** project.

Acronyms that include a number can be found either in upper or lower case (e.g. *B2B* or *b2b* = *business to business*).

Many **peer2peer** applications have now been blocked.

Many **P2P / p2p** applications have now been blocked.

Do not repeat the final abbreviated word in the text following the abbreviation (in the example below *I* stands for *interface* and *N* for *number*).

The **GUI interface** is user friendly. It does not require a **PIN number**.

The **GUI** is user friendly. It does not require a **PIN**.

Be careful of using acronyms that exist in your own language but not in English. Put the meaning of the acronym before the acronym itself. If necessary also include the nationality.

This paper describes a **CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research)** study of ...

This paper describes a study by the **French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS)** of ...

If the acronym is unlikely to be known to your readers, then provide an explanation of what it stands for. This does not need to be a literal translation. There is little point in putting the form in your own language as readers will not understand its meaning unless they happen to speak your language.

Italian citizens are subject to various taxes, the most important being **Irpef**.

Italian citizens are subject to various taxes, the most important being **IRPEF (Imposta sul Reddito delle Persone Fisiche – tax on the income of physical persons)**.

Italian citizens are subject to various taxes, the most important being **IRPEF, which is a tax on personal income**.

Ensure that you use the English form of an acronym when referring to an international entity, e.g. **EU – European Union**, not **UE – Union européenne**.

This is an **EU / UE** law.

1.3 Acronyms: grammar and punctuation

Acronyms, like all nouns, respect the normal rules of grammar. If an acronym refers to a countable entity it requires an article when used in the singular.

We used **a PC**.

We used **PC**.

The plural of an acronym is formed by adding an *s*. Do not put an apostrophe before the plural form.

Four **PCs / PC** in series were needed in order to make the calculation.

This book is intended for non-native English teachers (hereafter **NNETs / NNET**).

In the 2020s, vinyl and cassette tapes made a comeback, but not **CDs / CD's**.

The letters of an acronym are not separated by periods (.). However, some authors write U.K. and U.S.A. rather than UK and USA.

The **USA** and the **UK** are allies.

The **U.S.A.** and the **U.K.** are allies.

1.4 Apostrophes (')

The main use of the apostrophe is to form the genitive (**Chapter 4**).

Smith's paper on the immorality of right-wing voters (Smith, 2024).

Do not use an apostrophe to make acronyms and dates plural.

All my student have **PhDs / PhD's**.

Our institute was founded in the **1980 / 1980's**.

Contracted forms are not generally used in research manuscripts.

Let us / Let's now turn to Theorem 1 where we **will / we'll** learn that **it is/ it's** essential to ...

The experiment **cannot / could not** be repeated.

The experiment **can't / couldn't** be repeated.

1.5 Capitalization: days, months, countries, nationalities, natural languages

Days, months, countries, nationalities and languages all have an initial capital letter.

The new versions in **english** and **arabic** will be released on **monday**, **10 march** throughout **egypt** and **saudi arabia**.

The new versions in **English** and **Arabic** will be released on **Monday**, **10 March** throughout **Egypt** and **Saudi Arabia**.

Be careful with the use of *north(ern)*, *south(ern)*, *east(ern)* and *west(ern)*. These only require initial capitalization when these are official regions shown on a map or atlas. For example, *North Korea* and *South Korea* are two separate nations, whereas *northern England* and *southern England* are indistinct geographical areas rather than separate countries

This species tends to be found in the **north** / **North** and **west** / **West** of the island.

The languages spoken in **northern** / **Northern Turkey** are quite disparate.

This species is found in **South Japan**, **East India** and some parts of **south America**.

This species is found in **North Korea**, **East Timor**, and some parts of **South America**.

When you want to refer to a geographical area of a country, then you can use two forms, e.g. *southern France*, *the south of France*. Note that in both cases there is no initial capitalization.

I love it when conferences are located in the **south** / **South** of France.

The following generally have initial capitalization: *the West*, *the Middle East*, *the Far East*. You can write either *the northern hemisphere* or *the Northern Hemisphere* (likewise with *southern*).

Ugter [67] reveals the total lack of morality in the **West** / **west** and compares it to the **Far East** / **far east** where ...

1.6 Capitalization: sections and headings

Use upper case letters for the first letter of all words in the main title of a document except for *a* and *the*; *it*, *and*; and all prepositions (*by*, *from*, *of* etc.), unless they are the first word:

A Guide To The Use Of English In Scientific Documents

A Guide to the Use of English in Scientific Documents

Alternatively, just use the upper case for the first letter of the first word, and the rest in lower case. Section headings tend to follow this format.

A guide to the use of English in scientific documents

Both for titles and section headings, your choice of which words to initialize with a capital will depend on your journal's style. Look at the 'Instructions for Authors' on the journal's website.

1.7 Capitalization: academic titles, degrees, subjects (of study), departments, institutes, faculties, universities

Titles of job positions generally have an initial capital letter, particularly in formal documents (e.g. CVs, biographies for conferences) and when the position is held only by one person (in such cases *a* / *an* is not required). If the position is held by more than one person (*a* / *an* required), then initial capitals are not necessary though they may still be found.

She is now Associate Professor at Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

He is an associate professor at Nanjing University of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

Titles of degrees that are followed by the subject of study have an initial capital letter.

Short resume: Professor Wang has a Bachelor of Arts in medicine, and a Master's in alternative medicine.

From 1891 to 1931 he was Professor of **M**athematics and **D**escriptive **G**eometry at the Technical University of Munich.

Subjects (mathematics, anthropology, history) have no initial capitalization when they are being talked about as subjects of study. However, when they are part of the name of a department, institute or faculty, they require initial capitalization.

The terms *department*, *institute*, *faculty* and *university* (and similar words) only require capitalization when referring to a specific department, university etc.

He studied **m**athematics and **i**nformation **e**ngineering before doing his Ph.D.

The **D**epartment of **S**ociology offers the following courses: ...

Our **d**epartment offers the following courses: ...

The **F**aculty of **E**conomics at the University of Bangkok has a long history of ...

Courses typically offered by **e**conomics **f**aculties and **e**ngineering **f**aculties include:

1.8 Capitalization: *figure, table, section etc.*; *step, phase, stage etc.*

Capitalize the first letter when you refer to numbered sections, figures, tables, appendices, schedules, clauses, steps, phases, stages etc.

See **Section 2 / section 2** for further details.

See **Step 1** above.

Do not capitalize the first letter of *section, figure, table, appendix, schedule, clause, stage* etc. when there is no number associated.

See the **Appendix** for further details.

See the **appendix** for further details.

See **Appendix 2** for further details

1.9 Capitalization: keywords

In some documents, such as specifications and contracts, you may need to distinguish between different research units, users, projects, products etc. In such cases, initial capitalization is useful to make these keywords stand out for the reader.

There are two types of user. Hereafter they will be referred to as **User A** and **User B**.

This will be the task of **Research Unit 1**.

The two parties shall be referred to as the **Vendor** and the **Supplier**.

1.10 Colons (:)

The most common use of a colon in a research paper is to introduce a list.

The following countries were involved in the **treaty: Turkey, Armenia ...**

Use a colon to divide up a two-part title of a paper or presentation. The word following the colon can either be capitalized or not. In such cases, a dash (1.13) could be used instead of a colon.

Communicative language **teaching: The** state of the art

Space **debris: the** need for new regulations

Ethical management in **banking – does** the presence of females make the difference?

A colon may be useful to highlight a contrast.

X can be used as an **identifier: Y** cannot.

1.11 Commas (,): usage

Use a comma:

To separate two dependent clauses. This is often the case with clauses introduced by *if*, *when*, *as soon as*, *after* etc.

When the specimen is **dry**, **remove** it from the recipient.

To avoid initial confusion on the part of the reader. For example, in the sentence below it initially seems that the water boils the specimen.

If the water **boils the** specimen will be ruined.

If the water **boils**, **the** specimen will be ruined.

If you have a list more than two items use a comma before *and*. The comma highlights that the penultimate and last element are separate items.

There are three advantages of this: costs are lower, deadlines **and** other constraints are more easily met **and** customers are generally happier.

There are three advantages of this: costs are lower, deadlines **and** other constraints are more easily met, **and** customers are generally happier.

After sentences that begin with an adverb that is designed to attract the reader's attention (e.g. *clearly*, *interestingly*) or a link word that indicates you are adding further information or talking about a consequence (e.g. *consequently*, *in addition*).

Surprisingly the results were not in agreement with any of the hypotheses. **Moreover** in many cases they were the exact opposite of what had been expected.

Surprisingly, the results were not in agreement with any of the hypotheses. **Moreover**, in many cases they were the exact opposite of what had been expected.

In non-defining relative clauses (6.17, 6.18).

The **Thames**, which runs through **London**, is England's longest river.

The Thames **which runs through London** is England's longest river.

1.12 Commas (,): non usage

Commas should be avoided or limited if the sentence contains:

Twenty words or more. Consider rearranging the sentence or writing two separate sentences.

If, when the iodine solution is added to **food, it** does not turn this **color, this** indicates that starch is not present in the food.

If the iodine solution does not turn to this color when added to a **food, this** indicates that starch is not present in the food.

A series of very short phrases all separated by commas. Consider rearranging the sentence into longer phrases with fewer commas.

This application, **which** was developed specifically for this purpose, **can** be used on most platforms **for example XTC and B4ME, it** can also be used with ...

This application was developed specifically for this purpose. It can be used on most platforms, **for example XTC and B4ME. It** can also be used with ...

A long a list of items, which itself contains subgroups. It is better to use semicolons to separate the various subgroups.

We used various sets of characters: A, B and C, D, E and F and X, Y and Z.

We used various sets of characters: A, B and **C; D, E and F; and** X, Y and Z.

A series of nouns where the first and second noun are not related. Instead, begin a new sentence after the first noun, otherwise the reader will think that the nouns are all part of the same series.

Each row in the page represents an individual **record, the** information and the features provided enable the user to control, monitor and edit the records created.

Each row in the page represents an individual **record. The** information and the features provided enable the user to control, monitor and edit the records created.

In a defining relative clause (**6.17, 6.18**).

The **student, that** gets the top marks is awarded the prize.

The **student that** gets the top marks is awarded the prize.