

GEN E205F

Module 1

**Skills and strategies for
academic writing**

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Introduction

Module 1 is intended to refresh your skills in academic writing, and perhaps add some extra guidance, before we focus on the specific tasks in the IELTS Writing test in *Module 5*.

This module aims to ensure that you have a good understanding of some general structures and stylistic devices that are necessary for writing academic English. We encourage you to revise and sharpen your existing knowledge, and to explore the examples of academic writing included here. In the module, you are given many opportunities to practise drafting, editing, and revising sentences and paragraphs that are written for a *higher education* context.

More specifically, you will:

- revise important features of English sentences focusing in particular on complex sentences using coordination and subordination;
- think carefully about the nature and structure of paragraphs;
- organize paragraphs by using discourse markers, referencing and consistent use of tenses;
- think about how to create the formal register (or style) of academic writing;
- revise key punctuation skills and spelling strategies; and
- look carefully at a number of common errors, including sentence fragments and develop some strategies for avoiding them.

The sentences and paragraphs used as examples are based mainly on the topic of *health and medicine*. We hope that these examples provide you with some useful vocabulary, as well as good models of academic style. This vocabulary *might* be useful in the IELTS test – but please note that, since we *do not know what topics you will be given*, there is no guarantee that you will be asked to write, read or talk about health or medical issues.

Note

In this and all the other modules, feedback on most of the activities is provided at the end of the module.

Sentences

Successful academic writing begins with being able to write clear and correct sentences. In this first section of the module, we look at the basic components of a sentence, and then explore how complex sentences are created. We conclude by reviewing the important element of verb tense in sentences.

Subject and predicate

The basic sentence consists of a subject and predicate:

The patient / died.

The doctor / entered the room.

A subject consists of a noun or noun phrase (e.g. 'the patient', 'the doctor') and the predicate contains a verb ('died', 'entered') and can contain objects or phrases governed by the verb ('the room'). The predicate provides information about the subject, such as what the subject is doing or is like.

Noun phrases

Noun phrases are not just simple nouns, but take a variety of forms. Here are a few:

Miss Jameson

they

dieting

to live long

what to tell your doctor

how to take care of your teeth

Two or more sentences can be joined into one larger unit by means of *coordination* or *subordination*.

Coordination

We use conjunctions to coordinate (or link) sentences. The principal coordinating conjunctions are 'and', 'but' and 'or':

No one expected SARS *and* even doctors were afraid.

Treatments were developed *but* the poor could not afford them.

Sufferers can take medicine *or* try acupuncture.

Subordination

We also use conjunctions to subordinate (or join) two short sentences into a longer *complex* sentence. In such a sentence, one half usually has more meaning or importance than the other. For example, in the following sentence, the second half carries the stronger meaning:

Although there has been a great deal of research, *a vaccine has not yet been found.*

Important *subordinating conjunctions* that are used to link short sentences into complex sentences include:

| | | | | |
|----------|---------|---------|-------|-------|
| after | because | so that | where | whose |
| although | before | that | which | |
| as | since | when | while | |

Here are some examples:

After the disease has been identified, treatment can begin.

Although it is not usually fatal, diabetes is still a very serious illness.

As medical research is so costly, subsidies may be necessary.

A very efficient reporting system is needed *because* disease can travel fast in a globalized world.

Before patients undergo treatment, they must give their consent.

Since people are living longer, health care costs are going up.

Regular screening is needed *so that* the cancer can be detected early.

Experts say *that* most young people do not take enough exercise.

When you feel hungry, you can eat an apple.

The patient came from an area *where* hepatitis was not uncommon.

Nutritionists recommend food *which* is low in fat.

While people are waiting for treatment, they need to receive counselling.

The drug companies, *whose* profits can be seen in the table, claim they deserve a good return on their investment in research.

These conjunctions are said to *subordinate* because they join clauses by making one the main clause and the others dependent on it. Here is another example (the main clause is *italicized*):

Although the tests have not been completed, as the results are so positive *permission has been given for the wider use of the new drugs.*

Complex sentences that use coordination or subordination are a key element of academic writing. Such sentences allow the writer to express more sophisticated or complicated ideas by linking clauses. They also often help to *depersonalize* a sentence (i.e. they remove direct reference to people doing things), and this is a strong feature of academic writing. For instance, if you look at the example of the complex sentence above this paragraph, you do not know *who* had not completed the tests and *who* gave permission.

‘That’

‘That’ has many uses and is worth revising.

- It is a pronoun:

Let’s return to *that* point.

- It is a subordinator that can be used to join two clauses:

They believe *that* abortion is wrong.

- When a ‘that’ clause is used as the subject, it is usual to extend it into ‘the fact that’:

The fact that heart disease is spreading among women tells us a great deal about modern lifestyles.

- This phrase is also used after prepositions:

Researchers are very worried by *the fact that* viruses seem to be mutating more and more quickly.

- It is a relative pronoun:

We need to adopt lifestyles *that* involve less stress.

Here is the solution *that* we have been looking for.

- It is not normally found in non-identifying clauses:

Having a new organ, *which* is the best solution, may not be possible.

- It can be left out when the relative clause is the object of the verb:

Patients fail to follow the instructions doctors give them.

This may be the answer we are looking for.

That is the breakthrough we are all waiting for.

- It occurs in phrases expressing purpose – ‘so that’, ‘in order that’:

Screening is necessary *so that* treatment can start early.

Activity 1.1

Rewrite each of the following pairs of short sentences to create *one complex sentence*:

- 1 Helping the terminally ill to die peacefully seems good. It is wrong. (Combine using 'while'.)
 - 2 People are living longer. The government needs to provide more health services. (Combine using 'as'.)
 - 3 Cancer must be defeated. Research is needed. (Combine using 'so that'.)
 - 4 Asthma gets worse. Air pollution gets worse. (Combine using 'where'.)
 - 5 We must help poorer countries. Their diseases may spread to us. These diseases may kill us. The cost will be great. (Combine using 'although', 'as', 'and'.)
-

Conditional clauses

An important subordinating conjunction is 'if'. In the case of 'if', tenses are not used to move us back in time (present, past, past perfect), but to suggest probability (i.e. whether something is possible, unlikely, unreal, etc.):

If you take exercise, you'll soon lose weight.

Take more exercise *if* you want to lose weight.

If you have flu, antibiotics are no use to you.

If you had a heart attack, you would want fast treatment.

If the worst came to the worst, you could always go home.

If pollution could be reduced, there would be fewer breathing problems.

If we had used antibiotics sensibly, we would not be facing the present problem.

If the authorities had not acted so promptly, there could have been a severe outbreak of avian flu.

Life expectancy would not have increased so much *if* we had not learned the value of cleanliness.

Activity 1.2

Write conditional sentences using 'if':

- 1 The government should make people save for old age so that they will have enough money for it. ('If the government ...')
 - 2 SARS got out of control because we were not expecting it. ('If we had ...')
 - 3 Imagine a huge earthquake hitting Hong Kong tomorrow. What a massive number of people would die! ('If a ...')
 - 4 Mosquitoes transmit malaria. I wish there were none. ('If there were ...')
 - 5 Eat less meat. We'll be healthier. ('... if we ...')
-

Participles

Participles (nouns or noun phrases using the *-ing* or *-ed* forms) can also be used to subordinate one clause to another. Look at the following examples:

Leading less active lives, we do not need as much food.

Faced with the AIDS crisis, governments became more open about sexual behaviour.

It is very important that the participle refers to the *subject* of the main clause:

Examining the figures carefully, the trend seems to be continuing.

This sentence means the trend is examining the figures, and it makes little sense.

Activity 1.3

Combine the pairs of sentences into complex sentences by using participles:

- 1 People paid more attention to hygiene. People lived longer.
- 2 More people ate fast food. Fast food caused obesity.
- 3 I have taken all these things into consideration. I believe this is the best policy.

-
- 4 Many people have confidence in herbal preparations. They use them every day.
 - 5 The university commissioned the research. The research found a connection between good grades and amount of sleep.
-

Sentence fragments

A sentence must have at least one main clause. If there is no main clause, it is not a sentence, and a full stop should *not* be used. Look at the following complex sentence:

Although many people doubted if the operation would be a success,
the patient survived.

It is the last clause (*in italics*) that makes this a sentence. Compare the sentence above with the following example:

While doctors were puzzled about how the disease was spreading
receiving new patients as they did every day.

This is incorrectly punctuated, as all the parts are subordinate. It has no main clause. Without a main clause, this is not a sentence and a sentence needs completion before meriting a full stop.

Activity 1.4

Combine the sentence fragments and the main clauses below to create one complete complex sentence. Then underline the main clause in each sentence:

- 1 Eye care is provided by opticians. Operating from high street shops.
 - 2 Because the winters are cold. Heating is necessary.
 - 3 Although governments round the world have tried to discourage smoking. The number of smokers has hardly dropped.
-

Sentence adverbials

Sentence adverbials are words or phrases that contain an *adverb*. They are often placed at the beginning of sentences, and are a useful way of expressing the writer's attitude towards what he/she is writing. They are another key element of academic writing. Here are some examples:

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------|------------------|---------------|
| actually | frankly | luckily | significantly |
| controversially | inevitably | most importantly | unfortunately |

This group may also include modal adverbs which express the writer's feeling of probability:

apparently certainly definitely possibly probably undoubtedly

Longer forms may also be used, such as 'without a doubt'.

Activity 1.5

Add 'apparently', 'inevitably', 'most importantly', 'unfortunately', 'without a doubt' to the front of the following sentences:

- 1 The drug turned out to be a failure and the patients died.
 - 2 Given the lack of planning, the scheme failed.
 - 3 Everyone wants to have a happy old age.
 - 4 The diet greatly reduces the risk of heart disease.
 - 5 Although the evidence is not absolutely clear, the worst is over.
-

Connectives

Sentences may be combined, or links created between two sentences, by means of connectives, which include:

| | | |
|---------------|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| alternatively | finally | moreover |
| as a result | furthermore | on the one hand / on the other hand |
| consequently | however | similarly |
| equally | in addition | therefore |

These are not coordinating conjunctions and cannot be used to join main clauses. They should be used with a semi-colon or full stop:

On the one hand, laser surgery can have risks; *on the other*, it can offer a permanent solution.

She stopped eating wheat products. *As a result*, she felt much better.

You can find more about connectives later under the heading 'Discourse markers' in the following section on 'Paragraphs'.

Activity 1.6

Use ‘alternatively’, ‘consequently’, ‘finally’, ‘on the other hand’ to make connections between the following pairs of sentences:

- 1 Sport is certainly good for your muscles and heart. Many people injure themselves playing sport.
- 2 This is the cheapest solution. This, with the other points, makes a very strong case in favour of the reform I am suggesting.
- 3 If you want to lose weight, you can go on a diet. You can start taking much more exercise.
- 4 We have overused antibiotics and used them carelessly. There is a danger they will lose their effects.

Tenses

When you write sentences, it is important to think carefully about the verb tense that is required and the *reasons for choosing* a particular verb tense. This section gives you an opportunity to revise briefly the tense system of English.

You are probably already familiar with the simple past, simple present and simple future (‘will’ + base form) tenses. Some verbs use an *irregular* past tense form (Activity 1.8 gives you practice with the simple past form of common irregular verbs). Let’s start by revising briefly a few important points about how the simple present tense is often used in *academic writing*.

Simple present tense

Remember that the simple present tense is often used to describe *procedures* or *the stages in a process*, and how *something works*:

After graduating from medical school, interns *work* in a hospital for a year.

Optical microscopes *produce* an enlarged image of an object.

Also, if you are describing how one *factor causes an effect* or *changes a situation*, you generally use the simple present tense:

Smoking *causes* cancer.

Poor eating habits adversely *affect* young children’s development.

The simple present tense is often used with the passive voice. This allows the writer to *emphasize an idea, thing or action*, rather than a person:

Many generic drugs *are produced* in India.

Children's development *is adversely affected* by poor eating habits.

Present perfect and past perfect tenses

The perfect tenses are formed using 'have' or 'had' + the past participle. They can be used with the active or passive voices. In academic writing, the present perfect tense is usually used to describe a situation that began in the past, *but that still continues to the present*:

Lasers *have changed* the way that many operations are performed.

(Note: This change *began* 40 or 50 years ago but lasers *still continue* to change the way operations are carried out.)

Compare the sentence above with the following sentence:

Optical lasers *were first used* for eye surgery in 1960. (Note that the simple past, not the present perfect tense is used because the action occurred only once in the past, and *does not continue*.)

Be careful not to confuse the present perfect with the simple past. If you are unsure which tense to use, think about whether the action you are describing occurred only once, or whether it continues to the present time.

The past perfect is used to describe a situation *that began in the past and continued for some time*, and then finished *at a later time in the past*:

Before a vaccine was discovered, polio *had been* a common illness in many countries. (Notice that in this complex sentence, the first subordinate clause uses the simple past because the event occurred once in the past and did not continue, while in the second main clause the past perfect is used because polio was a common illness until the vaccine was discovered but now *is no longer* a common illness.)

Future perfect tense

The future perfect tense is used to describe a situation that *is expected to finish in the future*. It uses 'will' + 'have' + the past participle:

By the end of next year, she *will have finished* her research.

The following table provides examples of the main verb tenses in the active and passive voice.

| Verb tense | Active | Passive | Active continuous |
|-----------------|--|--|---|
| Simple present | 'Viruses <i>cause</i> many illnesses.' | 'Your rash <i>is</i> probably <i>caused</i> by an allergy.' ¹ | 'I <i>am having</i> acupuncture treatment for my bad back.' |
| Simple past | 'The doctor <i>wrote</i> a prescription for the patient.' | 'The diet <i>was invented</i> by a Dutchman.' ² | 'The pain started when I <i>was jogging</i> .' |
| Present perfect | 'I <i>have wanted</i> to learn first aid for a long time.' (NB This suggests that I <i>still</i> want to learn first aid.) | 'The gymnasium <i>has been run</i> by Giles for the last few years.' | 'She <i>has been receiving</i> treatment for about six months.' |
| Past perfect | 'The doctor <i>had already left</i> when I arrived.' | 'The operation <i>had never been performed</i> before.' | 'The patients <i>had been waiting</i> a long time before the doctor arrived.' |
| Simple future | 'You <i>will feel</i> better after a good night's sleep.' | 'Your temperature <i>will be taken</i> every half an hour.' | 'The new stock <i>will be arriving</i> tomorrow.' |
| Future perfect | 'I <i>will have finished</i> my course of treatment by the end of next week.' | 'His treatment <i>will have been completed</i> by next year.' (NB This tense is rare and rather clumsy.) | 'Next April I <i>will have been suffering</i> from diabetes for ten years.' |

Use your knowledge of verb tenses, and the examples in the table above, to complete the sentences in the following activity.

¹ The passive continuous form of the present tense is 'The operation *is being done* by Dr Tyndall'.

² The passive continuous form of the past tense is 'The injection *was being given* when I arrived'.

Activity 1.7

Add verbs to the following sentences, being careful to use the correct verb tense:

- 1 Old age _____ many woes. (bring)
 - 2 Sixty years ago we _____ antibiotics could wipe out disease. Now we _____ we _____ wrong. (think, know, be)
 - 3 It is the health authorities that must _____ if the same _____ again. (hold responsible, happen)
 - 4 By the time the cause of the outbreak was known, thousands _____. (die)
 - 5 The problem _____ ever since the 1980s and shows no sign of diminishing. (grow)
 - 6 I think the government is doing a good job. Every effort _____ to ensure the safety of Hong Kong's food supply. (make)
 - 7 Societies across the world _____ to spend far more on health care for the foreseeable future. (have)
 - 8 We _____ cancer one day. (defeat)
 - 9 Nowadays all of us _____ to lose weight. (try)
 - 10 The flow-chart shows how a case _____ once an emergency call is received. (handle)
-

Irregular verbs

When you are choosing a verb tense, remember to double-check whether it is a regular or an irregular verb. If it is irregular, its simple past and participle form may vary.

Activity 1.8

Complete the following table of irregular verbs.

| Base form | Simple past | Past participle |
|-----------|-------------|-----------------|
| beat | | |
| begin | began | |
| bite | bit | |

| | | |
|---------|---------|----------|
| bleed | | |
| blow | | blown |
| break | broke | broken |
| bring | brought | |
| build | built | |
| buy | | |
| catch | | |
| choose | chose | |
| cost | | cost |
| cut | | cut |
| draw | | drawn |
| drive | | |
| eat | | eaten |
| feed | fed | |
| fight | fought | fought |
| fly | | |
| forgive | | forgiven |
| freeze | | |
| hide | hid | |
| hit | hit | |
| hurt | hurt | hurt |
| know | | known |
| lead | led | led |
| lie | | |
| pay | paid | paid |
| ride | | |
| rise | rose | |
| steal | | |
| teach | taught | taught |
| throw | threw | |
| win | won | won |
| write | | written |

Paragraphs

Paragraphs are groups of sentences that relate to one another in a number of ways and form a separate stage in an argument or description. A good paragraph has a sense of unity. A new paragraph begins when a new argument, topic or point of view is introduced.

Topic sentences

One of the most reliable ways to achieve this sense of unity is to open a paragraph with a topic sentence. The topic sentence usually gives the *main idea* of the sentence and is also normally the *first* sentence in a paragraph. A topic sentence sets the stage for the paragraph and what follows elaborates, expands, explains and justifies it.

Activity 1.9

- 1 Write a topic sentence to start this paragraph:

We should not take antibiotics for coughs and colds, and we should never take antibiotics prescribed for someone else as they may not be suitable for our condition. Furthermore, we should not try to pressure our doctor into giving us antibiotics when he or she feels it is unnecessary. On the other hand, when our doctor prescribes them, we should always take care to finish the course of antibiotics.

- 2 Write a topic sentence to start this paragraph:

People are going to live longer and longer and need more and more care. Hospitals are going to contain more and more high-tech equipment, and a huge variety of operations and types of treatment are going to become available. It may even become possible to personalize drugs to suit a patient's exact needs.

- 3 Write a few sentences to follow this topic sentence:

A good breakfast is important.

Cohesion

A paragraph has to be held together in a number of ways. Paragraphs should be structured in a logical and orderly manner: causes lead to effects; more important points are followed by less important ones; the general is followed by the specific; the theory is followed by the example; and so on.

Activity 1.10

- 1 Arrange these sentences to form a logical paragraph:
 - a When they are stimulated with needles, chemicals are released into the body's muscles.
 - b A bad back that has persisted for months can be cleared up in just a couple of weeks.
 - c Acupuncture points are thought to influence the nervous system.
 - d Acupuncture can be used to treat many health problems.
 - e The effects can be dramatic with a marked reduction in pain and a much faster healing process.
 - 2 Arrange these sentences to form a logical paragraph:
 - a It will also happen because of increased concern about living a long healthy life.
 - b It increasingly seems that it poses disease risks as animal viruses mutate.
 - c This will be partly a result of increased belief in animal rights.
 - d The process will be slow, but this will be the trend.
 - e People will probably eat less and less meat in the future.
 - f For reasons of safety and economy, plant-based farming will be preferred.
 - g Animal farming takes up a great deal of land.
 - h A decrease in consumption of animal fats will help in this.
-

Creating cohesion with correct verb tenses

The tenses in a sentence must be used consistently and appropriately. Switching tenses causes confusion.

Activity 1.11

Sort out the tenses in this paragraph:

The HIV virus is a particularly hard one to defeat. We believe it is infecting various monkey species for centuries, when it suddenly

jumps over to man. Its spread is so fast doctors have no idea what they are dealing with. In the last 20 years, we learn much more about it and we now have treatments that enable people to live with the virus, but we have not yet conquer it. It is our aim to do just that. In another few years we hope we have ways to prevent the virus from infecting us at all.

Pronouns and referencing

To avoid *repetition* and a feeling of sentences being simply put next to each other rather than being integrated with one another, pronouns need to be used, e.g. ‘she’, ‘her’, ‘them’, ‘these’, etc.

Activity 1.12

Improve the paragraph below by using pronouns:

The Student Health Centre opened only five years ago but the Student Health Centre already has a great reputation. Students flock to the Student Health Centre and the students all go away saying how good the Student Health Centre is. The Student Health Centre’s success is largely due to the dedicated work of the staff. The staff are overworked and probably underpaid but the staff are always cheerful and helpful. Their being cheerful and helpful can make all the difference when you come in here on a cold, wet day feeling terrible. A nice cup of tea always awaits you, and while you are drinking the nice cup of tea, Sarah learns all about your symptoms and makes sure the doctor knows all about your symptoms before the doctor even sees you. You will leave with a feeling of warmth as well as some tablets.

Synonyms

We mentioned that pronouns can help reduce the amount of repetition; so can the use of synonyms when used with the pronoun ‘this’:

The popularity of *acupuncture* is growing in the West. Sufferers from back pain readily make use of *it*. This ancient form of *treatment* is also gaining recognition in the control of pain.

The pronoun ‘this’ is often used with a general noun such as ‘problem’, ‘situation’, ‘dilemma’, ‘solution’, ‘condition’.

Activity 1.13

Think of some possible synonyms for the following words:

- 1 government
 - 2 old people
-

Metaphors

Sometimes a text is held together by means of a series of metaphors from one area. For instance, in the following example, vocabulary relating to war is used to create a metaphor of a battle for the topic of obesity:

How can we deal with this crisis of obesity among our young people? I believe that we must take the *fight* to the schools. We must *wage war* on unhealthy eating habits. We will need to use all the *weapons* in our *armoury*: celebrities, films, comic books and competitions. The *battle* will take time and money. The *enemy* is likely to fight back, but for the sake of the younger generation we must achieve *victory*.

Activity 1.14

List words and phrases relating to agriculture which could be used metaphorically in any discussion of a related policy matter.

Discourse markers

Here we offer a rather more detailed look at some of the conjunctions and connective devices that can make a paragraph flow more smoothly. Please think of these as *signposts*. When you drive into a place you don't know, you rely on signs. If they are confusing or suddenly seem to vanish just when you need them, you feel frustrated. Readers feel the same when a writer does not use these devices to guide them around the text.

Here are examples of some discourse signposts that are commonly used in academic writing:

- 1 clarifying – 'that is to say', 'in other words'
- 2 conceding (allowing the other side a point) – 'while', 'although', 'despite', 'in spite of', 'while it is true', 'though', 'all the same'

- 3 contrasting – ‘however’, ‘nevertheless’, ‘but’, ‘still’, ‘yet’, *‘on the other hand’
 - * This one really needs to be highlighted, as it is so commonly misused in Hong Kong to mean ‘furthermore’. The phrase is strongly contrastive. ‘On the one hand’ / ‘on the other’ // ‘on the left’ / ‘on the right’ // ‘here’/‘there’ // ‘black’/ ‘white’. When you use it, check that there is a clear opposition.
- 4 creating focus – ‘as for’, ‘with reference to’, ‘as regards’. Note: be careful about starting a sentence with ‘For’. ‘For asthmatics, they are very unfortunate’ is not correct. ‘Asthmatics are very unfortunate’ is the natural way of writing this. If you have a good reason for establishing the topic first, ‘As for asthmatics, they are very unfortunate’ is possible.
- 5 exemplifying – ‘for example’, ‘for instance’, ‘such as’
- 6 generalizing – ‘on the whole’, ‘by and large’, ‘basically’, ‘in general’
- 7 joining – ‘and’, ‘also’, ‘additionally’, ‘furthermore’, ‘moreover’, ‘as well’, ‘besides’
- 8 moving on – ‘anyhow’, ‘at any rate’
- 9 noting similarity – ‘similarly’, ‘in the same way’
- 10 proceeding logically or signalling cause and effect – ‘therefore’, ‘because’, ‘so’, ‘as’, ‘in consequence’, ‘consequently’, ‘as a result’, ‘thus’, ‘then’
- 11 revealing attitude – ‘luckily’, ‘unfortunately’, ‘sadly’
- 12 structuring – ‘first’, ‘secondly’, ‘fifthly’, ‘lastly’, ‘in the second place’, ‘next’, ‘moving on’, ‘to start with’
- 13 summing up – ‘in short’, ‘in conclusion’

Activity 1.15

Complete the sentences below with the discourse markers from the boxes.

| | | | | |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|----------------|
| as regards | as a result | in spite of | still | that is to say |
|------------|-------------|-------------|-------|----------------|

- 1 _____ all their efforts, they did not find a remedy.
- 2 Better provision – _____, more financial aid – is needed for the mentally ill.
- 3 The policy has not achieved much yet; _____, it is better than nothing.

4 _____ aromatherapy, I can only say that I do not take it very seriously.

5 A far-sighted policy of fluoridation was introduced; _____ dental health has never been better.

| | | | | |
|---------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------|
| because | furthermore | nevertheless | on the whole | such as |
|---------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------|

6 Soya beans are a good source of protein, and, _____, growing them is good for the soil.

7 Researchers have made a good start; _____, there is still a lot to do.

8 Green leaf vegetables, _____ spinach, are very rich in anti-oxidants.

9 These are the arguments for and against. _____, I favour the latter.

10 The situation, _____ of inaction, is deteriorating fast.

To consolidate what you have learned in this section on paragraphs, choose a paragraph you admire from something you have been reading recently and comment on its structure, cohesion and use of discourse markers.

Academic register

The register, or style, of academic writing has a number of unique features. We have already noted that *complex sentences* and *depersonalized sentences* are two key features. The use of adverbials at the beginning of sentences to convey the author's opinion (such as 'apparently', 'inevitably', 'most importantly', 'unfortunately', 'without a doubt') is another tool that writers use to create a more *formal, distanced* academic style.

In this section, we look at some central features of academic style, focusing first on the *impersonal tone* of academic writing.

Impersonal tone

Academic writing has an *impersonal tone*. This tone is achieved in a number of different ways:

- The pronoun 'I' is rarely used, and general pronouns are preferred: 'We can see', 'One notes'.
- The pronoun 'it' is often used with the passive voice: 'It can be seen'.
- Non-human/abstract subjects are often used: 'The trend continued', 'Analysis shows', 'Evidence suggests'.
- The passive voice is used to place the focus on the facts, rather than the observers: 'It can be observed that'.
- Hedging and modality are used (i.e. not being too definite when it is not justified): 'This seems to suggest', 'It appears that', 'It is likely that', 'Speaking generally', 'In general', 'It may be that'.
- Abstract nouns are favoured, such as 'a continuous improvement', 'industrialization', 'implementation'.
- Semi-technical terms are preferred to colloquial language, e.g. 'A steady decline can be noted' rather than 'You can see a big fall'.

Activity 1.16

Rewrite these sentences in a more *impersonal* style:

- 1 Loads of people were buying face masks during the SARS crisis in 2004.
 - 2 The diagram shows us how they make the medicine.
 - 3 Wow, loads of people got flu two years ago!
 - 4 Things got a bit better on the health front this year.
-

Formal vocabulary

Another feature of academic register is the use of more formal vocabulary. Consequently, some of the language used in spoken language (such as contractions: 'I can't', 'we won't') is considered too informal for academic writing. Certain spoken vocabulary is also avoided. For example, the word 'guy' is used to refer to people casually in daily speech, but it would usually not be used in academic writing.

Compare the style and vocabulary of these two examples to see how formal academic writing differs from more colloquial or spoken language:

Hey, you guys, are you coming to the gym? (In this spoken language, the use of 'guys' is appropriate and natural.)

This survey on cardiac health was conducted among 200 guys visiting the out-patient section of Moresby General Hospital. (In this example of written language, the use of 'guys' seems very inappropriate, and clashes with the formal style of the rest of the sentence.)

Activity 1.17

Rewrite the following sentences to replace informal spoken vocabulary and contractions with more formal written vocabulary:

- 1 Unfortunately, the patient's body didn't like the new tissue and he kicked the bucket five hours after the operation.
 - 2 The government should show its commitment to improving the mental health of the community by allocating big bucks towards it.
 - 3 People are crazy if they don't realize that puffing on a cigarette is bad for them.
-

Word sets and collocations

Words naturally belong to sets or groups. Think for a moment about words associated with the environment. You will probably have thought of some of these words: 'pollution', 'habitat', 'ecology', 'protection', 'resources', 'global warming', 'greenhouse gases', 'air quality', 'waste', 'recycling'. A reader would be very surprised if some of these were not found in a piece of writing on the environment. Their presence helps to hold the text together.

Think for a few moments about word groups that you might use to describe the following topics:

- computers and technology

- education and training
- arts and culture.

The following activity asks you to think about word groups related to the topic of health and medicine.

Activity 1.18

- 1 Cross out words that do not belong to the set:

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------|-------|------------|-----------|
| ache | cough | fever | rash | shivering |
| anger | dizziness | milk | runny nose | sweating |

- 2 Sort the following list of words into two logical sets:

| | | | | |
|--------------|----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| ankle | diabetes | mineral | protein | spine |
| anorexia | diet | muscle | rib | throat |
| calorie | gum | nutrition | sinus | vein |
| carbohydrate | lung | obesity | skin | vitamin |

Some words naturally *collocate* (or group together). For example, the words ‘runny’ and ‘nose’ are naturally linked or collocated. It’s important to think about how words combine with each other. For example, the word ‘sore’ is often combined with a part of the body such as ‘throat’ or ‘back’ or ‘shoulder’, but it is usually *not* used with words such as ‘tooth’ or ‘stomach’. Instead, these words collocate with the noun ‘ache’.

Activity 1.19

Think about words that commonly collocate (or combine) with the following words:

- 1 healthy
 - 2 balanced
 - 3 scientific
 - 4 medical
-

Nominalization

We mentioned earlier that academic writing often *depersonalizes* information by removing reference to people. One of the ways that it does this is by using *nominal clauses* (or groups of nouns) to replace people and actions. Compare the following sentences:

Researchers have conducted several experiments to investigate the causes of bird flu.

Extensive research into the causes of bird flu has been conducted.

In the first sentence, the focus is on the researchers, but in the second it is on their *research*; and the writer specifies *what* was done, rather than *who* did it. Notice how reference to the people has been removed in the second example and replaced by a complex nominal phrase: ‘Extensive research into the causes of bird flu’. Academic writing is more focused on describing ‘things’ (such as research, evidence, results or information) rather than on describing the people who produce them.

Ellipsis

Part of academic style is to know what to *omit* as well as what to include. In general, when your meaning is repeated and clear in the context, you can omit a number of words that can be understood by your reader. Here are some examples:

- When you use coordinating conjunctions you can omit articles. There is no need to repeat adjectives or verbs:

Put the vitamins pills and [the] painkillers in the cabinet.

We need new bandages and [new] plasters.

I feel tired but [feel] well.

- When you repeat a verb you can choose to use the auxiliary verb marking tense only:

She was supposed to come at 7:30 but she didn’t [come].

- The same happens with modal verbs. Note also the omission of the subject and object in the second clause:

We want to supply you with free dental care, but [we] can’t [supply you with free dental care].

- When you want to repeat an infinitive, all you need to use is the ‘to’:

I was going to put cream on it, but forgot to [put cream on it].

Activity 1.20

Cross out the unnecessary words in the following sentences:

- 1 Knee injuries and back injuries are especially common among sports players.
 - 2 Most doctors pay little attention to the psychological state of their patients, but they ought to pay attention to their psychological state.
 - 3 Many people make a New Year resolution that they are going to give up smoking, but they don't give up smoking.
-

Punctuation and spelling

As we mentioned already in the section on sentence fragments, punctuation is a very important element of accurate and clear expression. The following points may help you to ensure that you write correctly punctuated sentences.

Some tips for correct punctuation

Commas

Use commas in lists, with a coordinating conjunction to join two main clauses, to mark off introductory phrases and clauses, to make asides, to separate phrases in apposition and for non-defining relative clauses:

She looked tired, depressed and unhealthy.

He examined the wound carefully, and then cleaned it.

Unfortunately, the drug can have unpleasant side-effects.

Feeling rather stressed, she decided to take a break.

If you need an ambulance urgently, call 999.

The figures, if we can trust them, show a steady decline in the number of cases of asthma.

Thomas Finch, the leader of the group, graduated from Cambridge University in 1985.

The herb, which originally came from India, has a very soothing effect.

Colons and semi-colons

Use semi-colons between two main clauses that are closely related in thought:

The situation is urgent; immediate action is needed.

They are useful with a variety of discourse markers, such as 'then', 'thus', 'therefore' and 'however', when they occur at the beginning of clauses:

It is difficult for people to give up smoking; however, they must.

Fast food contains a lot of fat; therefore, it can cause obesity.

Use colons to introduce a list or elaboration:

These are the usual symptoms of the common cold: a cough, a runny nose, a sore throat and a low fever.

I want my life to be a meaningful one: to help people and make a difference to the world.

There is one rule you must never forget: good health is more important than anything.

Apostrophes

Use apostrophes for contractions and possessives:

Let's go. It's a shame. They're waiting for us.
Harry's book My parents' dream

Full stops

Use full stops at the end of sentences. Do not use a full stop until there has been a main verb. Do not try to join main clauses with commas:

Some experts, though not all, suggest hypnotism as a possible, if rather mysterious, way of treating the problem. You must decide whether or not that would suit you.

Activity 1.21

Punctuate this passage and include a semi-colon (a useful strategy for punctuating is to try to imagine that you are reading the passage out loud – long pauses usually require a full stop, and shorter pauses need a comma):

every home needs a medical kit it should contain first aid items such as plasters antiseptic cream and bandages you also need some basic medicines a painkiller something to stop diarrhoea and tablets for a sore throat an eye-wash is also a good idea if you suffer from allergies some antihistamine tablets may be useful keep your medical kit in a dry place one last reminder make sure you replace items once their expiry date passes flush old medicines down the toilet they could be dangerous

Activity 1.22

Correct the punctuation in this passage:

As we have seen environmental pollution, because it affect's the air, which we breathe and the water which we drink, has an immediate, impact on human health. Where the air is full of toxins we can expect: birth deformities, an increased risk of heart disease, and an explosion in breathing disorders? Cancer that ancient enemy of humankind is greatly strengthened, when we flood our bodies with chemicals who's effects we know little of, if we think the cost of cleaning up the environment is just too great. Just consider the cost in health care, if we do nothing, and merely stand back as our habitat becomes one fit, for rats and cockroaches. Rather than humans.

Spelling, like punctuation, is something that is assessed in the Writing section of the IELTS test. You should, therefore, check and edit your spelling as you write. Noted below are some words that are commonly misspelled.

Commonly misspelled words

Look through this list and then do the activity that follows in order to see which words you need to revise:

- | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1 absence | 15 development | 28 necessary |
| 2 accidentally | 16 enemy | 29 obviously |
| 3 accommodation | 17 environment | 30 occasionally |
| 4 achievement | 18 exaggerate | 31 occurrence |
| 5 advertisement | 19 explanation | 32 performance |
| 6 appearance | 20 extremely | 33 prejudice |
| 7 argument | 21 foreign | 34 privilege |
| 8 attract | 22 government | 35 questionnaire |
| 9 beginning | 23 guarantee | 36 recommend |
| 10 business | 24 hygiene | 37 remember |
| 11 column | 25 immediately | 38 sacrifice |
| 12 committee | 26 information | 39 separate |
| 13 completely | 27 knowledge | 40 undoubtedly |
| 14 convenience | | |

Activity 1.23

Correct any spellings that need correction:

- 1 In the abcense of fever, I decided it could not be flu.
- 2 They accidently gave you the wrong medicine.
- 3 This accomodation does not seem healthy.
- 4 To be so fit is quite an achievment.
- 5 Advertisements for dangerous medicines are not allowed.
- 6 His appearance was not healthy.
- 7 There are some good arguments in favour of eating less protein.
- 8 The rubbish may attrack insects.
- 9 The diet is quite harsh at the begining.
- 10 Healthcare is big buisness now.
- 11 The results are shown in the third colum.
- 12 We have a fitness committee.
- 13 Are you completly sure of the diagnosis?
- 14 You can exercise here at your convenience.
- 15 There have been many developements in treatment recently.
- 16 Think of fat as your enemy.
- 17 The enviroment is not a healthy one for children.
- 18 Don't exagerate. You are not that ill.
- 19 What is your explanation of the high pulse rate?
- 20 Her temperature is extremely high.
- 21 Are there many foreign patients here?
- 22 The goverment lacks a clear policy on disease prevention.
- 23 A healthy lifestyle will gaurantee good health.
- 24 We must do something to improve the hygeien at once.
- 25 We'll operate immediatly.
- 26 Do you have any infromation on asthma?
- 27 That's correct according to my knowledge.

-
- 28 Hospitalization will be nesescary.
- 29 Obviously, you must stay in bed today.
- 30 I get colds occasionally.
- 31 We must report the occurance.
- 32 This diet will improve your preformance in the field.
- 33 Some people have a prejudace against herbal remedies.
- 34 Seeing Dr Jones himself is quite a privilege.
- 35 Can you fill in this health questionnaire?
- 36 I recommend you have some physiotherapy.
- 37 Can you rember what medicine you used to take?
- 38 Don't sacrifise your health by studying too much.
- 39 Of course, men and women receive seperate treatment.
- 40 You undoubtly have food poisoning.
-

Easily confused words

Look through this list, read the selected explanations, and then do the activity that follows in order to see which words you may need to revise:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1 accept/except | 14 fun/funny |
| 2 advance/advanced | 15 keep fit/diet |
| 3 affect/effect | 16 lose/loose |
| 4 access/assess | 17 memorize/remember |
| 5 bored/boring | 18 painful/in pain |
| 6 borrow/lend | 19 personal/personnel |
| 7 cancel/postpone | 20 principal/principle |
| 8 common/popular | 21 propaganda/publicity |
| 9 conscience/consciousness | 22 quiet/quite |
| 10 economic/economy/ economics/economical | 23 sporty/sporting/sportive |
| 11 emigrate/immigrate | 24 stationary/stationery |
| 12 eminent/imminent | 25 tasty/tasteful |
| 13 find/look for | 26 up-to-date/updated |
| | 27 weather/whether |

Understanding the differences

Here are brief explanations of the differences between some of these commonly confused words:

- ‘accept’/‘except’ – to receive (e.g. ‘I gratefully *accepted* the gift’) / apart from (e.g. ‘*Except* for one other student, I was the only person in the library’)
- ‘access’/‘assess’ – entry to/measure (e.g. ‘You cannot access the building without a security pass’ / ‘The students’ grades *were assessed* at the end of the examination’)
- ‘advance’/‘advanced’ – noun or verb / adjective (e.g. ‘the soldiers *advanced*’, ‘the army’s *advance* was rapid’ / ‘*advanced* technology’)
- ‘affect’/‘effect’ – verb/noun (e.g. ‘Increasing carbon gases *are affecting* the world’s climate’ / ‘Smoking has many negative *effects* on one’s health’)
- ‘bored’/‘boring’ – past participle / present participle (e.g. ‘I *was bored* by the long lecture’ / ‘The ceremony *was boring*’. Note: If you say ‘I am boring’, it means that you are having a bad effect on other people and you have nothing interesting to say or to share!)
- ‘common’/‘popular’ – frequent/liked (e.g. ‘Traffic jams are *common* in many large cities’ / ‘Madonna is still one of the most *popular* recording artists’)
- ‘economic’/‘economy’/‘economics’/‘economical’ – adjective: related to economics / noun: trade and industry / noun: study of goods, services and money / adjective: being careful with money (e.g. ‘*economic* theory’ / ‘Hong Kong’s *economy* has been growing strongly recently’ / ‘The study of *economics* involves using mathematics’ / ‘an *economical* holiday’)
- ‘fun’/‘funny’ – noun/adjective (The noun ‘fun’ is used to talk about a nice time or something that makes you happy or delighted, e.g. ‘The party was really *fun*’. ‘Funny’ is used to describe something that makes you laugh, such as a joke or a comedy programme. Don’t write ‘Sports are funny’ if you mean to say that you enjoy sports or like sports. Instead write something like ‘I enjoy sports very much’.)

Activity 1.24

Now use a dictionary to determine how these sets of commonly confused words are different in meaning from each other. You may want to write a sentence that uses each word to help you remember the difference.

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 borrow/lend | 10 personal/personnel |
| 2 cancel/postpone | 11 principal/principle |
| 3 emigrate/immigrate | 12 propaganda/publicity |
| 4 eminent/imminent | 13 quiet/quite |
| 5 find / look for | 14 stationary/stationery |
| 6 keep fit / diet | 15 sporty/sporting/sportive |
| 7 lose/loose | 16 tasty/tasteful |
| 8 memorize/remember | 17 up-to-date/updated |
| 9 painful / in pain | 18 weather/whether |

Activity 1.25

Tick the correct sentences in the following list:

- 1 Helping a patient die is against most doctors' principals.
 - 2 We have to decide whether we are willing to pay extra for more comfort.
 - 3 Africa has been severely affected by the HIV virus.
 - 4 No one with a conscience should be willing to accept an organ from an executed person.
 - 5 Dengue fever is becoming more popular.
 - 6 Health care costs are a heavy burden on a country's economic.
 - 7 Eat more tasty green vegetables!
 - 8 Doctors are finding a cure for the disease but so far they have had little success.
 - 9 We are still quite a long way from a solution.
 - 10 The hospitals cannot afford updated equipment.
 - 11 The procedure is no longer as painful as it used to be.
 - 12 As each patient arrives, the doctors in the ER assess the seriousness of their injuries.
 - 13 In advanced societies, a low birth-rate creates a number of problems.
 - 14 I am going to spend tonight memorizing this list of anatomical terms to get ready for my exam tomorrow.
 - 15 The health campaign suffered from lack of propaganda.
-

Editing for errors

We hope that, when you write, you can use the guidance in this module for writing effective sentences and paragraphs. We also hope that you can apply some of the conventions of academic style and punctuation, and correct your own spelling. In addition to applying all these skills, we hope that you can edit your writing effectively by identifying and correcting errors. The following activity should help you in this task. It also reviews some of the points we have covered in this module.

Common errors among users of English as a second language

Activity 1.26

Correct these sentences. Just a few have no mistakes:

- 1 There are alot of old people in Japan.
- 2 According to the article, it says that malaria is one of the biggest killers in the world.
- 3 Although smokers know their habit is bad for them, but they continue smoking.
- 4 This graph concerns about eye care.
- 5 The table gives some informations on heart disease.
- 6 Medical students are difficult to pass their exams in anatomy.
- 7 Even we attract nurses from the mainland, there will be a problem.
- 8 The situation gets worse every day.
- 9 The table shows we are more likely to catch a cold when we are feeling boring.
- 10 In my opinion, I believe health care should be the government's number one priority.
- 11 Despite of the cost, the research should be done.
- 12 AIDS is a terrible disease in the world.
- 13 Students must be teached the dangers of smoking.
- 14 According to these figures, this town lacks of a good hospital.
- 15 At last, I want to discuss the use of face masks.

-
- 16 Nowadays, children are becoming obese.
 - 17 I am like plenty of exercise.
 - 18 The results of a poor diet maybe very severe.
 - 19 Firstly, I wish to establish the criteria for a healthy lifestyle.
 - 20 According to the graph, developed countries spend three times more on health care than do developing countries.
 - 21 The accident was happened in the following way.
 - 22 There are totally five points to make.
 - 23 The problem appears to be much less severe in UK.
 - 24 I wish we can find a cure soon.
-

Reviewing common errors

Here is some guidance on errors which are often made (including some you've come across already in Activity 1.26):

- 1 'a lot' – It is easy to mistype, but there is no form/word 'alot'.
- 2 'according to' – The correct use is to follow the phrase with a source and then give a statement:

According to the survey, nearly 40% of women experience severe headaches at least once a week.

- 3 'afford' – This verb should be followed either by an infinitive or by a noun representing the object or service to be bought:

Not many people can afford to go to private hospitals for heart surgery. / Can you afford the operation?

- 4 'although' – The word must not be used with 'but'.
- 5 collective nouns – These may be used with singular or plural agreement depending on which aspect you wish to stress:

My class play a number of different sports. My class is the best in the college.

In many cases either is acceptable.

Do not confuse collective nouns and the individuals that comprise them. 'Audience', 'committee', 'panel', 'staff', etc. are collective nouns. Individuals are members of them: 'The clinic has twelve members of staff'.

- 6 ‘concern’, ‘concerned’, ‘concerning’ – This family of words causes many problems:
- ‘concern’ (noun, a feeling of worry) – ‘I want to express my concern about the hygiene in the kitchens.’
 - ‘concern’ (verb, involve) – ‘This problem doesn’t concern you.’
 - ‘concerned’ (adjective + ‘about’, worried) – ‘We are concerned about the number of cases of hepatitis in the area.’
 - ‘concerned’ (adjective following noun, involved, relevant) – ‘You must contact the lecturers concerned.’
 - ‘concerning’ (preposition, about) – ‘You’ll find more information concerning our services in this brochure.’

There are a number of other uses. These words must be handled with care.

- 7 countable and uncountable nouns – Learners need to remember which nouns are not usually used in plural form.

Here are some uncountable nouns: ‘accommodation’, ‘advice’, ‘behaviour’, ‘congestion’, ‘equipment’, ‘furniture’, ‘gossip’, ‘information’, ‘knowledge’, ‘money’, ‘news’, ‘potential’, ‘research’, ‘rubbish’, ‘traffic’, ‘transport’, ‘work’.

‘Fish’, ‘food’, ‘fruit’, ‘hair’ and ‘paper’ are usually uncountable.

‘Piece’ can be used with many uncountable nouns: ‘a piece of advice, fruit, furniture, paper, work, ...’

- 8 ‘difficult’ – This word and some related ones (‘easy’, ‘possible’, etc.) refer to processes:

It is difficult to avoid infection.

- 9 ‘even’ (adverb of emphasis) – This word is usually placed just before the word(s) it refers to:

Stanley is even too lazy to walk to the fast food shop. He orders by phone!

This adverb must not be confused with the conjunctions ‘even if’ and ‘even though’:

I’ll lose weight even if I have to run ten kilometres a day. Even though your arm looks bad, it isn’t actually broken.

- 10 ‘everyday’ (ordinary) – This is an adjective:

Exercise is a part of my everyday life.

Do not confuse it with the adverbial phrase ‘every day’, e.g. ‘I take a vitamin tablet every day’.

- 11 ‘exciting’ – This is to represent the common confusion between present and past participle adjectives. The former are active in sense and the latter passive:

The book excites me. The book is exciting. I am excited by the book.

That photograph of me embarrasses me. It is embarrassing. I am embarrassed by it.

- 12 ‘good’ – One is good at something: ‘She is very good at acupuncture.’

- 13 ‘in my opinion’ – Do not follow this overused phrase with any verb of thinking or you will be saying ‘I think I think’:

In my opinion, terminally ill patients should be allowed to die peacefully.

- 14 ‘in spite of’ and ‘despite’ – Both are prepositions. They must be followed by nouns or noun phrases:

In spite of sleeping for ten hours, she still felt tired. Despite the medicine, she still felt ill. Despite the doctor’s advice he went on eating hamburgers three times a day.

There is no form ‘despite of’.

- 15 ‘in the world’ – This phrase must be used with a superlative form (*-est*) to make sense:

Cancer is one of the worst diseases in the world.

- 16 irregular verbs – See the section on irregular verbs if you feel you need revision in this area.

- 17 ‘lack’ – There is a small group of words where the noun is followed by a preposition and the verb of the same form is not. As well as ‘lack’, there are ‘contact’, ‘interest’, ‘love’, ‘stress’, etc.:

I think you are showing a lack of sympathy. We lack an ear specialist in the clinic.

- 18 ‘last’, ‘lastly’, ‘at last’ – The first two mean ‘in final position’; the third means ‘eventually’, ‘after a long wait’:

Lastly, I want to thank Dr Green for his interesting talk. At last the nurse is ready. I have waited two hours for this X-ray.

‘Finally’ covers both meanings.

- 19 'nowadays' – Note that the word must end in *s*. It is not an adjective. 'Nowadays we have new treatments for acne.' In general, it is greatly overused to start essays.

- 20 'like' – The confusion comes between the preposition ('similar to') and the verb ('think nice')

I am like my sister. We are both very tall. I like to keep slim.

The temptation is to write things like 'I am like ice-cream'.

- 21 'maybe' – This is an adverb ('perhaps') and is not the same as the verbal form 'may be':

Maybe I will go for a run. You may be suffering from indigestion.

- 22 'much' – Reserve this word for questions and negatives (like 'any'). Use 'a lot' in positive sentences:

Are you feeling much pain? We haven't much antiseptic cream left. A face-lift will cost a lot of money.

- 23 plurals – In addition to the regular *-s* plurals, the following need to be remembered: 'aircraft', 'analyses', 'children', 'crises', 'criteria', 'hypotheses', 'media', 'men', 'offspring', 'passers-by', 'phenomena', 'series', 'teeth', 'women'.

- 24 'point of view' – Use with 'from'. This is not simply another version of 'in my opinion'. A particular point of view must be meant and mentioned:

From the medical point of view, your case is very interesting.

- 25 strange-looking nouns – Beware of nouns that:

- look plural but are not, e.g. 'athletics', 'news', 'physics';
- do not have (with the same meaning) singular forms, e.g. 'belongings', 'clothes', 'earnings', 'glasses', 'headquarters', 'prospects', 'scissors', 'surroundings', 'trousers'; and
- appear singular but are used as plurals: 'people', 'police'.

- 26 'succeed' – For some reason, this word causes many difficulties. 'Succeed' is the verb, 'success' the noun and 'successful' the adjective:

The surgeon succeeded in removing the growth. The operation was a big success. The treatment was very successful.

- 27 transitive verbs – Some verbs always need an object, e.g. 'He *loved*' sounds strange. 'Discuss' is a strongly transitive verb. 'Let's discuss it/the topic/the question.' Intransitive verbs do not have objects: 'They slept.'

As a passive is formed by making the object of the verb the subject – ‘He loved Jean’ / ‘Jean was loved by him’ – intransitive verbs cannot be passive. Forms such as ‘was happened’ cannot occur.

- 28 ‘totally’ – This is an adverb meaning ‘completely’. Do not confuse it with ‘in total’ (‘in sum’):

The treatment was totally wrong. She had 16 stitches in total.

- 29 ‘the UK’ – Some countries (whose names in some way describe them) need the definite article in front of them: ‘the United States’, ‘the United Kingdom’, ‘the Philippines’.

- 30 ‘wish’ – Wishes are less likely to come true than ‘hopes’. The verbs that follow them are as a result different:

I wish my heart would slow down. I hope my heart slows down soon.

Activity 1.27

Write a paragraph on health and old age. Check the following points as you edit it:

- Each sentence has a main verb, and there are no sentence fragments.
 - Your use of connectives is accurate (be careful of connectives like ‘on the other hand’).
 - Your use of verb tenses is accurate and consistent.
 - You have a clear topic sentence.
 - Your paragraph develops logically.
 - You use discourse markers correctly.
 - You write in a formal written style.
 - You use appropriate vocabulary and groups of words collocate (or combine) correctly.
 - Your use of punctuation is correct.
 - Your spelling is accurate.
 - You have avoided many of the common errors described above.
-

Conclusion

In this module, we looked at four areas of writing, namely:

- sentences;
- paragraphs;
- academic register (or style); and
- learner errors (grammar, punctuation, spelling).

When thinking about sentences, we considered:

- simple sentences;
- complex sentences;
- coordination;
- subordination (including the correct use of participle clauses);
- sentence fragments;
- sentence adverbials;
- connectives; and
- verb tenses and irregular verbs.

When thinking about the paragraph, we looked at:

- topic sentences;
- cohesion at various levels (including the ordering of ideas, and the use of pronouns and referencing, synonyms and metaphors); and
- discourse markers.

When thinking about academic writing, we considered:

- impersonal formal written language versus informal spoken language;
- vocabulary and word collocations;
- nominalization; and
- ellipsis.

We then revised some of the conventions of punctuation.

When thinking about errors that often spoil people's writing, we focused on:

- spelling errors;
- errors arising from easily confused words; and
- common usage errors.

The module ended with writing a paragraph, laying the foundation for the work in *Module 5*, where we explore the *specific requirements of the IELTS Writing test*.