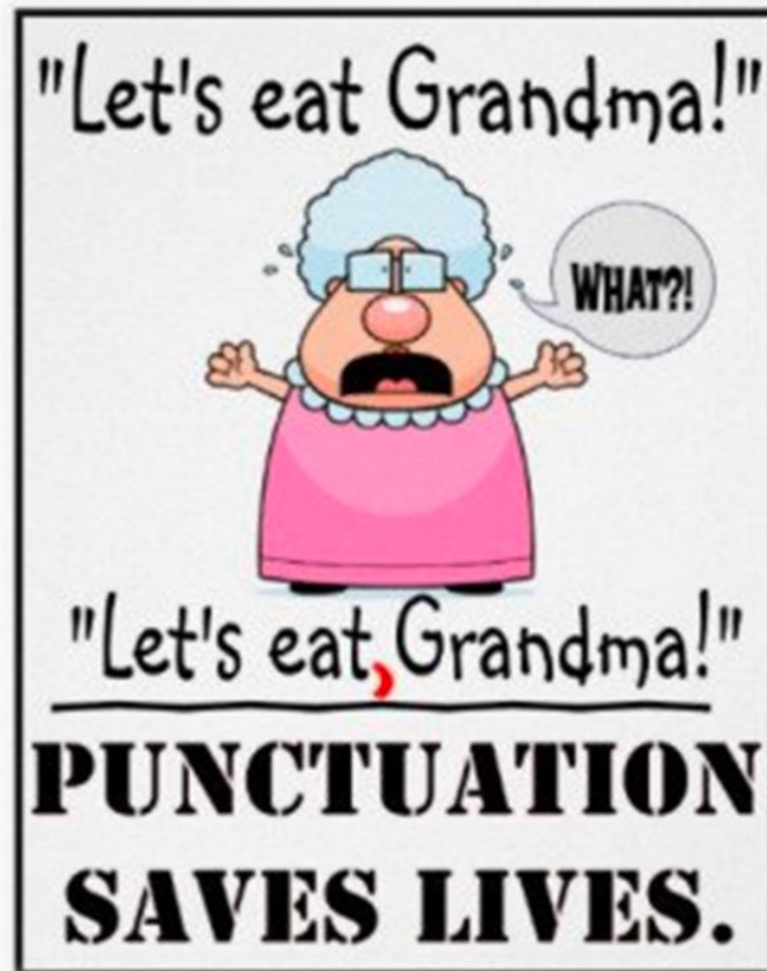


# English Academic Writing

## Module 2.7: Punctuations



# Common punctuations

<b>End marks or terminal punctuation marks</b>	
Full stop / period	.
Question mark	?
Exclamation mark	!
<b>Internal punctuation marks</b>	
Comma	,
Semi-colon	;
Colon	:
Dash(es)	–

# Common punctuations

<b>Other punctuation marks and formatting terms</b>	
Slash(es)	/
Parentheses / brackets	( )
Square brackets	[ ]
Apostrophe	cat's, cats'
Single quotation marks	'word' or 'phrase'
Double quotation marks	"word" or "phrase"
Underlined	<u>word</u> or <u>phrase</u>

# Comma

- important in formal writing
- Misuse of comma -- cohesive problems and misunderstand

## Commas between modifiers

- separate two premodifiers in a noun phrase
  - when the word *and* can be inserted between them
  - **NOT** when the first modifier is descriptive and the second one is classifying

**classifying modifier** : which class a noun belongs to

**descriptive modifier**: is an adjective that tells us what the noun is like.

- He is a **strong** , **healthy** man.
- We stayed at an **expensive** **summer** resort.

# Comma

## Commas and titles

- before or surrounding the name of a person directly addressed
  - *Will you, **Aisha**, fill in that form for me?*
  - *Yes, **Miss**, I will.*     **capitalize the title when directly addressing someone**
  - *Let's eat, grandma.*

## Months and years, addresses

- to separate the day of the month from the year
- to separate city, province and nation in address,
  - *December 5, 2018*
  - *Shenzhen, Guangdong, P.R. China*

## After sentence introductions

- used after the introductory part of a sentence     **inverted sentences**
  - *To apply for this job, no previous experience is required.*
  - *On February 14, many couples give each other flowers.*
  - *Before breakfast, you'd better not ask such difficult questions.*

# Comma

## Commas and sentence flow

- Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt sentence flow.
  - *I am, as you have probably noticed, very nervous about this.*

## Commas and non-restrictive postmodifiers

- If something or someone is sufficiently identified, the description that follows is considered nonessential and should be surrounded by commas
  - *Freddy, who is a famous singer, won many awards.*
  - *The singer whose name is Freddy won many awards.*

## Commas and contrasting part/introductory words

- Use a comma to separate contrasting parts of a sentence.
  - *That is my room, not yours.*
- Use a comma before introductory words such as *that is, i.e., e.g., for example, or for instance*
  - *You are required to bring many items, for example, sleeping bags, pans, and warm clothing.*

# Comma

## Commas and coordinating conjunctions

- Use a comma to separate two main clauses joined by one of the coordinating conjunctions and, or, but, for, so, yet, and nor
  - *There's no one in the house, **and** the garden seems to be deserted.*
  - *I have reached the destination, **but** he is still in the same place.*
- omit the comma if the clauses are both really short
  - *I paint **and** he writes.*
- If the subject is identical in the two conjoined main clauses and omitted from the second one, we do not insert a comma before the conjunction
  - *He thought quickly **but** still did not answer correctly.*
  - *He thought quickly, **but he** still did not answer correctly.*

# Comma

## Commas replacing verbs

- Experienced writers may replace the verb in a sentence with parallel structure.

*e.g., The passive voice is used frequently in some languages, but in others, not at all.*

- It is grammatically correct, but it chops the sentence into pieces.
- The omission of verbs may confuse non-native readers of English.

Example. Comma replacing verbs

**Correct:** Some researchers are prolific in publication; others, not at all.

**Clear:** Some researchers are prolific in publication; others are not at all.



# Don'ts for commas

- Don't insert a comma between a subject and its verb or between a verb and its object.
- Don't enclose a coordinating conjunction (*and*, *but*, *or*) with commas.

Don't insert a comma between a subject and its verb or between a verb and its object.

**Wrong:** The principle investigator designed the test apparatus, and gave a demonstration to the team members.

**Right:** The principle investigator designed the test apparatus and demonstrated it to the team members.

**Right:** The principle investigator designed the test apparatus, and he demonstrated it to the team members.

...

Don't enclose a coordinating conjunction (*and, but, or*) with commas.

Verb-to-noun

**Wrong:** The principle investigator designed the test apparatus, and, gave a demonstration to the team members.

**Right:** The principle investigator designed the test apparatus and demonstrated it to the team members. *[It is clear who gave a demonstration]*

**Wrong:** Do not insert a comma between an object and its verb, or, a verb and its object.

**Right:** Do not insert a comma between an object and its verb or a verb and its object.

Don't insert a comma wherever you feel like a brief pause.

Semicolon Strength: comma , < semicolon ; < period.

## Between two related sentences

- Used to separate two sentences which are closely related
  - *Few students know exactly what career path their studies will offer; they find their area of interest during their studies.*

## Before connectors

- use before a connecting word/phrases: *besides, as a result, consequently, furthermore, at the same time, on the contrary, and on the other hand.*
  - *The deadline for the assignment is due tomorrow; therefore, additional study time has been scheduled.*
  - *Exams are a means of measuring ability; as a result, not everyone performs well in them.*

## In lists

- used to in a list where some of the items already contain commas
  - *There are many faculties at a university: Arts; Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences; Science and Technology; Business, Economics and Public Policy;*

# colon

- at the end of an independent clause to draw attention
- strong pauses-mainly used to indicate that what follows is an illustration or explanation of the previous sentence
- Do not use a colon after *are*, *include*, and *such as*

## Introducing a list

- *This essay investigates three aspects of global warming , which are : ✗ historical events, environmental influences, and human influences.*

## Explaining (or illustrating) the previous statement

- *The Environmental Management and Policy degree course is highly regarded: academic standards are high; the lecturers cater for on and off campus studies.*

## Introducing an emphatic assertion

- *All activities can be summed up in one word: educational.*
- *This is the bottom line: you need to complete the assignment.*

# colon

- at the end of an independent clause
- strong pauses-mainly used to indicate that what follows is an illustration or explanation of the previous sentence
- Do not use a colon after are, include, and such as

## Preceding a (long) quotation

- *Hyland (2002, p.1) states the following: "A writer's development of an appropriate relationship with his or her readers is widely seen as central to effective academic persuasion as writers seek to balance claims for the significant, originality, and correctness of their work against the convictions and expectations of their readers."*

## Between the title and the subtitle Capital letter!

- *On the Relative Order of Adverbs : A Study of English and Chinese*
- *Distributed state estimation for linear systems: A finite-time approach*

# Apostrophe

- To show possession of nouns (e.g. the *paper's title*; the *authors' addresses*).
- To form plurals of lowercase letters and abbreviations (e.g., *double l's in the word labelled ; e.g.'s*).
- To indicate contraction, the omission of letters (e.g. *don't*, *aren't* ).

Do not use apostrophe for omission of letters in formal writing.

# Hyphen (-) and dash (—)

## Hyphen (-)

- Use a hyphen between two parts of a compound word
  - *Steady-state, angle-based, state-of-the-art, two-year-old*
- Put the hyphen before a suffix or after a prefix
  - *co-founder, self-esteem, ex-colleague*

## Dash (—)

- used instead of commas to set off a parenthetical element in a sentence
  - *Driving at night—especially in the rain—can be dangerous and requires more attention than daytime driving.*
- used to substitute the author's name for several sources by the same author
  - *hormählen, M. (2007). The Brontës and Education. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*  
*— (1999). The Brontës and Religion. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.*



# Brackets    (), [], {}, < >.

## **Parentheses ( )** - 'round brackets', 'open brackets'

- used to separate non-essential information from the main text
  - *The Baltic states (~~Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania~~) used to be part of the Soviet Union.*
- used to enclose cross-reference in the text
  - *Parentheses also enclose cross-references (see chapter 5).*

## **Square brackets [ ]**

- to add something to, or somehow change, or comment on a direct quotation
  - *According to Harris (2005:63), "[t]he Scandinavian countries have sound economies."*
  - *According to Harris (2005:63), this is partly due to "[their] being rich in natural resources."*

# Brackets

## Curly brackets { }


- within certain fields of research
  - *Mathematics*:  $E = \{1,2,3\}$
  - *Programming language* : if {...} else {...}

## Angle brackets < > separate from surrounding text and avoid ambiguity

- enclose e-mail addresses, URLs (Uniform Resource Locators, i.e. web pages)
  - *The first time a source is referred to, a full reference is provided in the note*:1. Maria Colenso, "Meerkat habitat and diet", para. 4, *How Stuff Works* (13 May 2008).  
<http://animals.howstuffworks.com/mammals/meerkats1.htm>, accessed 22 Jan. 2011.

Punctuations: vary the sentence structure

Increasing power to separate:



Comma  
Colon  
Dash  
Parentheses  
Semicolon  
Period

Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*

Punctuations: vary the sentence structure

Increasing formality:

Dash

Parentheses

The Others (Comma, Colon, Semicolon, Period)

Use dash or parentheses more sparingly

# Practice

Evidence-based medicine teaches clinicians the practical application of clinical epidemiology; ~~as needed to address specific problems of specific patients. It guides clinicians on~~ how to find the best evidence relevant to a specific problem, how to assess the quality of that evidence, and perhaps most difficult, how to decide if the evidence applies to a specific patient.

## Colon: join and condense

- Evidence-based medicine teaches clinicians the practical application of clinical epidemiology: how to find the best evidence relevant to a specific problem, how to assess the quality of that evidence, and how to decide if the evidence applies to a specific patient.

# Practice

extends beyond

Finally, the lessons of clinical epidemiology ~~are not meant to be limited to~~ academic physician-epidemiologists, who sometimes have more interest in analysing data than caring for patients. ~~Clinical epidemiology holds the promise of providing~~ clinicians with the tools ~~necessary to improve the outcomes of their patients.~~

provides

patients' outcome

A long descriptive clause that could be set off by a dash.

No transition.

## Dash: join and condense

- Finally, clinical epidemiology extends beyond academic physician-epidemiologists—who are sometimes more interested in analyzing data than caring for patients—but provides clinicians with the tools to improve their patients' outcomes.



# English Academic Writing

## Module 2.8: A few grammar tips

# 1. Subject-verb agreement

a singular subject -- a singular verb  
a plural subject -- a plural verb

## Singular nouns that look like plurals

- E.g. • ***The statistics indicate that statistics is a popular university subject.***
- ***Darts was his favourite pastime.***
- ***This is not our headquarters, but I will never tell you where the real headquarters is.***

# 1. Subject-verb agreement

## Inherently plural nouns

The word “data” is plural.

- E.g. *These data **show** an unusual trend.*  
*The data **support** the conclusion.*  
*The data **are** critical.*

Datum (singular form) “one data point”

*A datum **is** obtained.*

Other plural nouns: people, cattle, police ...

## 2. Singular antecedents...

a singular pronoun -- a singular subject  
a plural pronoun -- a plural subject

Do not use “they” or “their” when the subject is singular.

Each student worries about th~~ex~~ir grade.

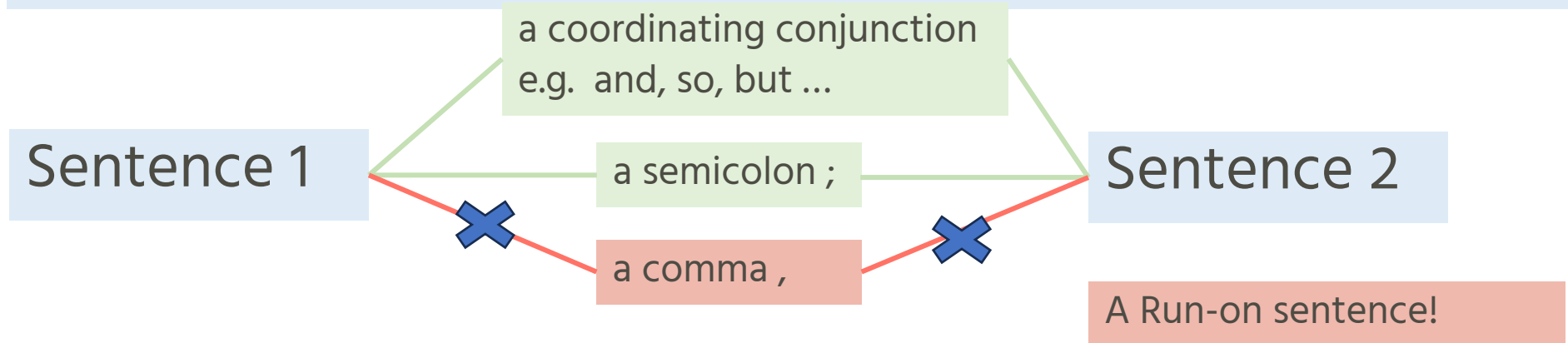
Each student worries about her grade.

Better: All students worry about **their** grades.

### 3. Run-on sentence

a minimal complete sentence :

a subject + a predicate+full stop



Run-on sentence: *The system has poles with negative real parts, the response converges fast to the steady state.*

Revisions: *The system has poles with negative real parts. The response converges fast to the steady state.*

*The system has poles with negative real parts ; the response converges fast to the steady state.*

*The system has poles with negative real parts , so the response converges fast to the steady state.*

## Right or wrong?

1. We turned on the power, the heater started heating the reactor.
2. We turned on the power. The heater started heating the reactor.
3. After we turned on the power, the heater started heating the reactor.
4. We turned on the power, and the heater started heating the reactor.
5. We turned on the power; the heater started heating the reactor.

**Incorrect:** We turned on the power, the heater started heating the reactor.

**Correct:** We turned on the power. The heater started heating the reactor.

**Correct:** After we turned on the power, the heater started heating the reactor.

**Correct:** We turned on the power, and the heater started heating the reactor.

**Correct:** We turned on the power; the heater started heating the reactor.

## 4. Compared to vs. compared with

- Compare to = to point out *similarities* between different things
- Compare with\*\* (used more often in science) = to point out *differences* between similar things

ex: “Shall I compare thee *to* a summer’s day?”

ex: *The delayed methods are seldom used compared *with* more common approaches, such as the sliding mode methods and the homogeneous methods.*

# Quiz

Which of the following sentences is grammatically correct?

A. The data that the company provided are unusually complicated.

B. The data which the company provided is unusually complicated.

C. The data which the company provided are unusually complicated.

D. The data that the company provided is unusually complicated.