English Academic Writing

Unit 2: Language

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Module 2.1: Grammar

The major word classes

Nouns – the name of any thing
- concrete things: *house, garden, boat*
- abstract concepts: *democracy, irritation, skepticism*

Verbs – something to be done
- activities that are performed: *read, count, laugh, run*
- **Spunky and strong verbs can enhance readability**

Adjectives – describes things, denote properties of things
- Concrete thing: *magic* wand
- Abstract concepts: *primary* mortgage market

Adverbs – describe states and events
- How things are done: *slowly, quickly, frequently, immediately*
- Degree: *thoroughly, slightly, partly*
- Contrast : *alternatively, however*
- Speaker's attitude : *surprisingly, unfortunately*
- Describe the adjectives and other adverbs: *extremely* dangerous, *very* slowly

Word and phrase

Phrases – n./v./adj./adv +other element (dependent)

Noun phrases - articles
- a/an vs the
  - the is used to refer to specific or particular nouns
  - a/an is used to modify non-specific or non-particular nouns

"Let's read **the** book." -- a *specific* book vs "Let's read **a** book."-- *any* book

Verbs phrases – tenses
- the present perfect vs the simple past
  - Present perfect: sth in the past that has a strong relevance to the present.
  - simple past: no connection to the present

"Mary has been angry for two hours." -- implication: She is still angry.
"Mary was angry for two hours." -- implication: She is not angry now.

Clause

Clause – units of language which convey a single message about information about
- what kind of event or state it is
- who is taking part
- where, when, why, or how it happened, etc.

Attributive clause
- that vs which
    - restrictive (or non-restrictive): information in the clause is necessary to understand the preceding noun (or not)
    - that : restrictive clause
    - which: non-restrictive clause

- " Laptops that are used for gaming purposes are usually more expensive." -- [restrictive clause] indicate necessary information
- "Paul's favorite café, ~~which serves excellent coffee and,~~ is in Memphis, Tennessee." -- [non-restrictive clause] can be omited

" Laptops, which are used for gaming purposes, are usually more expensive." ❌
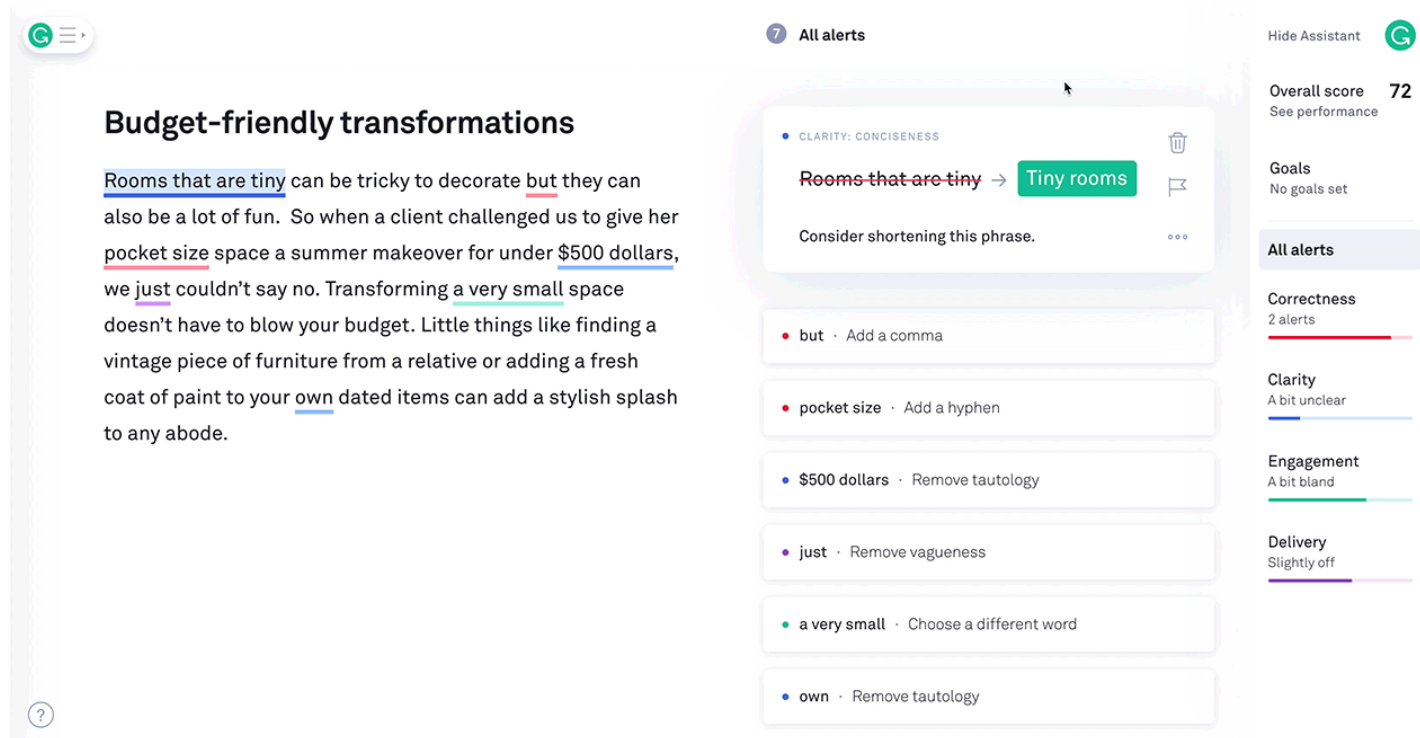
Module 2.1 Grammar

A strong tool: **grammarly**

https://app.grammarly.com/

Review:
- spelling
- grammar
- punctuation
- clarity
- engagement

Detects
- plagiarism

Suggests
- replacements

Budget-friendly transformations

Rooms that are tiny can be tricky to decorate but they can also be a lot of fun. So when a client challenged us to give her pocket size space a summer makeover for under $500 dollars, we just couldn't say no. Transforming a very small space doesn't have to blow your budget. Little things like finding a vintage piece of furniture from a relative or adding a fresh coat of paint to your own dated items can add a stylish splash to any abode.

All alerts

CLARITY: CONCISENESS

Rooms that are tiny → Tiny rooms

Consider shortening this phrase.

- but · Add a comma
- pocket size · Add a hyphen
- $500 dollars · Remove tautology
- just · Remove vagueness
- a very small · Choose a different word
- own · Remove tautology

Hide Assistant

Overall score **72**
See performance

Goals
No goals set

All alerts

Correctness
2 alerts

Clarity
A bit unclear

Engagement
A bit bland

Delivery
Slightly off

English Academic Writing

Unit 2: Language

Module 2.2: Vocabulary

Focus on vocabulary

Learn new words:
- in text and other forms of discourse
- specialised in a subject

Essential for writing: good knowledge of --
- general English
- how vocabulary is constructed
- the vocabulary used in specific disciplines

Common issues
- Vocabulary awareness
- Useful words and phrases
- Using abbreviations
- Spelling

Vocabulary Awareness

Baseline: knowing when to use certain vocabulary
making judgements for specific vocabulary.

Higher level: standards and accuracy

Common errors
- https://brians.wsu.edu/common-errors/#errors
- Paul Brians, Emeritus Professor of English at Washington State University

Vocabulary Awareness

Common collocations

- word combinations: used naturally for a native speaker of English
- https://www.englishclub.com/vocabulary/collocations-common.php

EnglishClub : Learn English : Vocabulary : Reference : Collocations : Common Collocations

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Common Collocations

On this page you can find a few short lists of common collocations to give you more of an idea about them. Many good learner's dictionaries show collocations associated with specific words. There are also dictionaries of collocations, though these are more difficult to find.

Verb collocations

Word formation and building

- **Pre + fix** = to attach before the base word
- **Suf + fix** = to attach after the base word

Base word	Prefix	Suffix	Both
agree	disagree	agreement	disagreement

Useful words and phrases

How do I say what I want?
- Most experienced writers: have at their disposal fixed expressions
- Less experienced writers (foreign language): collections of expressions organised in terms of tasks -- **phrase banks.**

The academic phrase bank at the University of Manchester
- http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/
- organised in terms of tasks associated with research articles
- e.g. the introductory section(s) of an article, we find:
    - Establishing the importance of the topic
    - Highlighting a problem in the field of study
    - Highlighting a controversy in the field of study
    - Highlighting a knowledge gap in the field of study
    - Focus, aim, argument
- covers a wide range of expressions that are useful to writers of research articles

Using abbreviations

Abbreviation	Short for	Use/Meaning
e.g.	For example	for example, for instance
et al.	et alii	and others
Etc.	etcetera	and other things
fig., figs.	figure(s)	Used when referring to figures in a text of work.
i.e.	id est, that is	which is to say, in other words, that is
l., ll.	line(s)	Used when referring to lines in a text.
NB/n.b.	nota bene	take special note of; note
n.d.	no date (of publication)	Used in referencing when a date is unknown - quite common with website addresses.
p., pp.	page(s)	Used for indicating page numbers when referencing.
sec.	section	Used when referring to sections of a text.

Standard spelling
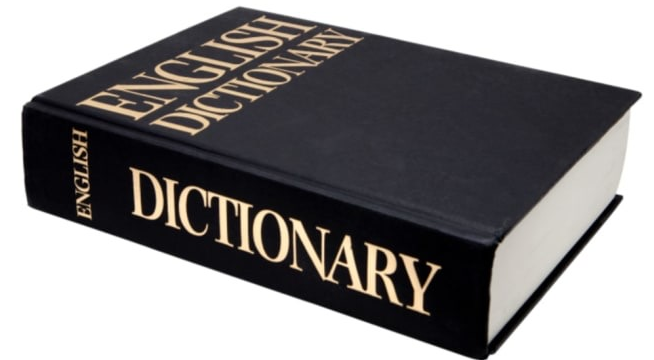
- Spell according to dictionary
- No novel spelling
  - Text messages
  - Information situations
  - e.g. "Amazome=amazing +awesome"
        "Passfusion=password+confussion"

- Use a dictionary
  - Checking the spellings of words in a dictionary
    -- equally important for both native and non-native speakers of English

British and American spelling

British English and American English
- generally very similar in all respects
- some spelling differences in writing

British English	American English
-re (e.g. metre, fibre, centre)	-er (e.g. meter, fiber, center)
-our (e.g. colour, behaviour, humour)	-our (e.g. color, behavior, humor)
-ise (e.g. recognise, familiarise, organise)	-ize (e.g. recognize, familiarize, organize)
-ell- (e.g. cancelled, traveller)	-el- (e.g. canceled, traveler)
-oe-/-ae- (e.g. archaeology, manoeuvre, encyclopaedia)	-e- (e.g. archeology, maneuver, encyclopedia)
-ence (e.g. defence, offence, licence)	-ense (defense, offense, license)
-ogue (e.g. analogue, dialogue, catalogue)	-og (e.g. analog, dialog, catalog)

Read the writing instructions!
If not specified, choose the system that feels most natural to you!

English Academic Writing

Module 2.3: Register and style

"the level and style of a piece of writing or speech (specified situation)"

Register and style

Register of a word: level of formality

Very formal	Formal			Hi	What's up! / Hey!
How do you do	Hello			Hi	What's up! / Hey!

Choices of style and register -- depends on the reader

'Familiar'
- people who know each oth
- lack of grammar, spelli

'Informal'
- generally journalism an
- more care is taken with
- conversational tone, us

'Formal'
- mostly used in academ
- strong opinions can be expressed objectively

'Ceremonial'
- rarely used in modern academic writing (historical documents, Shakespeare's text)
- archaic language, and often   s, with unusual
  or outdated sentence structures

> IDK, Will arrive evening. CU later

> While I was on my way to the Science Lab., a thought struck me that perhaps all that we think is possible, may not be.

> Based on the aforementioned notion, the following research model was formulated to investigate the influences of perceived authenticity of online reviews about destinations on two aspects of travelers' trust toward mega review sites.

> Further affiant sayeth naught.

Formal vs. informal

- **Formal language use complex sentence structures**
  - In 2001, the bridge was built. This was good politically. Two countries united. -- **Informal**
  - The bridge was completed in 2001, which resulted in a positive political move that united two countries. **-- Formal**

- **Formal language does not use contractions**
  - When considering staffing in hospitals in the future, it's difficult not be concerned. **-- Informal**
  - When considering staffing in hospitals in the future, it is difficult not be concerned. **-- Formal**

- **Formal language is objective**
  - I think/believe that the issue of global warming will be the primary concern at the meeting. **-- Informal**
  - There is little doubt/It is clear that the issue of global warming will be the primary concern at the meeting. **-- Formal**

Formal vs. informal

- **Formal language does not use spoken English**
  - Sweden's Prime Minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt, totally flipped out when he read the latest report from the press. **-- Informal**
  - The Prime Minister of Sweden, Fredrik Reinfeldt, expressed his concern when he viewed the most recent report from the press. **-- Formal**

- **Formal language focuses more on vocabulary choice**
  - The research assistant checked out the incident and got back to him the next day. **-- Informal**
  - The research assistant investigated the incident and reported to him the following day. **-- Formal**

- **Formal language uses the discipline specific vocabulary**

  - Germs grow well in dirty and warm temperatures. **-- Informal**
  - Bacteria thrive in unhygienic and warm conditions. **-- Formal**

Unless specified, use the formal register!

Practise

Decide if the passages are appropriate to use in academic contexts, from the viewpoint of register and tone.

Question 1
Albert Einstein is definitely the greatest scientist of all time.

Words like *definitely* and *best/greatest … of all time* shows less objectivity. In academic writing we need to avoid these absolutisation words.

Question 2
Supporters of the old regime have been fooled into thinking that climate activism is just for show.

Words like *fooled* must be avoided in academic writing. They reveal the author's disrespectful view of the referent, that is, the *supporters of the old regime.*
One could write something like *Supporters of the old regime have been taught that […] / have been trained into thinking that […]*

English Academic Writing

Module 2.4: Active and passive voice

What is the active voice?

The subject is the agent or actor.

" the entity that does something or causes something to happen"

She throws the ball.

Maria will drive the car.

The President made mistakes.

Active format: subject(agent), verb, object(recipient)

What is the passive voice?

The subject is the entity that is affected or undergoes the action. "the recipient"

She throws the ball.
The ball is thrown by her.

Maria will drive the car.
The car will be driven by Maria.

The President made mistakes.
Mistakes were made by the President.

Omit the agent:
"Mistakes were made."

Passive voice: a way to abdicate responsibility.

Active format: subject(agent), verb, object(recipient)

Passive format: recipient, verb, agent

Recognizing a passive verb

- **Passive verb (two parts)**
  - a form of the verb "to be" "is", "are", "was", "were", "be", "did" or "am".
  - the past participle of the main verb
- **The main verb must be a transitive verb (that is, take an object).**

She throws the ball.

She runs.   No passive voice

She runs the company.   The company is run by her.

"to be" verbs

- Is
- Are
- Was
- Were
- Be
- Been
- Am

• could be
• shall be
• should be
• will be
• would be
• may be
• might be
• must be
• has been

Example: passive voice

Recipient of the action:
what is remembered

<u>My first visit to Boston</u> will always be remembered by <u>me</u>.

The passive verb

Agent of the action: the person
doing the remembering

Active:

I will always remember my first visit to Boston.

From: Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*

Example: passive voice without an agent

She is loved.
→ Which evokes the question, "Who's loving her?"

The recipient of the love.

Form of "to be"

Past participle of a transitive verb: love + (*direct object*).

The agent of the activity love -- ???

leaves some intrigue

Passive vs. active voice

To turn the passive voice back to the active voice:

Ask: "Who does what to whom?"

       agent   verb   recipient

Use active voice

Passive:

By applying a high resolution, 90 degree bending magnet downstream of the laser electron interaction region, the spectrum of the electron beams <u>could be observed</u>.

→

Active:

<u>We could observe</u> the spectrum of the electron beams by applying a high resolution, 90 degree bending magnet downstream of the laser electron interaction region.

It's much easier to read that in the active voice.

Use active voice; be direct!

Additionally, it was found that pre-treatment with antibiotics increased the number of super-shedders, while immunosuppression did not.

→

We found that Pre-treating the mice with antibiotics increased the number of super-shedders while immunosuppresion did not.

Advantages of the active voice

- 1. Emphasizes author responsibility
- 2. Improves readability
- 3. Reduces ambiguity

1. Emphasizes author responsibility

- No attempt <u>was made</u> to contact non-responders because they <u>were deemed</u> unimportant to the analysis. (passive)

  a foregone conclusion? must be true?

Vs.

- We did not attempt to contact non-responders because we deemed them unimportant to the analysis. (active)

  These decisions involved human (the authors') judgement and thus might be fault.

2. Increases readability

- A strong correlation was found between use of the passive voice and other sins of writing. (passive)
- We found a strong correlation between use of the passive voice and other sins of writing. (active)
- Use of the passive voice strongly correlated with other sins of writing. (active)

3. Reduces ambiguity

General dysfunction of the immune system at the leukocyte level <u>is suggested</u> by both animal and human studies. (passive)

Who had immune dysfunction? -- ambiguity

Vs.

Both human and animal studies <u>suggest</u> that diabetics have general immune dysfunction at the leukocyte level. (active)

Is it OK to use the passive voice?

- Yes!
- Passive voice does better job in certain pccasions.
- Do not use it out of habit
- Just use it <u>sparingly and purposefully</u>
  - Passive voice may be appropriate in the methods section
    - what was done and the recipient are more important than who did it
    - to avoid starting with "we"

Write your introduction, result and discussion sections in the active voice!

English Academic Writing

Is it really OK to use "We" and "I"?

personal pronouns

Yes, it's OK!

- 1. The active voice is livelier and easier to read.
   -- write in the most clear and engaging way

- 2. Avoiding personal pronouns does not make your science more objective.

- 3. By agreeing to be an author on the paper, you are taking responsibility for its content. Thus, you should also claim responsibility for the assertions in the text by using "we" or "I."

Avoiding personal pronouns does not lend objectivity:

- You/your team designed, conducted, and interpreted the method and the experiments.
  - To imply the scientific results happened is misleading.
  - They did not materialise out of thin air!
- Removing the personal pronoun
  - *appears* more objective
  - Goal: actually *being* more objective

Passive Voice and Personal Pronouns

R. V. Ormes' judicious criticism of the passive voice [*Science* **125**, 529 (1957)] reminded me, by contrast, of my own too sweeping indictment of it a year ago. A young chemistry major took my remarks seriously and wrote a formal account of experimental procedure entirely in the active voice, using the first personal pronoun. The result was revealing. At least it convinced me that the passive voice is sometimes preferable to the active, and that criticism of it should be confined, like Ormes', to its abuse.

To illustrate, here is a passage on procedure, chosen at random from the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*. The original reads: "The thick oil was dissolved in ether, the solution was extracted twice with dilute alkali, and the combined basic extracts were washed with ether. The ether solutions were combined, dried and evaporated to give 2.8 g. of starting alcohol. The basic solution was acidified with dilute sulfuric acid and extracted with ether. The ether layer was washed with water. . . ." Recast in the active voice, with the

quite all right for reminding a reader of assumptions customarily understood when certain equations are used, but the reader should know when the assumptions are original, and the simplest way to tell him is by saying "I have assumed. . . ."

After all, human agents are responsible for designing experiments, and they are present in the laboratory; writing awkward phrases to avoid admitting their responsibility and their presence is an odd way of being objective. P. W. Bridgman (*Reflections of a Physicist*, 1950, pp. 57–58) puts it even more strongly: "In suppressing these personal expressions I am doing an unnatural thing that sometimes demands obvious circumlocutions and always involves an element of convention and construction. If I want to express what obviously occurs, I have got to use the first person. Has it ever been adequately proved, or has ever the assumption been adequately examined that in forcing myself to speak non-personally I have not thrown away something vital?"

JANE J. ROBINSON
University of California, Los Angeles

"After all, human agents are responsible for designing experiments, and they are present in the laboratory; writing awkward phrases to avoid admitting their responsibility and their presence is an odd way of being objective."—
Jane J. Robinson, *Science* 7 June 1957: 1160.

Journals want this!

- The style guidelines for many journals explicitly instruct authors to write in the active voice. For example, *Science* magazine advises:

- "Use active voice when suitable, particularly when necessary for correct syntax (e.g., "To address this possibility, <u>we constructed</u> a λZap library …)."

Other suggestions:
- to avoid jargon
- to write concisely

Practice: use the active voice

A recommendation was made by the DSMB committee that the study be halted.

The DSMB committee recommended that the study be halted.

Practice: use the active voice

Major differences in the reaction times of the two study subjects were found.

We observed major differences in the reaction times of the two study subjects.

OR

The two study subjects differed in reaction times.

Practice: use the active voice

It <u>was concluded</u> by the editors that the data <u>had been falsified</u> by the authors.

The editors concluded that the authors falsified their data.

Practice: use the active voice

The first visible-light snapshot of a planet circling another star has been taken by NASA's Hubble Space Telescope.

NASA's Hubble Space Telescope has taken the first visible-light snapshot of a planet circling another star.

Practice: use the active voice

Therefore, the hypothesis that the overall kinetics of a injured athlete and an able-bodied sprinter at the same level of performance are not different <u>was rejected</u>.

Therefore, we rejected the hypothesis that the overall kinetics of a injured athlete and an able-bodied sprinter at the same level of performance are comparable.

Turn negative constructions into positives!

English Academic Writing

Module 2.6: Write with verbs

Write with verbs

- use strong verbs
- avoid turning verbs into nouns
- don't bury the main verb

Use strong verbs

Verbs - drive the English language
    - make sentences lively
    - draw the reader in

Compare:

"Loud music came from speakers embedded in the walls, and the entire arena moved as the hungry crowd got to its feet."

With:

"Loud music exploded from speakers embedded in the walls, and the entire arena shook as the hungry crowd leaped to its feet."

expressive, active verbs – vivid sentence

Latter sentence from the novel: *Bringing Down the House*, Ben Mezrich

Use strong verbs

Pick the right verb!

avoid the use of adverbs

pick the verb that already has the adverb embedded

The WHO reports that approximately two-thirds of the world's diabetics are found in developing countries, and estimates that the number of diabetics in these countries will double in the next 25 year.

→

The WHO estimates that two-thirds of the world's diabetics are found in developing countries, and projects that the number of diabetics in these countries will double in the next 25 years.

better verb choices: use a thesaurus

Use strong verbs

Use "to be" verbs purposefully and sparingly.

Is are was were be been am…

They should not be the predominant verbs in your paper.

Do not turn verbs into nouns

Example:

During DNA damage, recognition of H3K4me3 by ING2 results in recruitment of Sin3/HDAC and repression of cell proliferation genes.

- Many nouns used ⇒ ambiguous
- Which protein is doing what to which other protein?

→

During DNA damage, H3K4me3 recruits ING2 and Sin3/HDAC, which together repress cell proliferation genes.

To say sth clear: who does what to whom
1. put things in the active voice
2. use verbs

Do not turn verbs into nouns

a spunky verb

⇩

a boring verb ✛ a boring noun verb

Weak verbs

Obtain estimates of   estimate

Has seen an expansion in   has expanded

Provides a methodologic emphasis   emphasizes methodology

Take an assessment of   assess

Formerly spunky verbs transformed into boring nouns

Do not turn verbs into nouns

Provide a <u>review</u> of

Offer <u>confirmation</u> of

Make a <u>decision</u>

Shows a<u> peak</u>

Provide a <u>description</u> of

review

confirm

decide

peaks

describe

Do not bury the main verb

Keep the subject and main verb (predicate) close together at the start of the sentence...

- **Readers are waiting for the verb!**

Putting too much distance ⇒ lose readers' attention

Do not bury the main verb

The case of the buried predicate...

<u>One study of 930 adults with multiple sclerosis (MS) receiving care in one of two managed care settings or in a fee-for-service setting</u> found that only two-thirds of those needing to contact a neurologist for an MS-related problem in the prior 6 months had done so (Vickrey et al 1999).

Do not bury the main verb

The case of the buried predicate…

One study found that, of 930 adults with multiple sclerosis (MS) who were receiving care in one of two managed care settings or in a fee-for-service setting, only two-thirds of those needing to contact a neurologist for an MS-related problem in the prior six months had done so (Vickrey et al 1999).

Practice Exercises

"The fear expressed by some teachers that students would not learn statistics well if they were permitted to use canned computer programs has not been realized in our experience.

A careful monitoring of achievement levels before and after the introduction of computers in the teaching of our course revealed no appreciable change in students' performances."

Practice Exercises

→

Many teachers feared that the use of canned computer programs would prevent students from learning statistics. We monitored student achievement levels before and after the introduction of computers in our course and found no detriments in performance.

Practice Exercises

Important studies to examine the descriptive epidemiology of autism, including the prevalence and changes in the characteristics of the population over time, have begun.

Identify the problems…

1. Where is the verb?

2. watch out vague words like "important"

    biased language: other studies are not important?

    Raise questions: what makes them important?

    And who's judging that they're important?

3. can changes occur without being "over time"?

4. "of the population" is vague

Practice Exercises

~~Important~~ studies to ~~examine the descriptive~~ describe epidemiology of autism, including the prevalence and changes in the characteristics of the ~~population over time,~~ have begun.

→

Studies have begun to describe the epidemiology of autism, including recent changes in the characteristics and prevalence of the disorder.

Practice Exercises

~~After~~ rejecting paths with poor signal-to-noise ratios, ~~we were left~~ *left us with* with 678 velocity measurements of ~~waves with~~ 7.5 seconds *wave* ~~period~~ and 891 ~~measurements~~ of 15 second waves.

→

Rejecting paths with poor signal-to-noise ratios left 678 velocity measurements of 7.5-second waves and 891 of 15-second waves.