**English Fall Exam**

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is related to many fields of everyday life where innovative ideas and inventions are abundant. The term refers to stealing someone else's work without permission and not giving credit to the original author. In fact, it does not matter whether the act of plagiarism is intentional or accidental! As long as you have used someone's work, you must properly cite your source(s). Be careful because an act of plagiarism could cost you dearly, e.g. your university degree, a serious fine, etc.

Plagiarism is often committed by young people (students) who use the Internet as their main source of information for class activities and projects. However, most of them do not realize that it is wrong to use (plagiarize) someone else’s work. All types of sources require proper citation, no matter if it is an idea, concept, text, image or video clip, to name a few. Many people believe that the Internet is a virtual platform for free information feed. As much as this may be so, all the information on the Internet is someone's intellectual property. In addition, submitting the same paper in two or more classes can also be considered a punishable act.

Tracking plagiarism today is almost as easy as plagiarizing. There are innovative software programs, which can track the percentage of plagiaristic action in a text, project or even PowerPoint presentation. These applications have been invented to first and foremost preserve intellectual property rights. In education, they ease the work of instructors in their effort to control plagiarism. Students who are caught plagiarizing are subject to failing the course or even getting expelled from college or university.

In the field of ICT, plagiarism has a central role since for many specialists it is important to have their work protected and patented. Plagiarism is similar to online piracy, which allows for different information such as images, videos, music books etc. to be downloaded illegally for free. In addition, because of the vast flow of information that ICT allows people to have access to everyday, plagiarism has become an issue of concern for all, from software engineers to bloggers.

Paraphrasing and Citing

One of the best ways to avoid plagiarism is by paraphrasing and citing. These two methods are extremely helpful for students who want to stay away from unintentional plagiarism. Even though we can use quotation marks to quote someone’s words or paraphrase a sentence, we still have to also refer to the original text in the source / reference section at the end. To do this, we must mention the author, year of publication and any other information we have. The Internet too, requires proper citation, including rights on images, clip art and videos.

In ICT, all the information posted on websites is the product of someone’s work. For this reason, many websites for software support compile data from different sources (books, journals, the Internet, etc.) and produce their own original materials. These materials should always cite the original sources, which prove the importance of paraphrasing and citing in the field of ICT.

To avoid plagiarism, students must have good time management skills. This means that those who often procrastinate are more likely to plagiarize. However, if you dedicate enough time to a project or presentation, you are less likely to copy-paste materials from the Internet. Paraphrasing becomes very easy when one knows reporting verbs that can illustrate the author's intention, so make sure you understand what the author is saying in order to choose the appropriate verb. In addition, spotting keywords will also help understand the main points and ideas of the original source. It is also very important to interpret the words of the author correctly and re-read the text if necessary.

The proper way to cite information from the Internet is to begin with the name of the media, online magazine, newspaper or the title of the article. Then, write below it the name of the author, the URL (if there is an online copy) and the date that you last accessed the link in parenthesis e.g. (FMI, Plovdiv University “Paissii Hilendarski”, Admissions, http://fmi-plovdiv.org, last accessed 16 July, 2014). Regarding ideas, which you think are uniquely yours, you still have to make sure someone else has not already published them by doing research on the topic. It often happens that what we think is our own idea or invention has already been registered as someone else’s intellectual property.

Introduction

In most languages, the paragraph is the building block of longer texts such as letters, essays, papers, reports, and others. Learning to write good paragraphs in English as your second language requires knowledge of the principles of good paragraph writing and practice. In academic writing, paragraphs usually have three important components: a) a topic sentence; b) supporting sentences; and c) a concluding sentence. These different types of sentences have specific purposes in the paragraph and have to be logically connected to one another and the central idea of the paragraph.

The Topic Sentence

The topic sentence contains the main idea of a paragraph. That is why it usually comes at the beginning of a paragraph and should be as clear as possible. The purpose of the topic sentence is to introduce the reader to the general idea that the author wants to develop in the remaining part of the paragraph. This means that the topic sentence should not contain specific details and irrelevant information. The details in a paragraph are provided by the supporting sentences.

Supporting Sentences

The sentences that follow the topic sentence are called supporting sentences. Their purpose is to provide relevant details and explanations about the main idea in the topic sentence. Giving precise facts, examples, reasons and explanations is an important quality of writing. However, facts alone do not speak for themselves – they need to be elaborated on. Authors should verify the validity of the information they provide in the supporting sentence by the use of reliable sources. Reliable sources of information include newspaper releases, books, scientific articles published in peer-reviewed journals, official government cites and archives, etc. Use of Wikipedia articles is NOT recommended for academic purposes.

A Concluding Sentence

A concluding sentence is not always required. When appropriate, it is used at the end of a paragraph to reiterate what has already been said in the topic sentence. A concluding sentence at the end of paragraphs can often be found in essay writing where each paragraph constitutes one main idea. However, in research papers the last sentence in a paragraph usually provides a transition to the next paragraph. Of course, there are a number of contexts where both a concluding sentence and a transition sentence are appropriate.

Paragraph Length

While there is no specific requirement for the length of paragraphs, a good paragraph should contain at least three to five sentences. It is important to remember that paragraphs are used to break up ideas in a longer piece of writing. So, their length depends on the optimum number of supporting sentences necessary to explain the topic sentence. The length of a paragraph also depends on the number of examples and illustrations that it will cover. It is suggested that every relevant idea should be supported by an appropriate example to. Providing statistical data (charts, graphs, percent etc.) or additional facts (dates, years, measures etc.) is also very useful when writing paragraphs.

Coherence and Cohesion

Coherence and cohesion are an essential component when writing paragraphs. The first is related to the logical flow of ideas and connections within them e.g. do all ideas develop I a logical order. Cohesion is associated with the language devices, which make these ideas logical e.g. to begin with, therefore, so, in addition, in contrast, in conclusion etc. Without cohesion and coherence, sentences do not make up a proper paragraph. When they asked Mozart, “Maestro, how on earth is it possible that you write such beautiful music?” the great master replied, “Oh, it’s easy: I get together musical notes that love each other.” This is what coherence and cohesion is about – find words that love each other to make up your sentences, then put together sentences that love each other to compose your paragraphs. At all times think of your intended audience and how clear the writing will be to the readers. People who use online tools, especially for writing in the Cloud, want to read simple and logical texts.

Tips for writing an excellent essay

Get down to business

This is the part where the real writing begins. Your task now is to add some flesh to the skeleton (i.e. your outline) following the rules about cohesion and coherence. This means creating sentences for each separate paragraph so that there is consistency and logic. Be careful not to overload your essay with too many new and unrelated ideas. It is not so important how long your essay is (unless you have a word limit). What is truly essential is for the ideas to flow logically and be connected with appropriate language devices (linking words and expressions).

Every new paragraph means that there is a new thought or idea which will be developed in the course if this essay. Even though the separate units of the essay are new thoughts, they must all be connected to the subject matter and not deviate from the main topic. However, if you see that you have missed something important, do not be afraid to add it in your text at any time during the writing process. Make sure to read your essay again for any run-on sentences. These are sentences, which deviate from the main topic. If at any point you feel that this sentence does not belong here, get rid of it.

Word Processors and Cloud Collaboration

After your essay is finished, it is essential to always go back and edit your work. One of the ways is by turning on the ‘Spell Check’ function, which will track any spelling or grammar mistakes you have made. However, make sure you re-read your draft version and correct all grammatical errors, because word processors do not always catch these. Read for inconsistencies or identify where logic is missing because this is something which software does not help a lot with. For instance, if you have typed “mill” instead of “will”, the SpellCheck facility will not mark it as incorrect because both words are valid lexical units of the English language and are entries in its dictionary. After you have read your writing top to bottom, leave your work aside for a day or even two. When you revisit it later, you will be more critical.

The Cloud offers a lot of different ways to share files, folders, as well as work collaboratively. Google Docs, for instance, allows for people to comment and edit each other’s work simultaneously while hanging out in the Cloud. Because of the user-friendly interface and common characteristics it allows for people to incorporate the Cloud in their professional and personal environment. We recommend that you find a friend who can take a look at your writing and give you some preliminary feedback.

Understand your task and interpret your topic

The key to creating a great essay is to understand what you are supposed to write before you attempt to sit down and do the job. In reality though, most students never really read the instructions they are given, even the most diligent ones. They simply begin writing the introduction based on what they assume might be required in the activity. This is why it is essential for students to read the title or topic of the essay at least a couple of times before beginning to analyse the possibilities for interpretation. It is always helpful to write the title in the centre of the page to help you stay focused during the process.

Online desktop research will also help you score higher since you will find useful information that you can use in your work e.g. facts, dates, statistics etc. Remember though, that you always have to cite your sources!

Plan and organise

Once you have interpreted the task, it is time for planning and organizing the essay. Brainstorming and mind mapping skills will give you a competitive advantage. As a first step, type the topic at the top of the screen and formulate your thesis, i.e. your standpoint for this essay. Like in a game of associations, make a list of all ideas related to the topic that come to your mind. Do not bother about grammar or relevance at this stage. Take some 3-5 minutes for this. Time for planning is not wasted - by the end of the day this will save you time and will enhance your performance. Then, look at each idea and decide if it is closely connected to the topic and if it is relevant for the target audience. Cut & Paste the dropouts and leave them at the bottom of your page – you may recycle and use them later for other purposes. Then, group the related ideas into clusters. For each of these clusters, identify the main topic (heading) and the supporting ideas (sub-headings). Arrange all your ideas in a logical manner so that your reader will be involved and can keep track of all your thoughts. After you number them, you are left with the outline of your essay

Summaries

Summaries are written projects, which provide a comprehensive understanding of a specific text, no matter of its genre. However, summaries are applicable in our everyday life in a verbal form too. For example, the answer to the question 'What was the film about?' requires a summative answer. Thus, you will summarize the content of the film and retell it to someone in a verbal form.

Summarizing does not mean that you have to reproduce all the minor details you have observed, unless they are important for the overall understanding of the subject matter. You should rather illustrate the main ideas. This presupposes that a summary should always be a lot shorter than its original. If your summary is as long as, or longer than the source text, it means that there is a lot of unnecessary information in it and you have to go back and edit to reduce it.

Another common application of summarizing skills is when you want to propose some bright idea to your boss. If you fail to communicate the essence of this idea within a couple of sentences, your boss will most probably lose interest or simply will be interrupted by something else.

Let us consider how summarizing works on a sentence level.

*Original*: Early in the morning of a sunny September day, Ivan, Peter and Maria got together in a nice Internet café and created a PowerPoint presentation for the team project they had for homework.

*Summary*: Ivan, Peter and Maria met in a café to create a team project on PowerPoint. Bottom line: The summary lacks the flavor of the original, but most of all the essential information about their activity is missing.

In order to summarize a piece of written text, start by reading the original to grasp its structure and meaning. Begin with scanning and skimming the text. The first relates to taking a look at the text just to get the general idea, without focusing on details. The latter, refers to reading with the intention of identifying important facts, numbers or statistical data. This will give you an overall idea of what the text is about.

A common mistake that students do is start summarizing the text without having read it first. After you are familiar with the content, take your time and read it again extensively. If necessary, go through the text as many times as you need to. Time spent on preparation is not wasted but smartly invested! At the end of the day, it will save you time and will help you produce a better summary.

Then, identify the main points in the original text, i.e. the key concepts as opposed to details or examples: the main paragraphs within the text; the main sentences within a paragraph; the main words within a sentence. Feel free to use information organizing techniques, such as mind mapping. Having done that, produce your first draft.

For each relevant paragraph in a long text, write a paragraph in your own words based on your notes. For a short text, just one paragraph will adequately summarize it. After that, produce the second draft by reducing the first draft. Delete any words/phrases that the reader would not need in order to understand the main ideas. Finally, produce the final version of the summary. Check the spelling, grammar, etc. If possible, ask someone to read it and give feedback if everything is clear and if there is extra information, etc.

Five tips for online writing

Tip #1 Keep paragraphs and sentences short

People today do not have the time to read and that is why the fashion of reading has changed. This fact alone has altered the way people read online materials, which means that half of the text will remain unread. The sentences and paragraphs should be short so that they do not scare the readers, but rather guide them into getting the information they need.

Tip #2 Using white space

It is important for a website to have white spaces, since it serves as frame around the text. This helps the reader orient himself around the page and understand its content better. White space also helps break up a text into parts, so that those who read it can follow through. Be careful with having a lot of white space, since it can tire the reader's eyes and make them leave the page.

Tip #3 Bullets and numbering

When writing for the web, it is always advisable to arrange your text and ideas in bullet points or any kind of numbering. This will help the reader get an idea of how much exactly there is to be read and will allow for a logical flow between ideas. And remember that people like reading texts that are clearly arranged.

Tip #4 Font

One of the most important things when writing for the web is to be careful with the choice of font. Even though you might be allured to use something more attractive on your page, it is better to keep it as simple as possible. The more fancy the font, the harder it is for the readers to stay focused. That is why using sans serif fonts (no feet on the letters as in Times new Roman) is a better option.

Tip #5 Proofread

Editing and proofreading are essential in all types of writing. Having a text filled with mistakes looks both unprofessional and untrustworthy. This is why you must check and edit your text and even let someone check it for you. Remember that typo mistakes look a lot worse on the web than on paper.

The Five W’s and the H

The ‘Five Ws and the H’ are essential for every type of journalistic writing. You can spot them in all kinds of informative texts and most often in press releases. Their main goal is to present as much facts about the main topic as possible in a clear and concise way. In a press release, you find the ‘Five Ws and the H’ in the beginning of the first body paragraph.

The ‘Five Ws’ stands for the questions ‘Who? What? When? Where? Why?’ and the’ H’ stands for ‘How?’ Any media release you read will provide answers to these questions so that the reader understands what the article is about and gets involved. If key information such as ‘When did it happen?’ is missing, then the piece will lack fundamental information about the specific event and shift the reader’s focus to another article.

If information about the Five Ws and the H’ is not available, then we must do our best to find as much material as we can so that our news piece sounds finished and is not missing key information. This however, does not mean making up false claims, because that is considered a crime. It is usually assumed that if a writer covers all these questions in a text and covers the details, in the end there will be a finished article.

Press Release format

Press releases are a powerful tool in the marketing campaign of an organization. There is no ‘one-right-method’ to create an effective press release. Still, there are certain aspects to it that are obligatory and should not be omitted.

Always begin with a headline at the top of the page in Title Case. Title Case means that every word will begin with a capital letter except for the prepositions and connectors (and, but etc.). Below the headline, include a subhead which is usually in sentence format (capital letter only at the beginning of the sentence). It is the sentence which holds additional information about the event and attracts attention. Under it write the CITY District, Country, Month Day, Year.

Then you continue with the body of your press release. Your opening sentence is intended to create interest among your readers, so remember to make it catchy! It also summarizes what is being announced in your message for the media. A press release can be about a major event, product launching or personnel announcements. It can be three to six paragraphs or even a bit longer, depending on the scale of the event. Always end your press release with your contact information. Make sure to include the Name of your organization’s contact person, his/her position (e.g. Media Relations) and contacts, e.g. telephone number, mailing address, etc.

CV’s, Cover Letter and Job Interviews

CV content

The CV (résumé in US English) is a document required by potential employers when applying for a job. This acronym stands for ‘curriculum vitae’, which basically means autobiography or ‘course of life’. Creating an efficient CV is very important in order to be shortlisted and invited to an interview.

A CV reflects your work experience, education and skills. You should always begin your CV with your contact information. It is recommended that you place only relevant information about your work experience and skills. This means that information such as hobbies and leisure activities will not be in your CV unless they are related to the vacancy you are applying for. Irrelevant work certifications should also not be included.

Including a photo in your CV is something that some employers care about, while others do not. It is advisable to attach a photo only if it is in the required set of documents. Using coloured ink for your text is not desirable. A black and white CV looks much more professional and is the standard requirement. There is no ‘one right way’ to construct your CV. There are numerous templates available both on the Internet and in the default settings of your preferred word processor that can help you get an idea of how to tailor your CV. Within the European Union, though, the Europass format tends to be most common and expected. Some companies ask applicants to complete specific forms, i.e. templates. People from the creative sphere today chose to film Video CVs and thus stand out of the crowd. Whatever you choose, the more creative and open-minded you are, the better your chances become.

Formatting a CV

The preferred length of a CV is between 1 and 3 pages, depending on your previous experience. Do not worry if your CV is only one page; that is perfectly fine for people who are just beginning their careers. All the information you provide in your CV must be accurate and verifiable, supported by relevant proofs or at least offering to send proofs upon request, e.g. attached scanned copies of certificates & diplomas, etc. Besides, in most cases CVs are verified by the human resources (HR) department of your prospective employer. It is not acceptable to exaggerate or even ‘safe-lie’ in your CV, since it is considered a crime in many countries. Never copy or steal ready-made CVs from the Internet.

One thing which makes the CV different from other application documents is the use of reverse chronology. This means that when you write your CV you will begin with your most recent job occupation and end with your first one. This is valid for both the employment history and education sections. You always start with the part about previous job occupations and then you go on to the education part. All language, computer/technical and other skills will follow. Certificates and awards will be placed at the end together with extracurricular activities and clubs.

It is wise to maintain two versions of your CV. One is “general-purpose” “database” which is continuously updated and contains your complete documented history. It is used as a starting point for the second version: the “special-purpose” one, which must be made specifically for the purpose you are submitting this CV. Even if you want to apply for a summer job, it is good practice to approach different employers with different versions of your CV to reflect the specificity of a particular job vacancy or the hiring organization. Like every job vacancy is unique, every CV is one of a kind.

Cover Letter

When you apply for a job, in addition to a good CV, you also more often than not, need to send a cover letter (motivation letter in US English). This letter should persuade your prospective employer why it is YOU who they are looking for and why they must choose YOU rather than someone else. This is actually a form of business communication, either in the form of a letter or an email.

The people who will be reading your Cover letter will have the full package of documents that means that they will also have a copy of your CV. In that case, you must not repeat the information from your CV, but rather think of additional information about yourself, which can impress the readers. It is many times when the HR are reviewing documents that their choice comes down to two skilled candidates and it all depends on the cover letter.

The Cover letter should not be longer than a page and must be constructed in a readable fashion. This means that the letter should be arranged in separate paragraphs (similar lengths). Usually writing more than three paragraphs in a cover letter will be considered too lengthy and will scare away potential readers. HR recruiters prefer shorter and to the point letters which are interesting and show personality and individuality. In addition to that, it is important to use simple font (Time New Roman), 12p and preferably double-spaced, since it is easy to read. The Cover letter should always be dated and signed at the bottom.

Job Interviews

Getting an interview means that you are half way there, but still a long way to go. Many good companies organise rounds of interviews in which they test their candidates as they make them do some ‘handson’ work and check their skills in practice. These steps are taken so that candidate(s) are diligently chosen and the company makes the best decision to suit their current needs. In the field of ICT, investing in human capital can be incredibly risky but in the same time is necessary to meet to the constant technological developments.

Interviews can differ hugely in respect to the purpose– getting to know candidates, asking questions or testing candidates. Sometimes there can even be more than one person interviewing the candidate. No matter what the format is there are essentials that candidates should have in mind.

The interview is your time to make a good impression and be the one candidate that stands out. What employers are looking for are people who come as close as possible to a ‘perfect match’. This means that the job requirements can be covered completely by the potential candidate. Body language is also a factor, which can be sensed at a subconscious level and speaks a lot about people. Having a good tone of voice and being positive is essential. Remember to dress appropriately for the occasion and position. Always bring a copy of all documents you have sent, since you might be asked questions on related to them. Dress appropriately and never be late!