

CHECKING YOUR ENGLISH AND USING GOOGLE TRANSLATE

INTRODUCTION TO THIS PDF

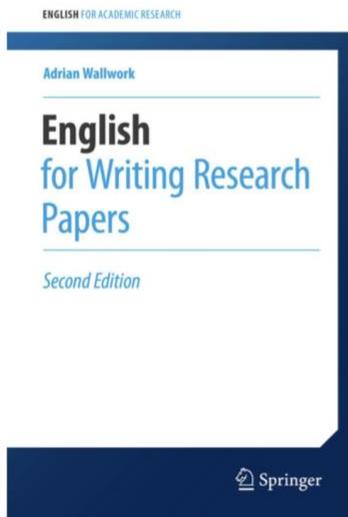
This document contains a template for writing a CV.

It is based on the Europass template and follows the same structure. However the Europass contains a lot of redundant headings which result in a very long CV.

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Adrian Wallwork

English for Writing Research Papers

Series: English for Academic Research

- At least two-thirds of published scientific papers are written by researchers whose first language is not English
- 20% of the comments referees make when reviewing papers for possible publication in international journals regard English language issues
- In some disciplines, acceptance rate by journals of papers originating from the US/UK is 30.4%, and is higher than all other countries

Publishing your research in an international journal is key to your success in academia. This guide is based on a study of over 1000 manuscripts and reviewers' reports revealing why papers written by non-native researchers are often rejected due to problems with English usage and poor structure and content. With easy-to-follow rules and tips, and examples taken from published and unpublished papers, you will learn how to: prepare and structure a manuscript increase readability and reduce the number of mistakes you make in English by writing concisely, with no redundancy and no ambiguity write a title and an abstract that will attract attention and be read decide what to include in the various parts of the paper (Introduction, Methodology, Discussion etc) highlight your claims and contribution avoid plagiarism discuss the limitations of your research choose the correct tenses and style satisfy the requirements of editors and reviewers This new edition contains over 40% new material, including two new chapters, stimulating factoids, and discussion points both for self-study and in-class use. EAP teachers will find this book to be a great source of tips for training students, and for preparing both instructive and entertaining lessons. Other books in the series cover: presentations at international conferences; academic correspondence; English grammar, usage and style; interacting on campus, plus exercise books and a teacher's guide to the whole series. Please visit <http://www.springer.com/series/13913> for a full list of titles in the series. Adrian Wallwork is the author of more than 30 ELT and EAP textbooks. He has trained several thousand PhD students and academics from 35 countries to write research papers, prepare presentations, and communicate with editors, referees and fellow researchers.

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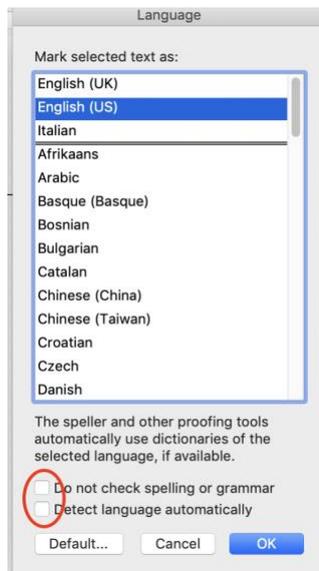
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Note that illegal downloads are killing parts of the publishing industry with a particular impact on authors. I personally feel that all academic books should be free and that governments should sponsor both publishers and authors. Unfortunately, this is not the case. So please obtain the books legally.

1 Using Microsoft Word's automatic spellcheck

Whenever you write a document in English, make sure you have the spelling function enabled. If you are writing a paper, check with your chosen journal what spelling (US or UK) is required. You can find this information in the 'Instructions to the Author'. Then follow these instructions:

1. Under 'Tools' choose 'Language'. Ensure that the two boxes (circled in red in the screenshot) are EMPTY like they are in the screenshot (i.e. not checked, and not with a little line across).



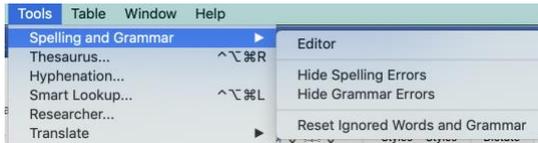
2. Under 'Tools' select 'Spelling and Grammar'. Ensure that 'Hide Spelling Errors' and 'Hide Grammar Errors' are NOT ticked.



3. Click 'Reset Ignored Words and Grammar'. This function is very useful if your document is made up of cut and pastes from other documents. It ensures that the entire new document follows the language that you have set, rather than being made up of a mixture of settings.
4. When your document is completed, click 'Editor'. For more details on spelling, including the kinds of typos that Word may NOT find.

2 Using Microsoft Word to check your English

Under 'Tools' in Microsoft Word you can find the 'Editor' function, as highlighted in the screenshot below.

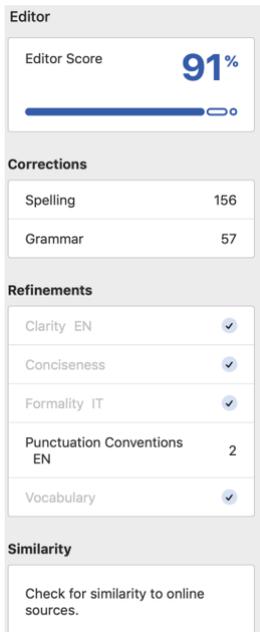


Note, depending on your version of Word, 'Editor' may appear under 'Spelling and Grammar' (as in the above screenshot) or it may be in the main menu:

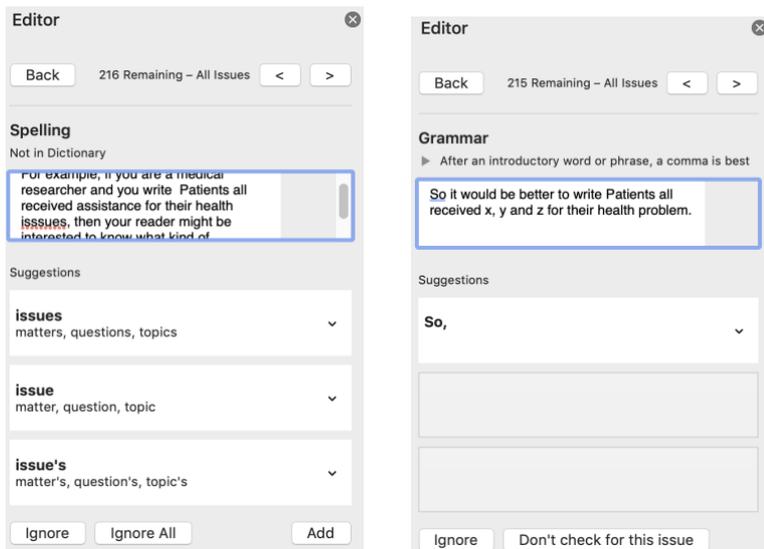


This function gives you an overall idea of the accuracy of your text.

In the example below, editor has found an incredible 156 possible spelling mistakes! However, many of these are likely to be words that are not contained in Word's dictionary, e.g. the names of authors, or spellings that Word doesn't like, e.g. *realise* rather than *realize*, both of which are, in reality, correct, but Word classifies the *-ize* form as being US English. Editor has also found 75 problems with grammar – again it is up to you to decide if they really are grammar mistakes or not. 'Editor' will help you in this decision by giving you explanations.



Editor suggests corrections to what it considers to be errors.



In the left-hand screenshot I have spelt *issues* with three s's. In the right-hand screenshot, Editor is suggesting that I follow *So* with a comma.

Microsoft Word will also highlight mistakes as you write them. Below is a screenshot from this book. Word has highlighted that *addiction* and *form* are probably the wrong words. If you right-click over the word or phrase, Word provides possible explanations and replacements.

typos	.. we did x. In addiction , we did y. This was purchased form IBM.	... we did x. In addition , we did y. This was purchased from IBM.
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Microsoft Word only provides these useful functions if you have enabled them in your settings.

3 Other useful applications to check your English

Below are some sites that might help you check your English

<https://context.reverso.net/traduzione/> - fantastic for showing sentences in English and your own language; also shows grammar items in different contexts (i.e. the usage of a particular tense)

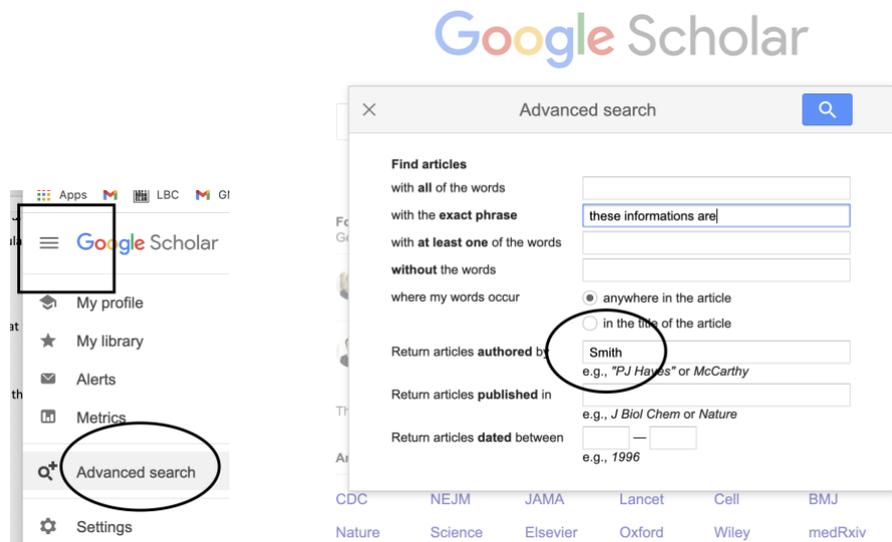
<https://www.linguee.com/> - similar to context.reverso

<https://www.wordreference.com/> - an excellent dictionary. However, I think the above three sites offer you more.

Applications such as Microsoft Word (see sections 1 and 2) are offering increasingly sophisticated means, not only to check your spelling but also your grammar. Make sure you have the latest version.

Note that the popular application Grammarly seems to be conceived for native speakers (i.e. it does not usually correct mistakes made by non-native speakers) and is focused on business texts and not academic papers.

https://scholar.google.com/#d=gs_asd – try using this trick with the ‘Advanced search’ of Google Scholar to filter out all non-native researchers:



4 Google Translate (GT) and translation software: when to use

Do not use GT (or DeepL etc.) to check your English, only to translate.

Depending on your native language, GT may be better at translating than you are. This is particularly true with major European languages.

My own studies with PhD students have shown that GT is more accurate than the average student. In fact, I now encourage students to write in their own language (modifying it as suggested in the following subsections) and then use GT to do the translation.

Clearly, if there are parts of your paper that you have already written in English, then it would make little sense to start again in your own language. However, if you have not written any parts of your paper, then I suggest you write in your own language and experiment with GT.

This does not mean that you have to write the entire paper in your language. If there are some sections that you feel confident about writing directly in English – for example the Methods section (i.e. the least complicated section from a linguistic point of view) – then write in English.

You can also use a mixture of your own language and English even within the same phrase. So if you are certain of a particular word or phrase in English, then you can insert this word or phrase directly into a sentence that is otherwise written in your own language. GT will then convert everything into English.

5 Preparing a text in your own language for submission to GT

To get the most accurate results from Google Translate, you need to make the text in your language follow some of the key rules of English and of good writing in general. You have much more control over your own language than you do over English, so the following recommendations should not be too difficult to implement.

1. Make your text as clear and concise as possible. Remember that you are writing for an incredibly wide range of readers. Don't try to impress them with 'elegant' writing skills.
2. Put verbs into the correct tense. Be particularly careful about using the simple past and simple present correctly: typically past to describe what you did, present to indicate what is already known.
3. Reduce the length of any long sentences. Also, divide up any long paragraphs – this will not help GT, but it will help your readers.

4. Remove redundancy. Imagine that the editor has told you to cut the paper by 25%, try to find ways to do this, but without removing key content.
5. Adopt an English-like word order. This may entail altering the word order of your own language, typically by putting the subject at the beginning of the sentence.
6. Look for any vague words or phrases and replace them with specific words and phrases. For example, if you are a medical researcher and you write *Patients all received assistance for their health issues*, then your reader might be interested to know what kind of *assistance*. So it would be better to write *Patients all received x, y and z for their health problem*. Obviously, avoid expressions such as *for a certain amount of time* (be exact), *several countries* (state how many or which ones) etc.
7. Check that you haven't used any synonyms for your key words. You should use the same key word throughout the paper. If you use synonyms, the reader may think you are referring to two different entities. Also, GT will make more sense of your text if a key word is always written the same.
8. Don't use masculine pronouns as generic pronouns, but only to refer to men and male animals. Instead try using the plural form of the noun so that you can use the third person plural pronoun.
9. Where there might be ambiguity, replace words such as *it, them, these, those, which* (i.e. the equivalents of these words in your own language) with the words that they refer to. This will help your readers immediately understand what you are referring to.
10. Where possible use active rather than passive forms. This helps both GT and your readers to understand who carried out the action.
11. If you already know the English version of a specialized a term, write this term directly into English. This will avoid any mistranslations by GT. Similarly, if you are sure of a particular phrase, write it directly in English. GT will leave any English words as they are and produce a uniform text all in English. You can even write an entire section in English, and GT will just translate the other sections.
12. Check for possible examples of the points mentioned in Sections 6 and 7.

It is much easier to carry out the above five modifications in your own language than it is for you to do it in English.

If you prepare your text in your own language before submitting it to GT, the resulting translation will be at least 95% correct, whereas most of the research papers that were written directly in English and that my editing agency (e4ac.com) corrects are less than 75% correct . Then all you have to do is to check Google's translation very carefully, just like you would do if you had translated manually. You will save a lot of time and make fewer mistakes!

Other translation software with a similar level of accuracy as Google Translate:

<https://www.deepl.com/en/translator>

<https://www.bing.com/translator>

6 Typical mistakes that Google Translate (GT) makes and does NOT make

GT is not consistent in the way it translates certain words and phrases. Sometimes it will translate them correctly, sometimes not. The tables below are based on my students' and clients' experiences of writing directly in English and using GT. They are not comprehensive, but they should give you an idea of how GT might actually be better than you are at translating from English!

6.1 GT often (but NOT always) avoids the following types of errors.

	Typical mistake that you might make in you were writing directly in English.	GT usually translates CORRECTLY using these blue versions.
adjective before noun	We used a doctor experienced to carry out the diagnosis.	We used an experienced doctor to carry out the diagnosis.
construction with <i>suggest</i> , <i>recommend</i>	The referee suggested / recommended us to rewrite the first section	The referee suggested / recommended that we (should) rewrite the first section.
<i>even if</i> vs <i>even though</i>	Even if the instructions to the author stipulate a maximum of 250 words we used 300.	Even though / Although the instructions to the author stipulate a maximum of 250 words we used 300.
false friends	This is the actual situation today. We found that $x = 1$. On the contrary, Smith et al. found that $x = 2$.	This is the current situation. We found that $x = 1$. In contrast / On the other hand,, Smith et al. found that $x = 2$.
noun strings	An internal strains collection	A collection of internal strains
preposition + ing vs inf	... without to receive any financial compensation.	... without receiving any financial compensation
simple past vs present perfect	First, we have weighed the samples.	First, we weighed the samples.

the / a	Using x as standard	Using x as a / the standard
typos	.. we did x. In addition, we did y. This was purchased form IBM.	... we did x. In addition , we did y. This was purchased from IBM.
verb / noun + preposition	X depends by Y and the association to Z.	X depends on Y and the association with Z.

6.2 GT generally does NOT avoid the following types of errors.

Clearly, GT is not a miracle machine, and for the moment tends to leave the mistakes outlined in the table below. For example, if in your language you do not use an initial capital letter for nationalities, GT will not use a capital letter in its translation, and vice versa. Likewise, if a sentence is ambiguous or vague in the original version in your language, it will be ambiguous or vague in GT's English version too.

Note: the mistakes given below are just some examples. This is NOT an exhaustive list.

	Typical mistake that you might make in you were writing directly in English.	GT would probably NOT translate correctly using these blue versions.
<i>allow</i>	This allows to reduce x.	This allows us * to reduce x. This allows x to be reduced. This reduces x. * GT tends to write <i>you</i> rather than <i>us</i> . The use of <i>you</i> is not appropriate in a paper.
capitalization	a european project in figure 1 We calculated the Odds Ratio by ... We used a Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) in order to ...	a European project in Figure 1 We calculated the odds ratio by ... We used a life cycle assessment (LCA) in order to ...
hyphens	The decision making task is ...	The decision-making task is ... Decision making is ...
numbers 1-10 in main text	Each test was replicated 3 times.	Each test was replicated three times.
position of <i>finally</i>	The samples were finally incubated in ...	Finally, the samples were incubated in ...
possible ambiguity	This analysis ... These considerations ... The method mentioned above ...	The xyz analysis The influence of xyz ... The xyz method (see Section 2.1) ...

* GT tends to correctly translate the most common nouns + prepositions and verbs + prepositions, e.g. *a comparison with, to depend on*.

6.3 GT will NOT normally compensate for the following issues:

REDUNDANCY For example, if in your original text you use a verb+noun construction, such as *this causes the reduction of x*, or *after the drying of the samples*, GT does NOT usually translate as *this reduces x* or *after drying the samples*. Another example: *As we can see from Figure 5, ... = Figure 5 shows ...*

WORD ORDER Good writing in English entails putting the main subject as close to the beginning of the sentence as possible, and then putting the verb and object immediately after. GT is a translator not an editor, so it rarely makes major adjustments in word order.

LONG SENTENCES GT will not divide up long sentences into shorter sentences.

PUNCTUATION MISTAKES For example, when you have a list that contains many commas, it is useful to group certain elements in the list together and separate them with a semicolon. GT will not do this for you!

SPELLING MISTAKES GT cannot deal with spelling mistakes in your original language that then cause the wrong word to be used in the English translation. Before you submit your original text, ensure that the spelling is 100% correct.

SPELLING AND CAPITALIZATION MISTAKES Stylistic rules differ from language to language particularly with reference to names of authors and formulas, indices, tests etc.; software; manufacturers etc. Double check that these are correct in your original version.

MISTAKES WITH ACRONYMS. Look for all acronyms in your original text and ensure that they are written in the English way. GT will not automatically translate acronyms. This means that if, in your language you write UE to indicate the European Union (EU), Google will not automatically convert UE into EU.

LEVEL OF FORMALITY. Research papers are written in formal English. If you use informal words in your original language, GT is likely to adopt a similar level of informality in its translation. In any case, be aware that the first word in the following pairs is generally the most appropriate (note: these are just some examples, there are several others): *reported/stated vs said, thus/consequently/therefore vs so, excellent vs brilliant/fantastic, until vs till, let us vs let's, a little vs a bit*

6.4 Problems that GT has with countable vs noun countable nouns.

GT will NOT usually generate a mistake such as the following:

 These informations / evidences are important.

Instead it will generate the correct version:

 This information / evidence is important.

In fact, in English *information* and *evidence* are uncountable nouns. This means that all words connected with them must be in the singular form (*this, is*) and not in plural form (*these, are*). However, GT has problems if the issue of countable vs uncountable also continues into the next sentence, as in the red example below.

 These informations / evidences are important. Consequently, they must be taken into account.

In these cases, GT will NOT generate the correct version. The correct version is shown below.

 This information / evidence is important. Consequently, it must be taken into account.

7 How to correct a translation that GT has made

First of all, have faith in GT. In terms of translations into English, it is much better than most people think, and has progressed considerably from its early days when it did indeed make some terrible mistakes! So, if you see something that you think that GT has made a mistake with, check with Google Scholar (see Section 3) to see if native authors tend to use such a word or phrase.

Trust GT in getting the correct order of a series of nouns. So if GT generates a heading or phrase such as

 The characterization of thermal properties

don't think that GT is wrong. So do NOT rewrite it as:

 Thermal properties characterization

If one word in your language has more than one translation in English, there is a good chance that GT can tell from the context which word is correct. For example, if GT generates:



To decide whether to use a particular sample or not, we ...

Do not correct *whether* with *if*.

However, if you are sure that GT is wrong, then check using Google Scholar or any of the applications listed in Section 3.

Interestingly, you will find that you are better at spotting the mistakes that GT makes (and be more motivated to do so) than you are when you try to spot your own mistakes. When we read a text that we have written, we tend to see what we THINK you have written, but not necessarily what we have really written. We are thus less likely to spot mistakes. Instead, when we are checking someone else's work (in this case GT's) we tend to pay more attention, and probably derive some pleasure from finding mistakes!

I am interested in hearing about your experiences with automatic translation (from your language into English). So please feel free to contact me with examples. If possible, present your examples in a similar way to how I have in this chapter. Email: adrian.wallwork@gmail.com



English for Writing Research Papers: 20 (how to check your paper before submission)

A note for teachers

In my own experiments with PhD students, I found that students make up to 30% fewer mistakes by using Google Translate, and that Google Translate tends to be at least 90% accurate (even 95% accurate if the source text is written well and is GT-ready).

My experiments were conducted over two courses. In the first course, students were taught how to write a scientific paper, but with no mention of using Google Translate (GT). As part of this course, students had to send me assignments for me to correct – I noted the number of mistakes that were made. In the second course, I introduced GT. In their initial assignments they sent me texts in their own language, Italian, and I suggested ways of modifying the Italian so that it reflects the style and rules of English. They then submitted their modified texts to GT, and finally corrected GT's version. Students also worked together by suggesting changes both to their partner's Italian and to their partner's final version in English.

I compared the accuracy of the GT texts that my students produced in the second course with previous texts that they had sent me in the first course and with full papers for publication that they and their professors had sent me for editing in previous years. My simple (and for the moment limited) experiments have convinced me that GT does a better job than most non-professional translators, provided of course that the GT-generated text is checked for mistakes.

If you are a teacher, I recommend that you test out GT. Don't be discouraged by bad Google translations that you have seen in the past, or by your own experiences of translating from English into another language. GT works best when translating technical texts from European languages into English. However, I have also tested it with Arabic, Chinese and Japanese. If the source texts are written simply and clearly, GT does a good job. But, I repeat, GT works best when translating into English, not from English. Also, the more technical the text, the better the translation. I would not advise using GT to translate colloquial English and complex emails.