GENERAL WRITING SKILLS

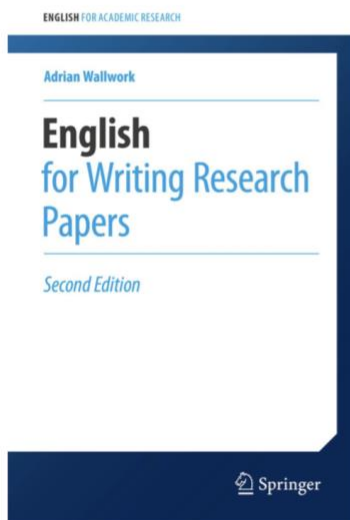## Adrian Wallwork

WHO IS THIS DOCUMENT FOR?

This document is primarily intended for students of my PhD English course on Scientific Communication. So some of what is written will only make sense if you have done the course.

However, most of what is contained herein should also be useful to anyone wishing to improving their writing skills – including native English speakers.

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ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Adrian Wallwork

English for Writing Research Papers

Second Edition

Springer

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Printed book

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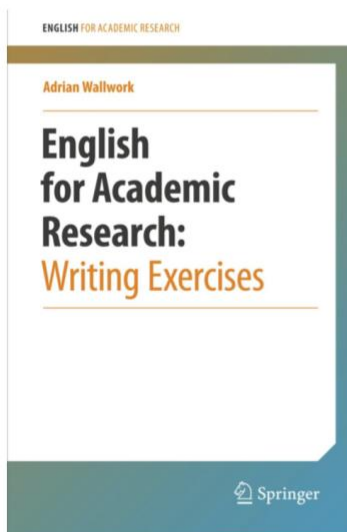
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Adrian Wallwork

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 With easy-to-follow rules and tips, and examples taken from published and unpublished papers, you will learn how to: prepare and structure a manuscript increase readability and reduce the number of mistakes you make in English by writing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.

ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Adrian Wallwork

English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises

Springer

2013, XV, 190 p.

Printed book
Softcover

16,95 € | £15.99 | $19.95
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Adrian Wallwork

English for Academic Research: Writing Exercises

Series: English for Academic Research

- Contains examples from around 5000 real-life papers
- Covers crucial skills in academic life, such as writing to journal editors and applying to research posts
- Has a clear, easy-to-use layout

This book is based on a study of referees' reports and letters from journal editors on reasons why papers written by non-native researchers are rejected due to problems with English (long sentences, redundancy, poor structure etc). It draws on English-related errors from around 5000 papers written by non-native authors, around 3000 emails, 500 abstracts by PhD students, and over 1000 hours of teaching researchers how to write and present research papers. The exercises are organized into ten chapters on: punctuation and spelling word order writing short sentences and paragraphs link words - connecting phrases and sentences together being concise and removing redundancy ambiguity and political correctness paraphrasing and avoiding plagiarism defining, comparing, evaluating and highlighting anticipating possible objections, indicating level of certainty, discussion limitations, hedging, future workwriting each section of a paper Some exercises require no actual writing but simply choosing between various options, thus facilitating self-study, e-reading and rapid progress. In those exercises where extended writing is required, model answers are given. Exercise types are repeated for different contexts, for example the importance of being concise is tested for use in papers, referees' reports, and emails of various types. Such repetition of similar types of exercises is designed to facilitate revision. The exercises can also be integrated into English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Special Purposes (ESP) courses at universities and research institutes. The book can be used in conjunction with the other exercise books in the series and is cross-referenced to: English for Research: Usage, Style, and Grammar English for Writing Research Papers

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.

The other books in the series are available directly from Springer:

https://www.springer.com/series/13913

If you want to do the course contact: adrian.wallwork@gmail.com

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BOOKS

We have written our own series of books entitled *English for Academic Research*, published by Springer. The books are specifically for non-native researchers to help you publish your papers, deal with editors/referees, give oral presentations (both 'in person' and online), write a CV / LinkedIn profile, and practise your English through exercises.

You can learn more about these books by clicking here.
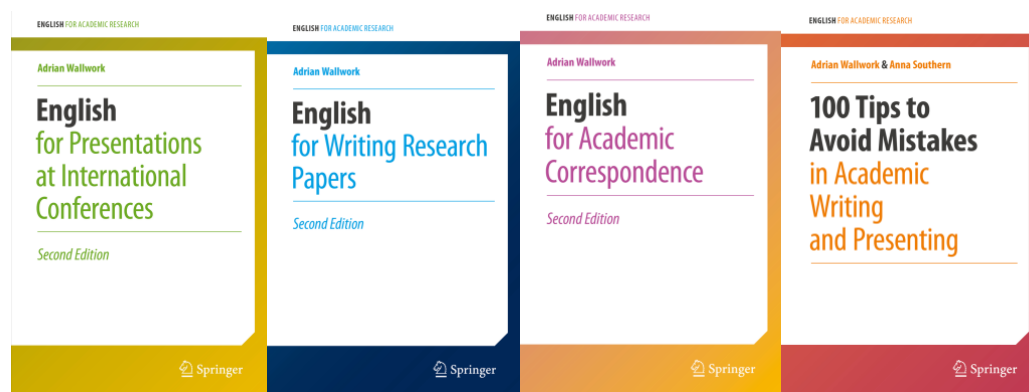
1 EMPATHY, RESPECT, THINKING FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW NOT YOURS

Why your papers need to be written in good clear English, so that:

- editors and reviewers will understand the novelty of your research and your key findings

- readers will find it easy to understand and remember, and be encouraged to cite your paper in their paper. The more cites you get, the higher you rise in the publishing hierarchy.

Key skill is RESPECT and EMPATHY: their point of view not yours

- Writing and speaking clearly – <u>generally</u> with short sentences

- Layout that is easy to see, read and understand

- Concrete concepts with lots of clear examples

- Minimum number of words, pages, slides, info

Helping them = Helping YOU

By helping the

1. readers of your paper

2. recipients of your emails

3. audience of your presentation

you are also helping yourself. If they understand, they will

1. continue reading and hopefully cite you in their papers
2. reply quickly to your emails
3. contact you after the presentation

EMPATHY means presenting info in simplest and most logical way possible

BAD! Minimal effort by **writer**, maximum effort for **reader**.

Human memory can be subdivided into **sensory memory** (by which we see a film as a continuous scene rather than a series of still images), **short-term memory** (as used for example when you mentally calculate 3 x 7 x 4), **declarative-learning long-term memory** (i.e. conscious recollection, for example of last week's English class), and **procedural-learning long-term memory** (of *how* to do something, for example play the piano).

GOOD! Minimal effort for READER, more effort by writer.

There are **four main types** of human memory. **First**, sensory memory, for example we see a film as a continuous scene rather than a series of still images. **Second**, short-term memory, this helps for example when you mentally calculate 3 x 7 x 4. **Third**, we have declarative-learning long-term memory. This means conscious recollection, for example, of last week's English class. **Finally**, procedural-learning long-term memory reminds us *how* to do something, for example play the piano.

Key guidelines to writing

The point is **not** complexity and 'elegance'. The point is **not** good vs bad.

The point is: is this text **effective** or not?

If you want:

- referees to accept your paper

- readers to understand you

- your research proposals to be funded

- your CV to be read and understood (so that you get a job)

- people to reply to your emails

Use short simple sentences and short paragraphs. Not just in English but in your own language too.

The more difficult a task is, the more negative the emotions attached to it.

The more difficult it is for …

- the reader to find your key results in a paper
- your audience to understand a graph in your presentation
- your recipient to find/understand your request in an email
- a Human Resources manage to find info on your CV

… the more negative the image they will have of you.

There is a direct correlation between poor "writing skills" and lower chances of publication.

NATIVE SPEAKING reviewers and readers do NOT want:

- Unnecessary effort (long sentences, poor organization, <u>redundancy</u>)
- Findings that are not highlighted
- Ambiguity / Unclear sentences
- Contribution / Innovation not clear
- Spelling mistakes

All the above show lack of empathy for the reader. The reader is forced to try to make sense of poorly written work. Papers and projects are NOT normally rejected for a few grammar or vocabulary mistakes. But CVs are rejected even for just one mistake.

Projects and papers ARE rejected because they require too much mental effort by the reviewers.

Spelling indicates that you didn't check your paper, so the reviewers may think that perhaps you didn't check your data or your results. Poor spelling <u>could</u> be an indicator of an unreliable researcher.

Always think about your audience: readers, reviewers, recipients of emails, people watching your presentation

Think in terms of *them them them* NOT *me me me*. What do **they** want to know? Read first? Hear first? How can I make it easier for **them**?

2 HOW TO WRITE A SHORT SENTENCE

Example of a very simples sentence with one part only:

English is often considered to be the simplest language.

Simple Sentence. Two parts.

Of all the languages in the world, English is often considered to be the simplest.

The key information should NOT be placed in the *middle* of the sentence.

English, *which is the international language of communication*, is now studied by 1.1 billion people.

English, *which is now studied by 1.1 billion people*, is the international language of communication.

Don't put the subject too far from the key information

NO!! English, which owes its origins to the Anglo Saxons (a tribe who lived in what is now Denmark and Northern Germany) and is the international language of communication, in part due to the importance of the USA, rather than the Queen of England, is now studied by 1.1 billion people.

Don't hide the subject in the middle of the phrase

NO!! Owing to its origins to the Anglo Saxons (a tribe who lived in what is now Denmark and Northern Germany), English is the international language of communication, in part due to the importance of the USA, rather than the Queen of England, and is now studied by 1.1 billion people.

Solution: Divide up the sentence into smaller parts

YES!! English owes its origins to the Anglo Saxons, who were a tribe from what is now Denmark and Northern Germany. // It has become the international language of communication. // This is in part due to the importance of the USA, rather than the Queen of England. // English is now studied by 1.1 billion people.

Good ways to divide up a sentence

parentheses

> NO!! English, which owes its origins to the Anglo Saxons *(a tribe who lived in what is now Denmark and Northern Germany).*

intervening or relative clause (... , which , ...)

> NO!! English*, which owes its origins to the Anglo Saxons,* is …

and or another link word

> NO!! …. a tribe who lived in what is now Denmark and northern Germany, *and is the international language of communication,*

a lot of commas

> NO!! … is the international language of communication, *in part* due to the importance of the USA, rather than the Queen of England, *is* now studied by 1.1 billion people.

Having shorter sentences also makes it easier to change their order

English owes its origins to the Anglo Saxons, who were a tribe from what is now Denmark and Northern Germany. // English has become the international language of communication. // This is in part due to the importance of the USA, rather than the Queen of England. // English is now studied by 1.1 billion people.	English is now studied by 1.1 billion people. It owes its origins to the Anglo Saxons, who were a tribe from what is now Denmark and Northern Germany. // English has become the international language of communication. // This is in part due to the importance of the USA, rather than the Queen of England.

Guidelines on sentence length

Write your first draft without thinking too much about the length of the sentences. Then look for long sentences read them aloud. If you have to inhale, you need to divide up the sentence.

- Do NOT write a <u>series</u> of sentences of only 5-15 words.
- Occasionally use short sentences to attract attention (particularly in Abstract and Discussion).
- <u>Generally speaking</u>, avoid sentences of more than 35 words.

NB: clarity (chiarezza) and readability are independent of sentence length.

Your main aim is to maintain readers' interest so that they continue reading (or listening).

3 AVOIDING REDUNDANCY / BEING CONCISE

Being smart does NOT mean writing in a complicated way or filling your sentences with elegant-sounding redundancy.

1. This will be done in the month of December. *month* is generic, *December* is specific. If possible, just use the specific word.

2. During the maturation process, the plant grows to ten times its original size. maturation is a process, avoid pointless abstract words

3. We did x. This **choice** meant that … You may get confused with the spelling (*choice, choose, chose*)

4. As can be seen, Figure 1 highlights that x = y. Cut redundant phrases at the beginning of a sentence. Try to put the subject at the beginning instead.

5. The activity aimed at the extrapolation of X is not trivial. You may not know if it is aim at or to. Passive: This is aimed at . Active: We aim to + infinitive

6. The summary statements presented above represent the authors' current perceptions in relation to the results. Since the work is ongoing, these statements should only be viewed as conclusions to the extent that it is the author's intention and aim to embellish them in the light of subsequent events. If you are particularly pleased with something you have written, because it sounds very eloquent or shows the high level of your English, then DELETE IT!

7. It was yellow in colour and round in *shape / form*. You may not be sure if you require shape or form. If you delete it, you avoid making a mistake.

If you cut redundant words it is impossible to make mistakes with them! They add no value for the reader. They are not concrete.

If you reduce the number of NON key words then the real key words will stand out of the text much better.

57 non key words

Even though GC/MS and GC-C-IRMS are the main techniques reported in the literature for the study of organic residues, recently, we have seen an increasing in the applications of high-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) mainly coupled with liquid chromatography. It provides the opportunity of performing accurate mass measurements, has shown its enormous capability to distinguish isobaric compounds thanks to the determination of exact molecular mass and elemental composition. In addition, when the instrumental asset makes it possible, the interpretation of tandem mass spectra allows the elucidation of chemical structures, even in the case of isomers, to be obtained.

26 non key words, but the same key words

GC/MS and GC-C-IRMS are the key techniques for studying organic residues. However, high-resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS) coupled with liquid chromatography is becoming more common. Through accurate mass measurements, HRMS differentiates between isobaric compounds by determining the exact molecular mass and elemental composition. In addition, tandem mass spectra can potentially reveal the underlying chemical structures, even for isomers.

Reduce the number of non-key words:

- Quicker for reader to read.

- Your key words and your key points will stand out much more.

- You will be cited more in other papers.

Other ways to reduce redundancy

Prefer <u>verbs</u> to <u>nouns</u>

X was used in the calculation of Y.

X was used to calculate Y.

Prefer a <u>verb</u> to a <u>verb + noun</u> construction

This allows the analysis of X to be performed.

This allows you to analyse X.

This allows X to be analysed.

A comparison was made between X and Y.   X and Y were compared.

X showed a better performance than Y. X performed better than Y.

Forget elegance. Often you can write more succinctly whilst still retaining the same information and being 100% clear.

Summary

Remove redundant words (and even whole sentences, paragraphs, sections)

For a period of six months   For six months

Reduce number of words

This gives us the possibility to do x   This allows us to do x

Use verbs instead of nouns

We made an analysis of x   We analysed x

Why be concise? You will not write like a child! Learning to be concise is not an option, it is essential.

4 WRITING A PARAGRAPH

First sentence: introduces overall topic

> Different writers have different methods of organizing their reports, and some seem to have no discernible method at all.

Sentences are linked together - an idea from one sentence is recalled in the next sentence

> **Different writers** have different methods of organizing their reports, and some seem to have no discernible method at all. Most of the **better writers**, however, appear to be in remarkably close agreement as to the general **approach** to **organization**. This **approach** consists of stating the problem, describing the method of attack, developing the results, discussing the results, and summarizing the conclusions. You may feel that this type of **organization** is obvious, logical, and natural.

Max. of <u>two</u> ideas per sentence

> You may feel that this type of organization is obvious, logical, and natural. (one idea)

> Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted. (one idea)

> For example, many writers present results and conclusions near the beginning, and describe the derivation of these results in subsequent sections. (two ideas)

Repeating key words is OK

> Different **writers** have different methods of organizing their reports, and some seem to have no discernible method at all. Most of the better **writers**, however, appear to be in remarkably close agreement as to the general approach to organization. .. Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted. For example, many **writers** present results and conclusions near the beginning, and describe the derivation of these results in subsequent sections.

Don't use different words to mean the same key concept: NO! writer, author, researcher; NO! test, experiment, trial; NO! gold, metal, precious item; NO! Rome, the city on the seven hills, the capital of Italy. Just choose ONE word, and always use that word.

Vary the length of sentences

You may feel that this type of organization is obvious, logical, and natural. Nevertheless, it is not universally accepted. (6 words)

For example, many writers present results and conclusions near the beginning, and describe the derivation of these results in subsequent sections. (21 words)

The scientists and engineers who work at NASA are among the most intelligent people in the world. They <u>can</u> understand long complex sentences. But they decide to use short simple sentences and paragraphs in the documents that they write for each other. You should do the same.

5 WORD ORDER

English word order is rigid. These three (SVO) must go as close together as possible.

1 subject   2 verb   3 object

Subject EINSTEIN verb LOVED object SCIENCE

Subject SCIENCE verb FASCINATED object EINSTEIN

Which is best?

The new feature for the calculation of X is particularly interesting for researchers in this field

X can now be calculated with a new feature which is particularly interesting for researchers in this field

Probably the first, but it may depend on what you want your readers to focus on.

Why is putting the subject at beginning of sentence important?

We have mentioned a number of different factors that can improve one's writing of scientific papers, however there is one factor that is even more important than the others (ie conciseness, sentence length, blah blah and blah blah, using verbs instead of nouns) and this factor is rarely taken into consideration by writers although it is absolutely fundamental; that factor is, of course, putting the subject at the beginning of the sentence.

(67 words)

Putting the subject at the beginning of the sentence is fundamental in improving one's writing of scientific papers. However, unlike the other factors (ie conciseness, sentence length, using verbs instead of nouns) it is rarely taken into consideration by writers.

(40 words)

If you put the subject first:

- Forces you to think what the best subject is.
- Reader doesn't have to read complete sentence to discover what it is about.
- Forces you to use shorter sentences and be more direct.
- Reduces the number of words needed.
- Reduces the number of mistakes.

NB You are not writing a thriller!

Put the main verb near the beginning of the sentence

Various European languages including Italian, and Portuguese, along with Hindi, Russian and Chinese (which has only recently been added to this list), can be learned using this method.

Various languages can be learned using this method. These include European languages such as Italian and Portuguese, along with Hindi, Russian and Chinese. Chinese has only recently been added to this list.

If you use an ACTIVE form, then the verb will be near the <u>beginning</u> of the sentence instead of the <u>end</u>. This makes the sentence easier to read.

Direct object <u>before</u> <u>indirect object</u>

We sent our manuscript to the journal.

1 Subject We

2 Verb sent

3 Direct object manuscript

4 Indirect object journal

If the direct object is very long: split sentence + repeat the direct object

NO!!!! We sent our manuscript, which had taken six years to research and six months to write (before being accepted after three reviews and two rejections), to the journal.

YES!!!!! We sent our manuscript to the journal. The manuscript had originally taken …

Always think about the best order to present information to the reader

If the negative part of a concept is the most important thing, put this info first.

NO!!! Finding a candidate with all the right qualifications, with a high level of communications skills, a good knowledge of at least two languages and a friendly personality is <u>not an easy task</u>.

= It is <u>not easy </u>to find …

If sense is negative, use a negative form and use it near the beginning of the sentence.

Penso che lei non venga alla lezione. I don't think she is coming to the lesson.

Ho poco tempo. I don't have much time.

Ho meno amici di te. I don't have as many friends as you.

Va al cinema raramente. She rarely goes to the cinema.

Give the bad news first.

Don't delay subject with an impersonal expression beginning with *it is advisable, probable, likely, mandatory etc that*

It is advisable that a foreign language should be learned at a young age.

= A foreign language should be learned at a young age.

Other ways to avoid sentences that begin: *It is*

It is interesting to note that …

Note that … **(remove redundancy)**

It is probable that X will happen.

X will *probably* happen. **(use *adverbs*)**

It is obligatory to do this.

This *must*

In the above sentences, the key concept is shifted towards the beginning of the sentence.

Talking about aims

Which is better?

1. You are doing this course in your own time but at the expense of your department in order to learn English.

2. In order to learn English you are doing this course. The course takes place in your own time but at the expense of your department.

When you explain a new game to someone, do you tell them the rules then the objective, or vice versa?

Reader's expectations:

1) aim 2) how

1. Aim = why you are doing something

2. How = the means with which you do it

Don't insert parenthetical information between subject and verb (i.e. don't use *frasi incisi*)

English, although currently the international language of business, may one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese.

The above construction separates the subject (*English*) from the verb (*may*).

The constructions below keep the subject and verb together.

Although English is currently the international language of business, it may one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese.

English may one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese, *even though* it is currently the international language of business.

English is currently the international language of business. *However,* it may one day be replaced by Spanish or Chinese.

Summary of Word Order

Subject + verb + object + indirect object	Don't insert parenthetical information
Subject at beginning of sentence	Negative ideas at beginning of sentence
Verb near as possible to beginning of sentence	Adverbs between auxiliary and main verb – see a grammar for an explanation
Don't separate subject from verb	Past participles after the noun - – see a grammar for an explanation

6 AVOIDING PLAGIARISM AND CUT & PASTES AS WELL AS MISTAKES

Imagine you want to paraphrase the following statement by Madonna (musician, dancer born 1959)

Madonna Ciccone claimed that Italians do it * better (Ciccone et al, 1998).   * make love

SYNONYMS

Ciccone proposed / suggested / stated / found / revealed that …

Italians perform preliminary reproductive activity / execute the coital task …

ACTIVE TO PASSIVE

It has been claimed / proposed / suggested / stated / found / revealed that … (Ciccone, 1998)

DIFFERENT FORM, DIFFERENT WORD ORDER

According to (Ciccone, 1998), Italians outperform the rest of the world in terms of levels of enjoyment between consenting adults in a bedroom scenario.

The Italian race tends to perform the fornicatory act in an enhanced manner (Ciccone, 1998).

Paraphrasing avoids:

- Plagiarism
- Repetition of phrases within your paper
- Mistakes – if you are not 100% sure of what you have written, paraphrase it (generally by simplifying)

Life-saving rule: Only write what you know is 100% correct

Why you need to check your English

How does this sound?

Scrittori diversi hanno diverse metodi di organizzazione dei loro rapporti, e alcuni sembrono avere alcun methodo visibile a tutti. La maggior parte degli scrittori migliori, tuttavia, sembrano essere in straordinariamente vicino un accordo per l'approccio generale di organizzazione.

The above is how your English sounds to me: easy to understand, but inaccurate. It doesn't create a professional impression.

Useful applications to 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 – I find it less appealing

https://ludwig.guru/ - based in Palermo, so be patriotic and try it out. Has some great features including 'paraphrase your sentence' 'compare frequency'.

https://www.wordreference.com/ - this is a dictionary. Personally, I really don't see the point of dictionaries when the three sites above offer so much more

https://textranch.com/ - try this new site which was set up in the US by two Italians. One day this site will be THE site for checking your English

grammarly – this application is totally misleading. It is designed to help native speakers not people like you. Microsoft Word's own grammar and vocabulary check is just as effective.

Google Scholar

Use my Smith trick in the 'Advanced search' of Google Scholar. This filters out all non-native researchers.
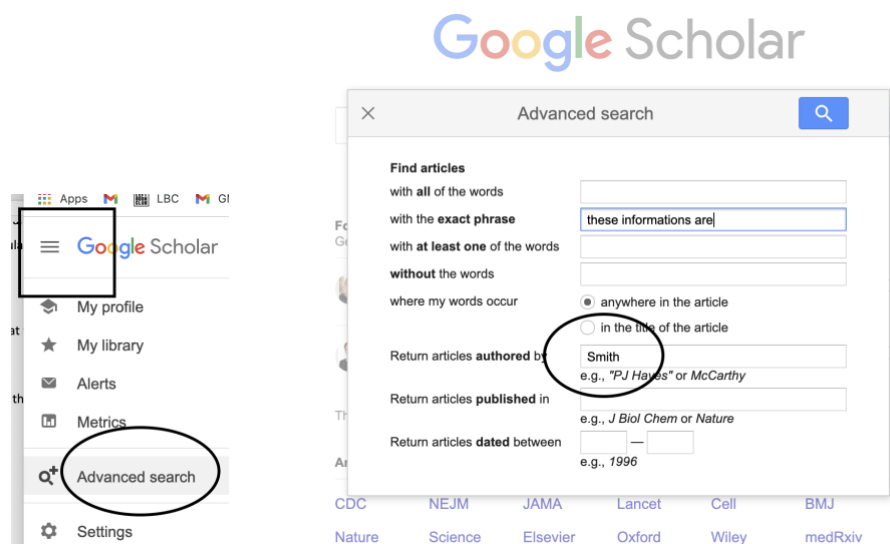
Google Translate (GT)

Do not use GT to check your English, only to translate.

In my opinion GT is better than translating than you are. To really enhance the translation modify the Italian version by reducing sentence length, deleting redundancy, and trying to adapt an English-like word order. The result will be at least 95% correct. Then all you have to do is to check it very carefully, just like you would do if you had translated manually. You will save a lot of time!

You can paste in the entire script of your presentation and press the sound icon to hear it.

You can also post lists of individual words. Make sure you place a period (.) after each word – this slows down the speaker.

Other translating software:

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

https://www.bing.com/translator

Why papers get rejected: Too much mental effort.

1   Long convoluted complex sentences

2   Redundancy

3   Words in the wrong order

4   Massively long paragraphs

5   **Ambiguity and lack of clarity**

Don't fill your paper or your oral presentation with abstract words and ideas.

Don't think you are super-smart by using complex terms.

Write and speak using the simplest most direct terminology.

Put the elements in a sentence in the most logical order.

They delivered food to the elderly residents living locally in a large box.

They delivered food in a large box to the elderly residents living locally.

Like Sandra, he had dark brown hair, with enormous black eyebrows, a moustache and a short beard.

He had enormous black eyebrows, a moustache and a short beard, and like Sandra he had dark brown hair. //// Like Sandra he had dark brown hair. His eyebrows were black and enormous, and he had a moustache and a short beard

Make sure subjects are next to their verbs.

If you take your dog in the car don't let him hang out of a window **while driving**.

If you take your dog in the car don't let him hang out of a window **while you are driving**.

Gerunds don't have subjects so they can be ambiguous

I found a **bug using** the software.

While I was using the software I found a bug.

Ambiguity with gerund

Inflation should go down **reducing** taxes.

Does this mean inflation will go down :

    a)   **before** taxes are reduced

    b)   **after** taxes have been reduced

    c)   ????

First taxes will be reduced and then inflation will go down.

= Inflation will go down **by reducing** taxes.

Inflation will go down first and then taxes will go down.

= Inflation will go down, **thus reducing** taxes.

THUS + gerund = and the consequence is / and then (temporal) [hence, therefore, so]

BY + gerund = this is how it will happen

Avoid using : *it, they, this, that, one* and *the former/latter*

Instead, repeat the word that these pronouns refer to.

When *the former/latter* is OK:

There are two countries involved in the project: France and Italy.   The <u>latter</u> initiated the collaboration in 2020.

There is no possible ambiguity in the above sentence.

When *the former/latter* is <u>not</u> OK

There are two countries involved in the project: France and Italy. Blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah blah. The <u>latter</u> initiated the collaboration in 2020.

9 THE FINAL CHECK

Make your paper looks like it has already been published by your chosen journal.

- Title – of similar type and length as journal
- Length of each section
- Use of headings and subheadings
- Structure of each section – particularly the abstract
- Content of Conclusions / Last paragraphs of Discussion
- Layout: use of white space and length of paragraphs

Get a referee's report sheet and use it as a checklist for your own paper.

For every paragraph you write, ask yourself: **Will the reader understand** i) why I have done x, y, z? ii) and why it is important that I did x,y and z?

Cut drastically – words, sentences, paragraphs, tables, figures, even subsections. Only leave what readers need to know. You can probably delete 25% without removing useful content.

You will discover the joy of destruction. And your referees and your readers will be very happy!

Check that

- paragraphs are not too long

- concordance (i.e. singular subject + singular verb)

- letter to editor

- there are NO spelling mistakes

Get colleagues to check too

FINAL THOUGHTS

Four <u>myths</u> of communicating in academia. You must:

1. Have a flowery style.

2. Be formal and serious.

3. Prioritize quantity over quality.

4. Show the Reader / Recipient / Audience how smart you are rather than making life easy for them.

REMOVE THE ABOVE FOUR IDEAS FROM YOUR HEAD!

Key message: empathy and respect. Minimal effort by reader and audience.

Remember: Empathy is **NOT** just listening, smiling, hugging.

Do not put yourself first - - understand what your readers/listeners need and will make them happy.

Stop thinking that someone who doesn't do what you want is by default an imbecile.

Do not go into defensive mode when you are criticized or when someone says something you don't agree with. Instead, listen.

Challenge the myths of how we communicate: stop thinking about being a scientist and start thinking about improving your communication and understanding what is interesting and what is not.