Drafting, editing & proofreading

Drafting

Drafting refers to the process of writing assignments and the subsequent editing and reviewing of your writing in order to get it right. There is no right number of drafts you need to complete before your work is ready for submission; this is largely down to you and your writing style. However, the following guide takes you through the first and second draft, and then through the editing process you will undertake when finalising your assignments.

First draft

Your first draft will not be a masterpiece; this is not the purpose of a first draft! A first draft is about getting your ideas onto the page, without worrying too much about word choice, structure, spelling, grammar or clarity. These come in later drafts. As such, a first draft can be very liberating to write as it is free of the confines of spelling and grammar. Here are the things you should focus on in your first draft.

Use your essay plan

If you are using an essay plan (and this is highly recommended) then use it to stay on topic and focused throughout your first draft. Although your first draft should be loose in terms of structure and language, you must distinguish this draft from your essay plan. As Flesch and Lass (1996) state: "Your plan and your notes tell the story in too much of a hurry. They are good reminders for yourself, but they are too brief for a reader" (p. 32). You will need to 'flesh out' the ideas on your essay plan by beginning to explain and contextualise ideas and introduce your critical analysis. (See more: Essay Plans)

Just write!

It's unlikely that anyone but you will ever see your first draft. Your first draft gives you a license to write how you like as all corrections can be made later. Fowler and Aaron (1998) recommend writing fluidly at this point to encourage spontaneity and increase your receptiveness to ideas and critique as you go. If you can't find the correct word, then highlight the closest thing so that you can revisit word choice later. Don't be overly critical of your writing style at this point; if you can't resist then make these criticisms in a different colour so you can come back to them.
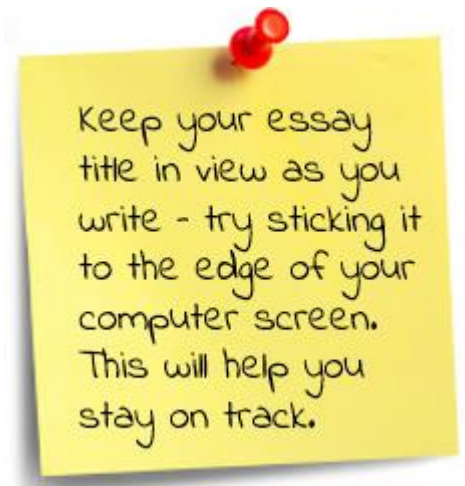
Outline

Use headings and subheadings on your document to group your ideas and organise your evidence. You can remove these in your editing process if they aren't permitted in your assignment brief. This will allow you to start writing at any point in your assignment without worrying about structure at this point

Interpret the essay question

Make sure you know the question you are answering. This will help you stick to the essentials rather than going off on a tangent. You can use your essay plan to check that your writing is on topic as you go. If you are slightly unsure about what is being asked, then go back to your assignment brief to identify the approach to take and what your writing should cover.

See more: Interpreting the Essay Question

> Keep your essay title in view as you write - try sticking it to the edge of your computer screen. This will help you stay on track.

Clarify your position

"It is important to state your position clearly – although some people like to sit on the fence, so that might be important too" (Cottrell, 2019, p. 106). Joking aside, your first draft is a great time to clarify your position and the argument that is being made in your writing. This means clearly stating your main ideas, conclusions and line of reasoning.

Paragraph power

The main body of your assignment will be made up of paragraphs. Paragraphs are the building blocks of any essay and are used to organise the information you wish to convey so your reader can access similar information within the same section. Here is a suggested paragraph structure to follow:

The effect of the prison environment on a woman has been stated to contribute to a loss of liberty. Carlen (1998) suggests that the act of confinement diminishes physical and psychological space, leading a woman to consider her cell environment as 'polluted space'. Medlicott (2007) corroborates this through the observation that female prisoners receive more disciplinary measures than their male counterparts due to disobedience propagated by the distress of confinement. As Sykes (1958) has previously demonstrated, it is more the act of confinement that contributes to a woman's loss of liberty during imprisonment.

^ Extract taken from 3rd Year Undergraduate Dissertation

Topic sentence
Statement that sets out the content of the paragraph, which conveys the perspective, stance or argument being made

Supporting evidence
Evidence analysed and arranged according to the topic sentence

Critical evaluation
Your own evaluation of why this is important or relevant and what is indicated, impacted or suggested

Further reading: 'Chapter 3: Writing and revising paragraphs' in Fowler, H.R. & Aaron, J.E. (1998). *The little, brown handbook.* (7th ed.). New York, NY: Longman.

Add in the evidence

Hamilton likens evidence in an essay to "chocolate chips in a cookie – you need plenty…, and, ideally, they should be evenly distributed" (2011, p.103). Typically, two pieces of evidence per paragraph is an excellent starting point, but you may come across more in your reading that you wish to include. However, be mindful that you don't overwhelm your writing with evidence; it should be used to convey your own voice and understanding, not mute it! At this point, attempt to paraphrase the evidence, but don't worry about this too much. You can always insert quotes into your work with a view to paraphrasing them during your editing process. **Make sure you cite as you go so you can retrace where evidence originated!**

Create links

Your first draft is a great time to note the links between paragraphs and evidence, so that you can make these clearer in future drafts. Connect your sentences so you know which ideas belong together; don't worry about coherence at this point; just get your points linked. Use signposts to indicate to your reader the direction of your argument i.e. *however, in contrast, furthermore.* See more: Signposting in your essays

Second draft

Your second draft will require careful consideration of the argument you are making. If you have planned your time, then you will be able to take a couple of days off from this assignment and revisit it with a fresh perspective. You will need to scrutinise your writing to ensure that your line of reasoning is clear, and your argument progresses throughout the paragraphs. Use the flowchart in Figure 1 to see what you should be focusing on in your second draft.

Beginning, middle & end

Your second draft is the best place to draft an introduction and conclusion too, so you have all of the relevant components ready for the editing process. Once your main paragraphs have been redrafted, you can then focus on how you will introduce the essay now that all of the information is in place, and how you will conclude the essay, now that you have considered the evidence required to make recommendations and summarise. See more: Writing introductions and conclusions

Put feedback into action!

Your second draft is a great time to put any feedback you have received on previous assignments into action. Go through your feedback point by point and make sure that you are checking for similar errors in this draft and amending them. See more: Handling feedback

Further reading: 'Chapter 4: Structuring the essay' in Hamilton, C.L. (2011). *Anthem guide to essay writing.* London, UK: Anthem Press.

Second Draft

1. Does the first draft have an essay structure?

Go to Point 2	← **Yes** ← It is arranged into paragraphs that flow and link appropriately
See **Well-crafted sentences** — Focus on connecting or reformulating your notes into full sentences to ensure your ideas	← **No** ← It is written in note form / the sentences aren't connected/ there is no clear structure

2. Read your first draft aloud. How does it sound?

Go to Point 3	← **Confident** ← My argument and line of reasoning is clear and easy to understand
See **Developing Arguments** — Focus on making sense of your argument and clarifying your position.	← **Stilted** ← My argument isn't clear and reading it aloud sounds clunky and disconnected
See **Wordiness & Waffle** — Focus on clarifying your writing style and reducing sentence length.	← **Rambling** ← My argument isn't clear and reading it aloud sounds wordy and cumbersome

3. Are the individual paragraphs linked?

Go to **Editing Guide**	← **Linked** ← My paragraphs are clearly signposted and the links between them are clear
See **Signposting in Essays** — Focus on links between paragraphs to indicate where the argument is going.	← **Not linked** ← My paragraphs are not linked and there are no signposts to indicate argument flow
See **Paragraph Power** — Focus on paragraph content and shuffling things into a logical order.	← **Unstructured** ← My paragraphs are linked but the flow seems illogical; the argument goes back and forth

Figure 1: Second draft flowchart

Editing

Editing is the process through which you can review, revise and reformulate your assignments to make your writing more academic. Academic writing is characterised by several elements: precision, clarity, formality, structure, balance, critique, and literality. The editing process referred to in this guide is directed by these principles but is by no means an absolute guide to editing your assignments.

Structural flow

Overall structure

When a document flows, the writer's argument, logic and line of reasoning are clear (Billingham, 2002). When editing document flow, you are reviewing the position of a particular piece of information in relation to other information and considering whether the positioning is effective. This is measured through links between preceding and subsequent paragraphs and signposting.

Paragraphs

Each paragraph must act as a container for a specific set of related thoughts, evidence and evaluation, and must reflect what is required by the assignment brief and include your main point being made, the evidence you have acquired to support or refute it, and your critical evaluation or your voice.

Try editing between a paper copy and an electronic copy, or if you prefer to work electronically all the time, then save your versions as separate documents, and compare them side by side, so you can view your paragraph development.

Linguistic flow

According to Billingham (2002):

> *Each word needs to fall into the most natural place in the sentence so that you can read the text aloud without it sounding clumsy or artificial... It is acceptable to start sentences with 'and' or 'but', to split infinitives, or to end a sentence with a preposition if that is the best way to make the sense clear. Readers should be able to concentrate on what they are reading, not how it is written (p. 48).*

Writing with precision and clarity is a challenge many students face, especially if they are used to descriptive writing. Academic writing needs to be specific and clear throughout, so that your argument can be accessed by the greatest number of people, from all backgrounds and cultures. Remember, academic work should spread knowledge and transcend geographical borders, so your editing process will need to consider sentence constructions and word choices.

Sentence constructions

If you are prone to including long sentences in your academic work, then this should be in your editing crosshairs. Although a sentence might make sense to you, there is a high possibility that your audience will find it tiresome and difficult to derive meaning. Here are some tips to help you identify sentences that might be problematic:

A sentence should contain no more than two commas - if you have more than two, then your sentence needs to be broken down into smaller ones. Look for linking words such as *but, and,*

✘	A recent report shows that the top dog food manufacturers are growing concerned by the falling sales of their wet and dry foods, laying the blame for decreased sales on Millennials who are opting for niche brands, and spending more money on dog food than ever before, but this might be attributed to the better level of care Millennials are giving their pets.
✓	A recent report shows that top dog food manufacturers are concerned by the fall in sales, who lay this blame on Millennial dog owners. Millennials are reportedly spending more on niche brands of dog food, which might be attributed to the higher level of care this generation provides for their pets.

or and use these as sentence break markers:

Keep the subject of your sentence as close to the verb as possible, to make clear who is doing what. More distance between the subject and the finite verb means additional difficulty for your reader's comprehension (Day, 2018).

✘	Dog owners need to be aware that the two most important contributing factors to their physical, psychological and social well-being, are exercise and a healthy diet.
✓	Dog owners need to be aware that exercise and a healthy diet are the two most important contributors to physical, psychological and social well-being.

Consider your use of *-ing* verbs (present participles) as they can be used to extend a sentence unnecessarily.

✘	Designer dog brands are increasing in popularity due to the growing amount of celebrities advertising ownership and promoting luxury dog products.
✓	Designer dog brands have increased in popularity due to the growth of celebrity advertisements in dog ownership and luxury dog products.

Word choice

Academic writing is literal and precise. In your editing process, look out for words where their meaning is unclear. Don't opt for the bigger word to create an academic tone as you might end up 'belaboring the obvious' (Williams, 1990, p. 119). Heed Billingham's advice: "Try thinking about longer words as high-calorie snacks… use too many long words and the text becomes stodgy and difficult to digest. Remember to watch your reader's diet" (2002, p. 81). However, specialist vocabulary is necessary and encouraged, and informal language shouldn't be used in your assignments. The key is **balance**.

Additionally, be on the lookout for words and phrases which might be redundant and can therefore be deleted. Redundant words in academic writing are typically **modifiers** (words that modify another word to change or qualify the meaning). Redundant phrases are a string of words that can be replaced with a single word, or in some cases, a string of words is used where the similarity is so strong, there is no needs for all of them. The grid below demonstrates some common constructions used in writing that could be edited:

Simple over complex constructions			One word can replace a phrase		
endeavour	→	try	at the same time	→	simultaneously
perpetuate	→	continue	a great many	→	several
commensurate	→	equal	the reason for	→	because
proficient	→	capable	despite the fact	→	although
expeditious	→	quick	it is vital/crucial	→	must
acquiesce	→	agree	is able/in order	→	can
ameliorate	→	improve	a chance that	→	might
Modifiers			**Redundancy**		
many	general		past memories	summarise briefly	
some	certain		small in size	revert back	
just	almost		completely finished	surrounded on all sides	
really	very		evolve over time	consensus of opinion	

Further reading:

'Chapter 5: 'Waffle': improving readability by managing your extra words' in Mewburn, I., Firth, K. & Lehmann, S. (2019). *How to fix your academic writing trouble: A practical guide.* New York, NY: Open University Press.

'Chapter 7: Concision' in Williams, J. M. (1990). *Style: Towards clarity and grace.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

'Phrases you can Omit' in Alonquin College (2019). Pruning the redundant. Retrieved from http://plato.algonquincollege.com/applications/guideToGrammar/?page_id=3411#phr

Eliminating repetition

Sometimes writing an essay can be difficult, especially when you keep on using the same words repeatedly. The editing process can help you identify words that have been overused, and find suitable replacements, without worrying whether you have included the correct content.

- If you are using Microsoft Word, right-click on your overused word and click **Synonyms**. This will give you a list of words with a similar meaning to use. We recommend checking the definition, to make sure you have the right word for the job.
- You can use The Academic Phrasebank (The University of Manchester, 2019) to vary your signposts in your essay.
- Read your essay aloud; it's easier to identify repetitions when reading aloud.
- Use the **strikethrough** tool on your word processor to show repeated constructions in need of deletion for quick identification.

Help: I've overshot the word count!

Here are some quick editing tips for reducing the word count:

- Turn passives into actives: Use Ctrl + F in your word processor and look for every instance of *by* in your work (see *The Paramedic Method* from Purdue University, 2019).
- Strip out parts of your text and put them in a different document, or "an ideas graveyard where unwanted text can rest in peace, but without being deleted permanently" (Mewburn, Firth & Lehmann, 2019, p.100).
- Carefully consider adjectives and adverbs that might be unnecessary.
- Swap phrasal verbs for single words, for example, *talks about* → *discusses* or *go up* → *increase* (George Mason University, 2019).
- Use Ctrl + F and look at your use of *for, to* and *of* and amend them so the preposition is no longer needed, for example, *research for science* → *scientific research; highlight of the day* → *the day's highlight; in order to investigate* → *to investigate*.

- Know what is included in your word count. You can find out in your module handbook or asking your lecturer.

Check your evidence

The editing process is a great time to transform direct quotes in paraphrases. Remember, direct quotes need to be used sparingly in your assignments, as paraphrases demonstrate to your reader that you understand the material read and that you can present it in a way that is in keeping with the rest of your argument. You should check your citations, even if you have used a referencing generator or Mendeley, in case there is any incomplete information.

See more:

[Quoting, Paraphrasing & Summarising](#)

[Official Marjon APA Guidance](#)

Presentation

Poor presentation of work will create a poor impression on your reader; even if your content is excellent. Make a good first impression on your reader by presenting your assignments consistently, clearly and in line with any departmental guidelines you need to follow. Here are some things to consider:

- Do I need to upload my assignment in a specific file format?
- Have I included relevant details such as module information, student number and date of submission?
- Have I used the appropriate font, text size and style as indicated in module handbooks?
- Have I used the appropriate line spacing?
- Have I started paragraphs on a new line each time?
- Have I included page numbers?
- Have I included the word count directly before the reference list?
- Is the reference list organised in alphabetical order, with a hanging indent?

Ada's essay

Read Ada's response to the essay question below.

Discuss the benefits of pet ownership on well-being. (350 words)

> **Original Draft**
>
> Pet ownership has been linked extensively to being very happy. Research shows that dog ownership in particular, can be great for individuals with a history of depression, as having a dog can lead to increased levels of Serotonin and Oxytocin (Petersonn et al., 2017). The relationship between dog owners and their pet dogs has been likened to the attachment between a parent and child (Walsh, 2009). Research proves that the human-dog relationship increases levels of Cortisol in dogs (Petersonn et al., 2017), indicating that they are more stressed by the relationship than calmed, and that the well-being is not the same for dogs as it is for people. Other research has investigated how pets can help the mental well-being of people who don't suffer from mental illness and has found that these people have better self-esteem, more confidence and act as a form of social support to their owner (McConnell & Brown, 2011). Research is being done into the benefits of dog and cat ownership as a way of reducing spending on healthcare in public secateurs, due to the big benefits of having a pet friendship (Wells, 2009).
>
> As well, owning a pet has massive benefits for physical health. Blue Cross (2019) state:
>
> *It's true, pets really are good for your health – and the medical benefits have long been lauded. Having a dog improves fitness as it encourages you to get out walking more, and even playing with your dog or cat indoors when you'd otherwise be lying idle on the sofa can loosen up those limbs and get the blood pumping around your body. Horse ownership brings with it plenty of exercise too, and is often used as a form of rehabilitation and therapy for those with injuries or disabilities. Staying fit and active, whatever your age, helps to prevent a whole host of illnesses, and pets give people that motivation to keep moving.*
>
> This is supported by research that has found that the physical activities such as dog-walking or horse-riding can actually stave off serious illness such as cancer, epilepsy and hypoglycaemia (Walsh, 2009). CONTRAST McNicholas et al. (2005) says that the results of studies about pets effectiveness in improving well-being are contradictory, as no significant link between pet ownership and a reduced chance of cardiovascular disease was found. Is this because the definitions of health aren't broad enough, so when the terms are widened, it encompasses physical well-being in terms of daily health rather than just severe health problems? <u>BUT</u> pets are often valued as family members in their own right, and therefore should have the same supportive effect on well-being as our relatives.

The well-being of the pet when using them for the purposes of human well-being is not central, it is more focused on human outcomes. Future research should consider the impact of human-pet relationships on pet well-being, as well as human well-being and look at ways stress can be reduced to create a balanced and purposeful partnership.

(493 words)

Ada's draft has the beginnings of a good argument, but needs some editing to get across her argument, and make sense of the structure. Ada has also managed to overshoot the word count, so will need to edit quite a lot to get it within the accepted word count. Look at the edited draft below and compare it to the original draft to see the techniques she has used to reach the appropriate word limit, craft an academic style and make an argument.

Edited Draft

Pet ownership is promoted as beneficial to human wellbeing; but the notion of well-being is broad and difficult to define. This essay will look at the effects of pet ownership on both mental and physical well-being.

Firstly, pet ownership has been linked to happiness; dog ownership can be beneficial for individuals with a history of depression, increasing levels of Serotonin and Oxytocin (Petersonn et al., 2017). However, research suggests that the human-dog relationship increases levels of Cortisol in dogs (Petersonn et al., 2017), indicating that the well-being benefits of a dog-owner relationship only apply to the owner. Despite this, research has investigated how pets can help those with good mental health and found that they have better self-esteem, more confidence and feelings of social support (McConnell & Brown, 2011). Consequently, the benefits of pet ownership are under consideration as a way of reducing healthcare expenditure in public sectors (Wells, 2009).

Owning a pet also has major benefits for physical health. The Blue Cross (2019) states that pet ownership has extensive medical benefits, including improved fitness through dog walking; reduced sedentary behaviour through pet play; and rehabilitation for disabilities and injuries through horse-riding Research supports this as these activities can stave off serious illness such as cancer, epilepsy and hypoglycaemia (Walsh, 2009). In contrast, some studies have found that there is no significant link between pet ownership and serious illness such as cardiovascular disease; but McNicholas et al. (2005) argues that this is due to the narrow definition of well-being applying to those who are seriously ill. Yet, constructs of well-being are individual and affect humans daily; regardless of ill or good health. Pets are often valued as family members, therefore pet-owner attachments should have the same positive well-being effects as human family members, including emotional and social support.

In conclusion, human-pet interactions are beneficial to human well-being; social support improves mental well-being, and physical well-being is improved through activities such as dog-walking. Future research should consider the impact of human-pet relationships on pet well-being too and look at ways stress can be reduced to create a balanced and purposeful partnership.

(350 words)

Proofreading

Proofreading is the final check you give your work before submission and involves scrutiny of your writing for consistency, completeness and accuracy (Day, 2018). This is also a final point for you to confirm that you have met all of the criteria in your assignment brief and answered the essay question to the best of your ability. A proofread is most effective when you have not looked at your writing for a day or two, and when it is read aloud.

Spelling

Homophones

Homophones are words that sound the same but have different meanings and spellings. The trouble with homophones is that they aren't picked up with a word processing spell-checker; as these can check what you write, not what you intended to write (Billingham, 2002). Therefore, you will have to be vigilant in looking for them, so they don't alter the intended meaning of your writing. Here are some common homophones* to look out for in your work:

compliment	Admire or praise	complement	Something that completes or fits with something else
I *complimented* her on the dress she wore.		The dress she wore *complemented* her shoes.	
affect	Verb, to impact or change	effect	Noun, the result of impact or change
The results were *affected* by the research environment.		The research environment had an *effect* on the results.	
accept	Agree or receive something offered	except	To exclude something or an exception to a norm
The tribe *accepted* the child despite their city upbringing.		All members of the tribe had similar scores, *except* the child from the city.	
allude	Refer to something indirectly or briefly	elude	To avoid something or fail to be understood
The researcher *alludes* to indicative statistics, but no full interpretation is given.		When asked about climate change by a member of the audience, the minister *eluded* the question.	
principal	Most important	principle	Rules, beliefs and general laws about systems or behaviour
The *principal* aspect of Bowlby's work was the mother-child relationship.		The *principles* of attachment theory are clearly set out.	
practice	The application or an idea or method (noun)	practise	The application or an idea or method (verb)
The *practice* of interviewing requires consistency and accuracy.		The method was *practised* in a pilot study, so amendments could be made if necessary.	

revue	A theatrical show with short sketches, songs and dances	**review**	A formal or critical assessment of something to make changes, reconsider or recommend
Comics and *revue* singers are also included in the article.		The theory must be *reviewed* in the context of modern parent attachments.	
stationary	Not moving or changing	**stationery**	Paper and other materials needed for writing
The cars were *stationary*; traffic had come to a standstill.		There was no more paper available, so the employee placed a *stationery* order.	
weather	The state of atmosphere; wear away over a period	**whether**	Expressing doubt or choice between alternatives
After years spent in a damp storage unit, the furniture was *weathered* and worn.		The choice of job depends on *whether* the pay is commensurate to the requirements of the post.	

*All definitions are based on the Oxford English Dictionary (2008)

American-English

Word processors on campus are automatically set to English (United Kingdom). However, your computer at home might not be, so you can't rely on spell checker to make sure you haven't used American-English. Here are some common spelling features to be aware of, but please note that some words in both variations have irregular spellings.

American-English	**British-English**
Words that end in -er center, theatre, meter, somber	*Words that end in -re* centre, theatre, metre, sombre
Words that end in -og dialog, catalog, analog	*Words that end in -ogue* dialogue, catalogue, analogue
Words with L endings do not double traveler, modeling, fueled	*Words with L endings double* traveller, modelling, fuelled
ae and oe change to 'e' encylcopedia, estrogen, pediatric	*ae and oe kept* encyclopaedia, oestrogen, paediatric
Words that end in -ize formalize, apologize, criticize	*Words that end in -ise* formalise, apologise, criticise

Words that end in -or color, favor, behavior	*Words that end in -our* colour, favour, behaviour

Further reading: Spellzone. (2019). Differences between British English and American English spelling. Retrieved from https://www.spellzone.com/pages/british-american.cfm

Punctuation*

*Please note that all mistakes in these titles are deliberate 😊

Sneaky apostrophe's

Apostrophes are commonly used in error by even the most experienced writers. An apostrophe should be used to indicate **ownership** or be used in a **contraction**. However, contractions are not typically used in academic writing, so where possible, always use the fuller form. Possessive apostrophes should be used in academic writing as follows:

Ending in *s*		
Singular possessive	Add apostrophe only after the noun	Dickens' novel was …
Plural possessive		The researchers' study…
Not ending in *s*		
Singular possessive	Add apostrophe + s after the noun	The planet's atmosphere…
Plural possessive		The children's ambassador…
Joint possession	Add apostrophe + s after the final noun	Burton and Smith's research…

Look out for *It's* and *Its*: This is one distinction that trips up every writer! These two spellings have different meanings and will not be picked up by a spell-checker if used incorrectly. **It's** is the contracted form of *it is* or *it has,* for example: *It's been a long day*. In true irregular English style, **Its** is the possessive form, for example, *The research has its merits and disadvantages*.

Further reading: Ross, B. (2019). Apostrophe rules. Retrieved from https://www.grammarly.com/blog/apostrophe/

Comma and comma and comma

The comma is a useful piece of punctuation that can be used for various reasons. They can be used stylistically so not all uses are wrong, but there are some instances where a comma is absolutely required. If you have lots of commas in a single sentence, reconsider the structure!

1. Separating items in a list *i.e. The study required participants who were female, aged 60 and over, consumed 2 or more units of alcohol per week and had a history of heart disease.*

2. Marking an introductory word or phrase from the rest of the sentence *i.e. In contrast, females over the age of 60 tend to consume more units of alcohol per week than younger females.*
3. Two complete sentences are joined together using conjunctions such as *and, or, but* etc. *i.e. The researcher found two anomalies in the results, yet he does not explain them further.*
4. To mark the beginning and end of additional information. In academic writing, this is used in place of brackets *i.e. Freud's theory, although dismissed by many, still has relevance in modern psychotherapy.*

Look out for comma splices. A comma splice is when a comma is used to separate two syntactically complete sentences i.e. *The readings were compiled by the course leader, the additional material was collated by the trainee teacher.* Often, these sentences can be resolved by replacing the comma for a semi-colon, or inserting a conjunction *i.e.*

The readings were compiled by the course leader; the additional material was collated by the trainee teacher.

The readings were compiled by the course leader, and the additional material was collated by the trainee teacher.

Further reading: 'That'll do, Comma' in Truss, L. (2009). *Eats, shoots & leaves: The zero tolerance approach to punctuation.* London, UK: Fourth Estate.

It really isn't that exciting!!!
Exclamation marks don't have a place in academic writing, unless you are including them as part of a direct quote. Academic writing relies on sentence-craft and the development of arguments to draw emphasis on points and persuade the reader.

Do you think an essay is the place to ask a question?
Typically, asking questions in your essays is not academic in style. There is no need to 'break the fourth wall' in your writing and ask a question of your reader. After all, the focus should be on your ability as a writer to answer and allay any questions that might arise as part of your argument.

See more: The Essay Writer's Guide to Punctuation

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