

**King Saud University
College of Engineering
Industrial Engineering Department**

برنامج إثراء الأربعاء

How to Boost your Academic English

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- Tips to Improve Academic English
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What is Academic English?

What is Academic English?

- English you need to use in studies (i.e. university)
- It is a way to express yourself formally while ...
 - ▣ Reading
 - ▣ Speaking
 - ▣ Listening
 - ▣ Writing (most importantly)

Academic vs. General English

- Academic English is ...
 - ▣ More formal
 - ▣ More objective
 - ▣ Uses lots of referencing (i.e. where you got info.)
 - e.g. can't use info. you like and not say where you got it!
 - if you don't cite ... this's called “**plagiarism**” (crime!)
 - we leave this to another discussion (ethics)

Why is Acad. English Important?

- So what if my Academic English is “bad”?
 - ▣ You will most likely not succeed in “academia” ...
 - ▣ A document with many mistakes gives a bad impression about you
- How to have “good” Academic English?
 - ▣ “Practice makes perfect” ... no other way!
 - ▣ Remember, no one is born with “good” English

How to Improve Academic English

How to Improve Academic English

1. Clear, Concise, and Well-constructed Language
2. Construct Veritable Content
3. Stay Away From Plagiarism
4. Avoid Over-quoting
5. Summarize

We now discuss in some further detail ...

Clear, Concise Language

- ❑ Make your writing legible
- ❑ Use correct grammar and structure
- ❑ Don't make reader guess what you're saying
- ❑ Typos, mistakes, errors \Rightarrow considered “bad taste”
- ❑ Proofread (over & over), use spell/grammar check
- ❑ If you're stuck \Rightarrow ask a native speaker for help!

Construct Veritable Content

- Base all content on well-established facts
- Support content with research (“substantiation”)
 - e.g. avoid a statement like this

Today's students are not as hardworking as those in the previous generation (where is the evidence, numbers?)

- Don't speak about a topic unless you know about it!

Stay Away From Plagiarism

- ❑ Plagiarism: presenting others' work as your own
- ❑ Must make the proper balance between:
 - ▣ Taking advantage of people's work and
 - ▣ Giving credit to those people
- ❑ Cite all sources of: text, images, data, ...even ideas
- ❑ Those who plagiarize may get expelled

Avoid Over-quoting

- “Word for word quoting”: used with care
- Use quotations,
 - ▣ to cite material you can’t put in your own words, or
 - ▣ is *so beautiful* you want to show in original format
- Paraphrase majority of your writing
 - ▣ i.e. put in your own words (how?)
 - ▣ Note, this doesn’t not necessarily condense source

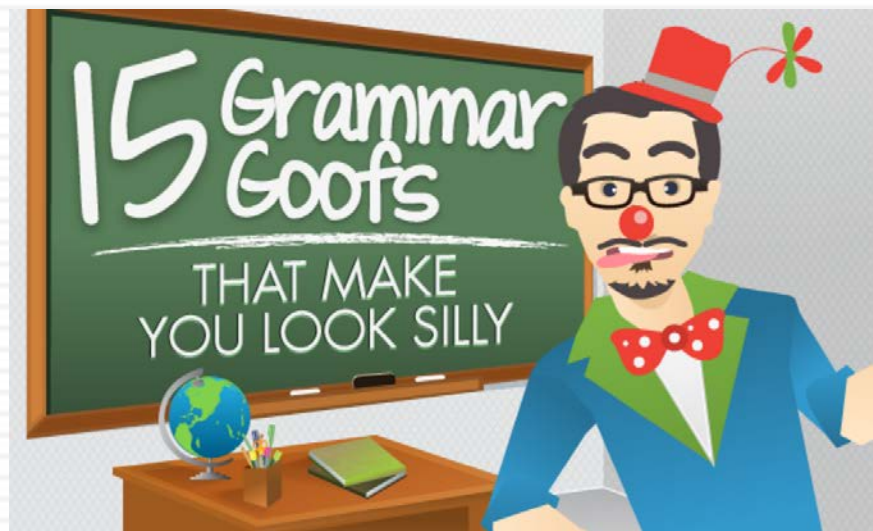
Summarize

- Indeed, one of the most difficult academic tasks!
- Involves,
 - ▣ removing all unnecessary details ([Ockham's Razor](#))
 - ▣ retaining the main/necessary content
- Examples:
 - ▣ reducing the text mentioned in original document
 - ▣ reduce evidence in text (8 case studies instead of 40)

What to Avoid in Academic English



What to Avoid in Academic English

- ❑ Certain grammatical errors,
 - ▣ make you look “bad” (AKA a “grammar goof”)
 - ▣ makes you work appear less reliable/effective
- ❑ Careful not to misuse grammar just because other people do so!



15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

1. YOUR / YOU'RE


Your	You're
<p>"Your" is a possessive pronoun, as in "your car" or "your blog."</p> 	<p>"You're" is a contraction of "you are," as in: "You're screwing up your writing by using 'your' when you mean 'you are.'"</p> 

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

2. **IT'S / ITS**

It's

"It's" is a **contraction** of "it is" or "it has."



It's an apple!

Its

"Its" is a **possessive pronoun**, as in: "This infographic has got **its groove on**." Say your sentence out loud using "it is" instead. If that sounds goofy, "its" is likely correct.

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

3. THERE / THEIR / THEY'RE

There / Their	They're
Always do the “That’s ours!” test : Are you talking about more than one person and something they possess ? If so, “their” will get you there .	“They’re” is a contraction of “they are,” so talk it out to be sure.



The illustration shows a male teacher with glasses and a dark vest over a grey shirt, pointing with a stick at a whiteboard. On the whiteboard, there is a sign with a red star and the text "That's ours!". A speech bubble from the teacher says "They're ...".

- So... word or advice: avoid contractions!

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

4. AFFECT / EFFECT

Affect	Effect
<p>“Affect” is a verb, as in: “Your ability to communicate clearly will affect your income.”</p>	<p>“Effect” is most often a noun, as in: “The effect of poor grammar on a person’s income is well documented.”</p>
	

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid


5. THEN / THAN

Then

The word **“then”** can have a variety of meanings, including **“at a point in time”** or **“in addition to.”** As a rule, use the word **“than”** when comparing and **“then”** in all other instances.

Than

The word **“than”** is used to compare two different things: “This is bigger than that.”



15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

6.

LOOSE / LOSE

Please don't mess this up. If your pants are **too loose**, you might lose your pants.

Be careful!



15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

7. ME, MYSELF, AND I

Me/I

Choose between **“me”** and **“I”** by removing the other person from the sentence and using what doesn't sound silly.

Me I love you!

Myself

“Myself” is only proper two ways, both used here:

“Many despise asparagus, but I myself tolerate it. I thought to **myself**, ‘Why?’”

?

15 Grammar Goofs That Make You Look Silly

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid



8.

IMPROPER USE OF THE APOSTROPHE

You need an apostrophe in two cases:

For contractions (“don’t” for “do not forget the apostrophe”) **and to show possession** (“Frank’s apostrophe means the apostrophe belongs to Frank”).

The infographic features a hand pointing to the title and a yellow pencil at the bottom right.

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

9. COULD OF, WOULD OF, SHOULD OF

“Could’ve,” “would’ve,” and “should’ve” are legitimate verb contractions, but when spoken, they sound like they end in “of” (wrong) instead of “have” (correct). “Could of,” “would of,” and “should of” all make you look silly.

Could of...

Wrong! Fool!

- Again, ... avoid contractions

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

10. COMPLEMENT / COMPLIMENT

Complement	Compliment
<p>“Complement” is something that adds to or supplements something else, or the act of doing so.</p> <p>+</p>	<p>“Compliment” is something nice someone says about you.</p> <p><i>Thanks!</i></p> <p><i>You're pretty.</i></p>

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

11. FEWER / LESS

Fewer

If you **can count it**, use “fewer.”

> “Robert has written **fewer** poems since he got a real job.”



Less

If you **can't**, use “less.”

> “Sonia has **less** incentive to do what I say.”



15 Grammar Goofs That Make You Look Silly

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

12. HISTORIC / HISTORICAL


Historic	Historical
Silly alert! "Historic" means an important event.	"Historical" means something that happened in the past.

15 Grammar Goofs That Make You Look Silly

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid


13. PRINCIPAL / PRINCIPLE

Principal



As a noun, “principal” means the **highest in rank** or the main participant; as an adjective, it means the most important of a set.

Principle



“Principle” is a noun meaning a **fundamental truth, law, or standard**.

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

14. LITERALLY

“I’m literally dying of shame.” Bet not.
“Literally” means that exactly what you say
is true – no metaphors or analogies.
Everything else is figurative.

OK!

- e.g. I literally have only 10 SR in my pocket

15 “Grammar Goofs” to Avoid

15. THE DANGLING PARTICIPLE

A dangling participle occurs when you order a sentence in a confusing way.

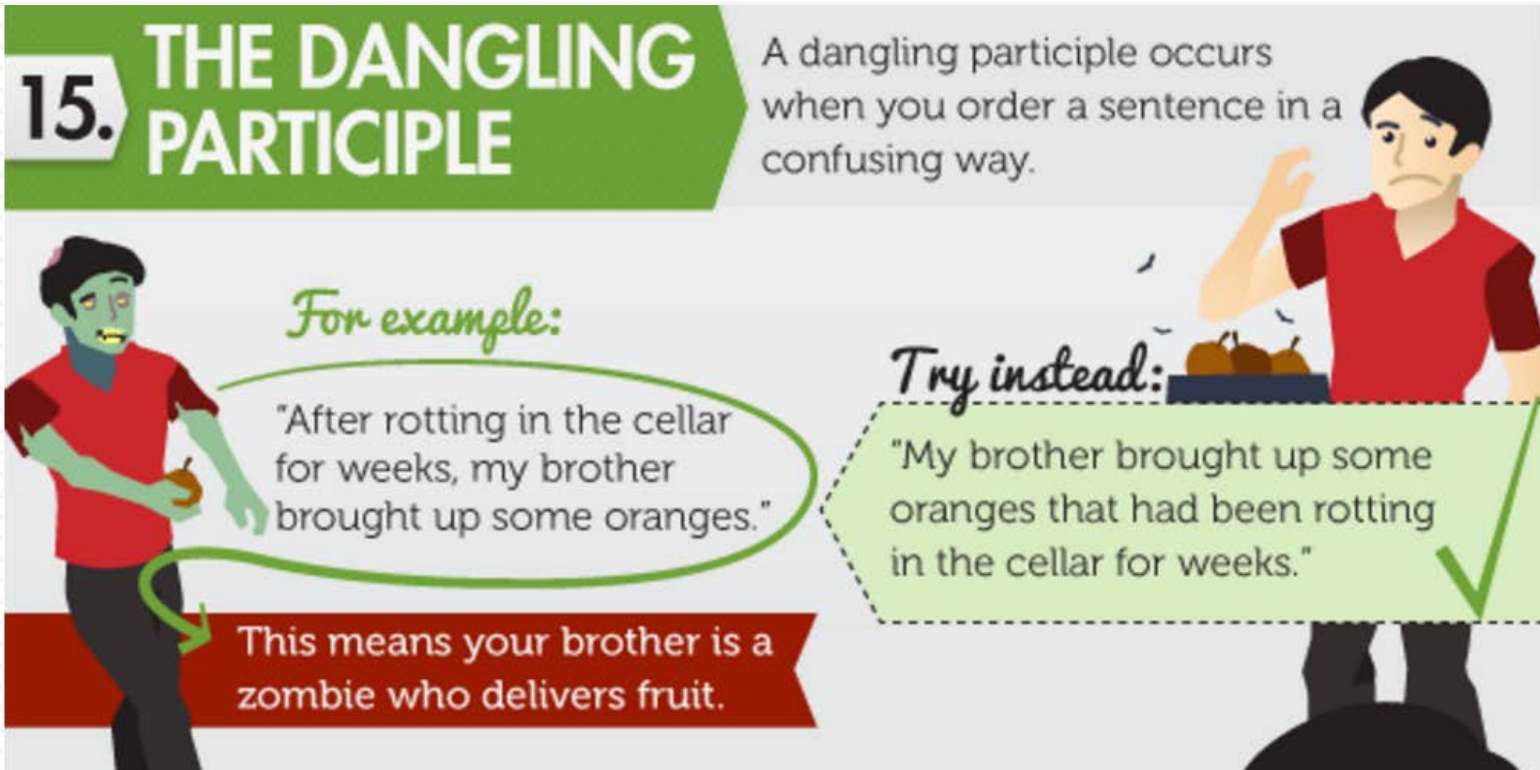
For example:

"After rotting in the cellar for weeks, my brother brought up some oranges."

This means your brother is a zombie who delivers fruit.

Try instead:

"My brother brought up some oranges that had been rotting in the cellar for weeks."

The illustration shows two scenarios. On the left, a man with green skin and a red shirt is holding an orange, looking like a zombie. A speech bubble next to him contains the sentence "After rotting in the cellar for weeks, my brother brought up some oranges." Below this, a red banner states "This means your brother is a zombie who delivers fruit." On the right, a normal man in a red shirt is holding a basket of oranges. A speech bubble next to him contains the sentence "My brother brought up some oranges that had been rotting in the cellar for weeks." A green checkmark is next to this sentence.

- i.e. use proper sequence/order in your sentence

More Personal Advice

- ❑ Watch videos explaining Scientific material
- ❑ Speak and listen to academics (in English)
- ❑ Read course textbooks (do you do that?)
- ❑ Read an article from time to time (subject you like)
- ❑ Make effort in projects to paraphrase, summarize
- ❑ Use good dictionaries (e.g. www.almaany.com)

References Used in Presentation

- 15 Grammar Goofs That Make You Look Silly [Infographic]

<http://www.copyblogger.com/grammar-goofs/>

- 5 Tips To Improve Your Academic Writing

<http://www.nextscientist.com/tips-improve-your-academic-writing/>

- 12 Common Errors in Academic English – and how to fix them!: <https://youtu.be/mZQgd2sPxpK>

Questions