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| Professional Writing  Guide |
| Student Guide |

**Table of Contents**

[1. Introduction 3](#_Toc401955447)

[2. Elements of the professional writing process` 4](#_Toc401955448)

[2.1 Element 1: The writing process 4](#_Toc401955449)

[2.2 Element 2: The research process 9](#_Toc401955450)

[2.3 Element 3: Acknowledging sources 10](#_Toc401955451)

[2.4 Element 4: Structuring the Response 13](#_Toc401955452)

[3. General Guidelines 15](#_Toc401955453)

[3.1 Assignment Submission Requirements 15](#_Toc401955454)

[3.2 Writing style 15](#_Toc401955455)

[3.3 A hit list of common errors 19](#_Toc401955456)

[3.4 Concluding remarks 20](#_Toc401955457)

[List of references 21](#_Toc401955458)

[Annexure A: List of action verbs 22](#_Toc401955459)

[Annexure B: Features of professional writing 25](#_Toc401955460)

[Annexure C: Hit parade of common errors 26](#_Toc401955461)

[Annexure D: Spelling-British and American 30](#_Toc401955462)

[Annexure E: Wordy and old fashioned phrases 32](#_Toc401955463)

[Annexure F: Prepositions 33](#_Toc401955464)

# 1. Introduction

Professional writing forms an integral part of the learning process and should present information that demonstrates that the learner has a clear understanding of a specific learning area or subject.

The purpose of this guide is to assist you, the learner, in the professional writing process. The guide focuses on four main elements of professional writing and is.

**Diagram 1: Elements of the professional writing process**

These elements are discussed in the sections that follow. We also share information

on general guidelines that should assist you in your professional writing process.

The purpose of this guide is to assist you in achieving the following learning outcomes:

* Formulate a coherent and logical agreement;
* Structure an academic document;
* Write a report.

# 2. Elements of the professional writing process`

## 2.1 Element 1: The writing process

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In this section we focus on the first element of the professional writing process, namely the writing process itself.  When planning a response to an assignment or project you need to follow a well-planned process.  Below we discuss three (3) steps that will guide the writing process. |  |

**Step 1: Understanding the purpose of the assignment through action verbs**

You need to ensure that you understand the essence of the assignment and what is expected of you in the assignment. This means you need to read the assignment carefully to identify what is expected of you. Each assignment or activity will have an **action verb**. An action verb explains what you are expected to do in the respective assignment/activity. Below are some **examples** of action verbs:

* Explain;
* Describe;
* Evaluate;
* Analyse; and
* Make recommendations.

A list of action verbs and explanations are attached as **Annexure A**.

**Step 2: Planning and developing an outline for the assignment**

You need to plan and develop an outline for your assignment. It provides a structure in which you will develop your ideas and it allows you to determine a logical sequence of thoughts, ideas, arguments and information. It also serves as a reminder for you to cover all the points.

Below are some **suggestions** for developing an outline:

* Use a **mind map** format:
* Draw a mind map (brainstorm your ideas first);
* Think about what you are going to write about; and
* Arrange your thoughts on the mind map into a logical sequence.
* Use **index cards**:
* Write key points onto index cards; and
* Then lay them on the floor in different sequences until the ideas and thoughts flow logically.

**Step 3: Writing the assignment**

In this step, we focus on the writing process itself. You should now understand what is expected of you in a specific assignment. The writing process consists of four (4) **stages**. These stages are illustrated in Diagram 2.

**Diagram 2: Stages of the writing process**

These stages are not linear, as they do not have clear starting and ending times. Furthermore, you can be in more than one stage at the same time. The stages are discussed in detail in below.

Stage 1: Prewriting

Prewriting is everything you do before you begin drafting the assignment. This can include:

* Looking over an assignment handout (PMA);
* Choosing a topic;
* Assessing the audience; and
* Researching, locating and evaluating source material.

**Prewriting strategies** you can use to help you choose and develop a topic include:

* Brainstorm a list of ideas on a topic;
* Draw a mind map;
* Read and take notes on a topic;
* Ask questions;
* Discuss ideas about a topic; and
* Draw an outline (diagram) of your assignment.

As you consider your topic, you need to make sure you can narrow it enough to fit the required length of your assignment, e.g. 3-5 pages. To do this, you will need to consider your purpose for writing the assignment.

There are several different **purposes** to consider, namely to:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Express | * Analyse |
| * Inform | * Persuade |
| * Explore | * Entertain |

You may also need to think about your audience, e.g. who they are and how much they know about the topic. Once you have considered your topic, developed your ideas on the topic, thought about the purpose and audience, you are ready to draft the paper.

Stage 2: Drafting

Drafting is the stage where you begin to put the assignment in a structure or reading form. You can select between different writing techniques. Five (5) **writing techniques** follow in Table 1.

**Table 1: Writing techniques**

| **Technique** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **Aim of research or assignment** | At the end of your introduction, write a one-sentence statement that forecasts what your assignment will contain. Tell the readers what you are going to share with them. |
| **Topic sentence** | Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence, which states the main idea of the paragraph. |
| **Sufficient support** | You need to support your topic sentence by developing the paragraph with sufficient support. Different forms of support range from statistics, research information, case studies, definitions and graphs.  **Note:**  Remember you can use tables, figures, graphs and charts to condense data and present it clearly. These do not count as part of your word count. |
| **Coherence** | If an assignment is coherent, all the paragraphs relate to the one before it and all the sentences relate to the one before it. **Transitional words and phrases** help to create bridges between sentences. The following words can be used for this purpose:   * However; * For example; * In other words * In contrast; * Nevertheless.   Repeating key words also help to create bridges between sentences and paragraphs. |
| **Unity** | Unity ensures that all sentences relate to the topic sentence and all paragraphs relate to the thesis statement. |

When planning and drafting your response you should consider the eight features of professional writing. A list of these features is attached as **Annexure B**.

**Writing is a process** and you might need to attempt and practise the different techniques a couple of times before you feel comfortable with the format, structure and content of your assignment. Revising is the third stage in the process and can assist you in this process.

Stage 3: Revising

Revising implies reading the assignment or response critically with the aim to identify confusing, inconsistent, incorrect or wordy arguments and statements. During the revision process you might identify sections in the assignment where you need to:

* Add information;
* Delete information; and/or
* Rearrange information.

Below is a **checklist** you can use to assist you in revising your assignment.

| **#** | **Item** | **Yes** | **No** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Does the essay fit the topic? |  |  |
| 2. | Does the introduction have a research aim or goal statement? |  |  |
| 3. | Does each paragraph have a topic sentence? |  |  |
| 4. | Are there explanatory words between sentences? |  |  |
| 5. | Do you have sufficient theoretical support in each paragraph? |  |  |
| 6. | Are the paragraphs arranged in a logical flow? |  |  |

**Note:**

Revision is much more than proof-reading. Good revision and editing can transform a mediocre first draft into an excellent final assignment or response.

Stage 4: Editing

In the editing stage you need to check your spelling, grammar and mechanics of your assignment. A well-written, error-free and well-structured assignment is always a pleasure to assess and moderate.

The following is an editing **checklist** that you can use to assist you in the editing process.

| **#** | **Item** | **Yes** | **No** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Does the text read smoothly? |  |  |
| 2. | Is each sentence complete? |  |  |
| 3. | Is each paragraph complete? |  |  |
| 4. | Is each section complete? |  |  |
| 5. | Are ideas, arguments and relationships thoroughly developed? |  |  |
| 6. | Have you checked for unnecessary use of jargon and repeated words and phrases. |  |  |
| 7. | Are paragraphs in the correct order? |  |  |
| 8. | Is there a logical progression? |  |  |
| 9. | Did I use the following correctly and consistently?   * Punctuation * Capitals * Tenses * Spelling |  |  |
| 10. | Have I checked that tables and diagrams are numbered correctly? |  |  |
| 11. | Have I referred to all sources used in the text? |  |  |
| 12. | I have checked the following formatting aspects:   * Headings and sub-headings * Bullet points or lists * White space * Underlining * Indenting |  |  |

## 2.2 Element 2: The research process

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| In the previous section, we have discussed aspects related to the writing process and agreed on the following steps:   * Understanding the action verb; * Planning and developing an outline for your assignment; and * Prewriting of the assignment or response. |  |

In the prewriting stage of the writing process, you should start working through relevant source material. In this section we discuss the second element of the writing process, namely the **research process**.

The discussion will focus on the next three (3) major **steps** of the research process:

* Locating source material;
* Evaluating source material; and
* Processing source material.

**Guidelines for locating, evaluating and processing of source material**

To start any research, you might want to have a research question or a hypothesis. This will narrow your focus and allow you to locate materials that would answer, confirm or deny the hypothesis.

There are two (2) different types of sources that will help answer your questions, namely **primary** and **secondary** sources.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Primary source:** | Is a first-hand account of the information you are seeking, e.g. a newspaper article written at the time, government documents, an interview, eyewitness accounts. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Secondary source:** | Is a secondary account of the information you are seeking, e.g. books or articles written by someone who is analysing any primary sources and secondary sources. You can also use the library and the Internet. |

* Start with the recommended reading list, but do not limit yourself to this list, as further research usually results in better marks.
* Skim/read books to see if they will be relevant, noting down relevant page and chapter numbers. You can also use *post-its* in this process.
* Take down brief and concise information in your words.
* Do not copy paragraphs word for word unless you are going to use them as quotations.
* Write down all the source information for referencing purposes.

Constantly check on your outline and the topic and make sure you are on track.

## 2.3 Element 3: Acknowledging sources

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | We have now looked at different sources you can use to inform your assignment.  In this section, we discuss the importance of acknowledging sources in professional writing and share examples of text referencing techniques and the format of a bibliography or list of references. This discussion is based on the **Harvard referencing method**. |  | |

**Guidelines:**

* **Plagiarism** means using the work of other authors (or students) without acknowledgement. This form of cheating is severely penalised by assessors. Plagiarism does not only refer to direct quotes, but also to taking someone else’s ideas without acknowledgement, even if you put it in your words.
* Refer to examples on the **use of quotations** in text.
* Quotations should be put in inverted commas.
* If the quotation is short, include it in the main paragraph, otherwise indent and set it out as a separate paragraph.
* Use dots (…) if you have not used the whole quotation, this indicates that you have skipped a bit.

Below are examples of **quotations and text referencing methods**

**Acknowledging a direct quote:**

… quotation marks must be “set out within texts” (Murphy, 2009:139).

**Acknowledging an idea expressed in one’s own words**:

Output also includes the psychological contract recognised expectations (Douwes-Dekker 2011:333)

Below are guidelines to draw up a **list of references**.

* List all the references you used at the end of your assignment. This needs to be done alphabetically.
* Books or other material that you have utilised must be listed in the **reference list** and each source should contain the following elements:

**Text referencing a book:**

Author’s surname, Initials. Date. The title of the book. Place of Publication: Publisher.

**Example:** Shearman, D. & Sauer, G. 2009. *Green or gone*. Cambridge: Wakefield Press.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements for referencing a book** | |
| Authors’ surnames and initial with a full stop. | Shearman, D. & Sauer, G. |
| Year of publication in brackets followed by full stop. | 2009. |
| Title of book in minimal capitalisation and italics followed by a full stop. | *Green or gone.* |
| Place (City) followed by a colon. | Cambridge: |
| Publisher. | Wakefield Press. |

**Text referencing a journal:**

Author’s surname, Initials. Date. Title of article in minimal capitalisation followed by full stop. Title of journal in maximal capitalisation and italics. Comma after title of the journal, volume(issue number):page numbers with a full stop at the end.

**Example:** Stove, R.J. 2008. Xenophobia: the great local content myth.. *Institute of Public Affairs Review,* 51(1):14-16.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements for referencing a journal** | |
| Author’s surname and initials with a full stop. | Stove, R.J. |
| Year of publication no brackets followed by full stop. | 2008. |
| Title of article in minimal capitalisation followed by full stop. | Xenophobia: the great local content myth. |
| Title of journal in maximal capitalisation and italics. Comma after title of the journal. | *Institute of Public Affairs Review,* |
| Volume and issue number in lower case with a full stop at the end. | 51(1):14-16. |

## 

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Elements for referencing a website/e-source** | |
| Author’s surname and initials with a full stop. | Sanders, P. |
| Year of publication no brackets followed by full stop. | 2012. |
| Title of article in minimal capitalisation followed by full stop. | Effective communication – an essential element. |
| Website address followed by full stop. Date the website was accessed followed by full stop. In brackets. | (www.writing.utoronto.ca. Accessed on 23 February 2012). |

## 2.4 Element 4: Structuring the Response

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| When you reach this stage of the professional writing process, you are in the final stage of the process.  Now you need to structure your assignment based on the outcomes of the preceding three stages.  Remember, writing an effective assignment requires a logical, systematic approach supported by sufficient evidence and leading to a conclusion. |  |

**Diagram 3: The three elements of an effective response**

**Elements of a structured response**

|  |
| --- |
| Introduction  To write a good introduction, you need to reflect on the purpose of the assignment or response. Your first purpose is to catch the attention of your reader. This implies you need to include some kind of motivating factor.  Beneath are six **techniques** that you can consider using to capture the attention of your reader(s):   * Ask a provocative or critical question. * State an unusual fact. * Give an illustration, example or anecdote. * Present a provocative quote. * Refer to a historic event. * Point to common relationships, beliefs, interests or opinions.   In the next section, you need to tell the reader about what they will be reading. You will need to present them with some background information.  The last part of the introduction is to present them with the research aim or goal statement.  Body  The body contains the arguments and information in support of your topic. It takes the form of inter-linked paragraphs. Each paragraph should deal with one specific concept or idea and the headings and sub-headings should reflect these concepts or ideas.  You will use the information and notes you have researched in a structured and logical manner.  Conclusion  When concluding you need to restate your research aim or goal statement and leave the reader with a memorable impression. |

# 3. General Guidelines

In this section we share general guidelines that should assist you in planning and writing excellent professional work.

## 3.1 Assignment Submission Requirements

The requirements for submission of an assignment are summarised in Diagram 4.

**Diagram 4: Requirements for submission of assignments**

## 3.2 Writing style

In writing professional work, the aim should be to write clearly and intelligently about relevant subject-related aspects and issues through an appropriate and engaging professional tone and style. This implies you need to demonstrate your ability to apply the principles of the academic writing style. Table 2 illustrates the differences between different writing styles, their principles and examples.

**Table 2: Principles and examples of different writing styles**

| **#** | **Style** | **Principles** | **Examples** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | **Colloquial (informal)** | * Slang * Mix languages * Colloquial language | * *Nice weather, boet!* * *Lekker hot, hey?* * *Scheme it’s time for a braai?* * *Beaut weather, mate!* |
| 2. | **Posh (pseudo-formal)** | * Mix languages * Colloquial language | * *‘I say, what a splendiferous day, old chap! Might you fancy partaking in a bit of barbeque?’* |
| 3. | **Business (semi-formal)** | * Clear, concise and plain language * No-nonsense approach * Contractions allowed | * *‘According to the Met Office the weather will be good.’* * *Met Office says we’ll have good weather.’* |
| 4. | **Academic (formal)** | * Raised register * Objective * Passive * Noun structure * Tentative | * *‘Evidence from the Bureau of Meteorology indicates that a temperature of approximately 28 degrees Celcius is expected. This could result in the development of thunderstorms.’* |

When the learner writes academic work he/she should demonstrate his/her ability to structure the information and discussion in a logical format. An effective structure is dependent on an effective technical outline. The technical outline refers to the following aspects:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| * Alignments * Headings * Layout * Margins * Numbering | * Referencing * Spacing * Table/figure/graph headings * Transitional links to chapters * Typeface(s) |

The guidelines in Tables 3 and 4 will assist you addressing both the academic and technical requirements in your academic work.

**Table 2: General guidelines**

| **#** | **Guideline** | **Description and examples** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 1. | Write clearly and directly. |  |
| 2. | Avoid colloquialisms and slang | NOT The paper was awful  BUT *The paper was poorly researched, or The paper was unsubstantiated* |
| 3. | Sequence thoughts and ideas logically. |  |
| 4. | Organise a plan or outline before you write. | Refer to the four (4) stages of the writing process as discussed in Section 2. |
| 5. | Avoid too much “subject-specific jargon”. |  |
| 6. | Using the third person | NOT: ‘I think that all guns should be banned.’  *BUT*: *‘There is a case for stricter control on guns* |
| 7. | Avoid the double negative form | * The analysis ***did not yield*** *any* new results   The analysis yielded **no new** results   * The budget ***did not allocate much*** funding   The budget **allocated little** funding   * There ***does not seem to be many*** viable solutions   There **seems to be few** viable solutions |
| 8. | Avoid cautious or tentative language | * Seem; tend; appear to be; think; believe; doubt; indicate; suggest; assume * Would; should; might; may; could * Often; sometimes; usually * Certainly; clearly; probably; possibly; conceivably * It could be the case that … * It is important to develop … * It may be possible to obtain … |
| 9. | Make use of powerful reporting words | * X: … states; contends; describes; examines; concedes; disagrees; agrees; observes; asserts; supports; claims; disputes; suggests; purports; persuades; dismiss; refutes; proposes; concurs; recommends; objects; contradicts; perceives; notes; regards as; remarks; distinguishes between; observes |
| 10 | Avoid system crashing. | Keep in a separate file until the very last draft:   * Tables * Figures * Flow charts * Graphs * GIF; JPEG |
| 11. | Make use of bullets. | Bulleted text aims to:   * focus attention * seperate information * add structure to layouts * organise content * simplify conclusions * emphasise main points   Each bullet point follows the same logic/parallel construction:   * Placement of nouns and verbs * Parallel verb tense * Each key word in the same position |
|  | Avoid bullet point kill. | * Limit list to six or fewer items * One list per page * Shorter list entries, fewer entries per list |
| 12. | Avoid death by boredom | * Worn-out phrases * Avoid repetition * Use a thesaurus and a dictionary * Improve your writing * Enrich your vocabulary |
| 13. | Use active in stead of passive voice, | **Active:** The boy rode the bicycle.  **Passive**: The bicycle was ridden by the boy. |

In **diagram 3,** we discussed the elements of an academic piece of work or assignment. Table 4 below lists technical guidelines in structuring the three elements of the assignment, namely Introduction, discussion and conclusion.

**Table 4: Technical requirements for structuring of the assignment**

| **Numbering** | **Heading and sub-headings** | **Guidelines** |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Chapter heading** | * 16 pt bold caps * centered |
| **1.1** | **Heading** | * 12 pt bold all caps * flush left * line spacing single |
| **1.1.1** | **Sub-heading** | * 11 pt bold sentence case * flush left * line spacing single |
| **1.1.1.1** | **(Sub) sub-heading** | * 11 pt bold italics * flush left * line spacing single |

Finally Table 5 outlines guidelines when using tables as part of the text in an assignment.

**Table 5: Technical guidelines when using tables in an assignment**

| **Items of the table** | **Guidelines** |
| --- | --- |
| **Body text indent** | * Verdana/Calibri * table heading 10 pt bold * body: 8/9 pt; left aligned * line spacing single * # before 3 pt; # after 6 pt * widow/orphan control |
| **List bullet 2** | * Verdana/Calibri * heading 8-10 pt; left aligned * left margin 7 pt * hanging 10 pt * line spacing **single** * # before 3 pt; # after 0 pt * widow/orphan control |
| **Captions** | * Table captions – above * Figure/Graph captions – below * Numbering follows chapter numbers * Keep captions brief   **Example:**  **Table 1.1: Positive and negative aspects of outsourcing** (Source: Smith, 2009:66) |

The facilitators and assessors do notwant imitation scholarship. They would like to read clear, concise, factual and persuasive arguments. Finally, remember to *surrender* your assignment to a work colleague, friend or supervisor before submission. This will eliminate grammatical and spelling errors as well as test the logical progression and understanding of your assignment.

## 3.3 A hit list of common errors

Taylor & Proctor (2012:1) have developed a “Hit parade of errors in grammar, punctuation, and style”. This list consists of 13 common errors that learners make in their professional writing work. The 13 common errors are listed below:

1. Lack of agreement
2. Sentence fragments
3. Overly-long sentences
4. Overuse of passive voice
5. Faulty parallelism
6. Vague pronouns
7. Dangling modifiers
8. Squinting modifiers
9. Mixed or dead metaphors
10. Faulty word choice / faulty diction
11. Wordiness
12. Comma splices
13. Misuse of comma, semicolon, colon

These errors are explained in detail in **Annexure C**.

We have also attached a number of guidelines and suggestions that should help you to correct and/or avoid some of the abovementioned common errors. The following guidelines and suggestions are attached as **Annexures D, E and F** respectively:

* Spelling – British and America;
* Wordy and old fashioned phrases; and
* Punctuation.

We suggest you work through the list of common errors and identify the errors you tend to make when planning and writing professional work. Thereafter you can work through the guidelines and suggestions that are attached as **Annexures D, E and F** in an attempt to plan and write good professional work.

## 3.4 Concluding remarks

In the discussion we have explored the elements of the professional writing process, namely the writing process, the research process, acknowledging sources and structuring the response. We have also listed some general guidelines that should assist you in your professional writing process.

# List of references

Procter, M. 2012. Wordiness: Danger signals and ways to react. www.writing.utoronto.ca. [Accessed on 23 February 2012].

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# Annexure A: List of action verbs

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Analyse | In order to analyse a phenomenon, it must first be thoroughly studied. Then distinguishing elements are highlighted, causes and effects are identified, and the underlying relationships are pointed out. |
| Compare | A comparison basically involves two or more phenomena, methods of techniques being weighed against each other with regard to dimensions such as exceptional characteristics, advantages and disadvantages, similarities and differences as well as the relative strong and weak points of each. Normally a reasoned conclusion is reached on the basis of the comparison. |
| Define | This requires a short and concise description of the meaning of a specific word, concept or idea. Where possible, elements are specified and explained by means of examples. Where necessary, similarities and contrasts between the word, concept or idea and other related words, concepts or ideas are spelt out. |
| Describe | This requires a detailed account of the material without interpretation. In other words, this involves, firstly, a description of which characteristics are present and how characteristic these are, and secondly, an indication of the ways in which the phenomenon -is similar to, or differs from, other phenomena. In some cases, the verb "describe" refers to the description of a process. In such cases, you are required to set out the sequence of actions, activities or events leading to a specific outcome. Sketches and diagrams may be used fruitfully to illustrate the process. |
| Discuss | Unlike in the case of "describe" in order to "discuss", you are required to give a detailed view of the phenomenon, matter or event on the basis of arguments about cause-effect relationships, advantages and disadvantages, as well as reasons why these specific relationships exist or why a specific result ensues. Discussion requires insight into the matter discussed and the ability to argue a case. Please note that you may be asked to discuss only a specified aspect, for example the disadvantages of a method or the most important causes of a problem. |
| Differentiate | When you are required to differentiate/distinguish between anything, the crux is differences - i.e. distinguishing characteristics. Two or more phenomena, events or processes are analysed and described in such a way that differences or distinctions are clearly identified. |
| Evaluate | Essentially, evaluation refers to the application of criteria against which to measure the technique, method or approach. A deduction or conclusion usually follow evaluation. In such a case, you are required, firstly, to indicate which criteria are applied in the evaluation, and, secondly, to set out your conclusion. |
| Explain | This term is closely related to "discuss". Essentially the difference lies in the fact that you must explain, i.e. express the logical relationship between events, activities or actions in such a way that your audience or reader can deduce how and why a process follows a given path. In addition, the audience/reader must be able to recognise that you (as the person giving the explanation, have a good grasp of the matter). In order to explain, you must give a considerable amount of detail. You must explain how things are connected, why they are connected in precisely that way and no other, and why a certain result is achieved. Explanation therefore requires both knowledge and insight. |
| Indicate | Although this term may sometimes be used more specifically, here the term is used as synonymous to explain. |
| Name, list and  tabulate | Here you are required to do no more than merely provide a list of names, dates, reasons, facts, advantages, characteristics, etc. You are not required to provide arguments or to explain processes. Tabulation usually refers to the organisation of information so as to provide a clear and systematic overview. |
| Prove/  Support | In order to prove or support an argument, facts, knowledge and insight are required. This involves the logical ordering of information, facts and arguments to substantiate/motivate a specific conclusion. In this regard, extensive use may be made of statistics, research findings, and historical facts as well as of inductive and deductive reasoning. |
| Set out | Setting out is closely related to discussion. However, the focus is, to a much larger extent, on the organisation of material. In order to "set out", you must first sort and arrange facts, arguments, characteristics, etc., according to specific points of departure in a new, often original, way. Thereafter the material is discussed, and, where necessary, explained. |

# Annexure B: Features of professional writing

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **#** | **Feature** | **Description** |
| 1. | **Complexity** | Written language is relatively more complex than spoken language because it:   * Has longer words, it is lexically more dense. * Has a more varied vocabulary. * Uses more noun-based phrases than verb-based phrases. * Is shorter and the language has more grammatical complexity (e.g. more subordinate clauses and more passives). |
| 2. | **Formality** | Professional writing is relatively formal. In general this means that in an assignment you should avoid colloquial words and expressions. |
| 3. | **Precision** | In professional writing, facts and figures are given precisely. |
| 4. | **Objectivity** | Written language is in general objective rather than personal. It therefore has fewer words that refer to the writer or the reader. This means that the main emphasis should be on the information that you want to give and the arguments you want to make, rather than you. For that reason, professional writing tends to use nouns (and adjectives), rather than verbs (and adverbs). |
| 5. | **Explicitness** | Professional writing is explicit about the relationships in the text. Furthermore, it is the responsibility of the learner/writer to make it clear to the reader how the various parts of the text are related. These connections can be made explicit by the use of different signalling words. |
| 6. | **Accuracy** | Professional writing uses vocabulary accurately. Most subjects have words with narrow, specific meanings. Ensure that you understand these words and concepts and use them correctly. |
| 7. | **Hedging** | In any kind of professional writing, it is necessary to make decisions about your stance on a particular subject or the strength of the claims you are making. The learner/author should indicate his/her viewpoint and substantiate it with relevant facts, arguments and examples. |
| 8. | **Responsibility** | In professional writing you must be responsible for and must be able to provide evidence and justification for, any claims you make. You are also responsible for demonstrating an understanding of any source texts you use. |

Source: Adapted from http://www.uefap.com/writing/feature/featfram.htm.

# Annexure C: Hit parade of common errors

| **Error** | **Description** |
| --- | --- |
| **Faulty agreement** | 1. **Subjects and verbs must agree in number.**   X Recent discoveries about the weather reveals that several cycles are involved.  √ Recent discoveries about the weather reveal that several cycles are involved.  X The media were biased in its reporting of the event.  √ The media were biased in their reporting of the event.   1. **Nouns and pronouns must agree in number.**   X A student is free to express their opinion.  √ A student is free to express his or her opinion.  √ Students are free to express their opinions.   1. **Pronouns must agree with each other.**   X Once one has decided to take the course, you must keep  certain policies in mind.  √ Once you have decided to take the course, you must keep  certain policies in mind. |
| **Sentence fragments** | 1. **Sentence consists of an independent unit with at least a subject and a verb**.   X All of these rules and regulations should be made aware of.  √ Athletes should be made aware of all these rules and regulations.  X The liquid was poured into a glass beaker. Being a strong acid.  √ Because it was a strong acid, the liquid was poured into a glass beaker. |
| **Overly long sentences**  **(see also #12, comma splices)** | 1. **Sentence should express only one idea or a clearly connected set of ideas.**   X Home care has been expanding tremendously over the past few years partly due to recent technological advances that enable assessments and treatments to be a part of the home setting which at one time could only be performed within the hospital environment.  √ Home care has expanded tremendously over the past few years. This increase is partly due to recent technological advances that now make more assessments and treatments possible in the home rather than only in the hospital. |
| **Overuse of passive voice** | 1. **Prefer active verbs to passive verbs, and prefer persons over abstract ideas for the subjects of these verbs.**   X It is through this essay that the proposed benefits of active exercise for Chronic Lower Back Pain (CLBP) will be examined.  √ This essay will examine the proposed benefits of active exercise for Chronic Lower Back Pain (CLBP). |
| **Faulty parallelism** | 1. **Building parallel elements into a sentence adds clarity and emphasis.**   X Eating huge meals, snacking between meals and too little exercise can lead to obesity.  √ Eating huge meals, snacking between meals, and exercising too little can lead to obesity.  X Our coach is paid too much, obese, over forty, and a former champion wrestler.  √ Our coach is a former champion wrestler, but now he is overpaid, overweight, and over forty. |
| **Vague pronouns** | 1. **Make sure that pronouns such as it and this refer to something specific.**   X In the report it suggests that moderate exercise is better than no exercise at all.  √ The report suggests that moderate exercise is better than no exercise at all.  X The group wanted to meet in January, but this didn’t happen until May.  √ The group wanted to meet in January, but the conference didn’t take place until May. |
| **Dangling modifiers** | 1. **Make sure that a modifying phrase or clause has something to modify.**   X By manipulating the lower back, the pain was greatly eased. (--implies the pain was doing the manipulating)  √ By manipulating the lower back, the therapist greatly eased the pain.  X When not going to school, my hobbies range from athletics to automobiles. (--implies the hobbies go to school)  √ When I am not going to school, my hobbies range from athletics to automobiles. |
| **Squinting modifiers** | 1. **Make sure the modifier clearly refers to the element you want it to modify.**   X The council advises physicians at regular intervals to administer the drug.  √ The council advises physicians to administer the drug at regular intervals.  √ At regular intervals, the council advises physicians to administer the drug. |
| **Mixed or dead metaphors** | 1. **Recognise the literal meanings of your metaphors; avoid clichés**.   X Like a bolt from the blue the idea grabbed him, and it soon took its place as one of his hobby-horses.  √ The idea excited him as soon as he heard of it, and it soon became an obsession. |
| **Faulty word choice / faulty diction** | 1. **Do not use “fancy” words for their own sake; use a dictionary to check words whose meaning you are not sure of.**   X Explaining the rationale for treatment can help distil patients’ fears.  √ Explaining the rationale for treatment can help dispel patients’ fears. |
| **Wordiness** | 1. **Do not spin empty words; use the minimum number of words.**   X It is evident that this term is associated with much ambiguity. Many concepts and ideas come to mind upon first hearing this phrase; however, a true grasp of its meaning is quite difficult to establish. Despite this ambiguity . . .  [not worth saying -- omit]  X A definition that can be employed usefully, according to LaPlante et al. (2011:34), states that “assistive technology. . .”  √ LaPlante et al. (2011:56) state that “assistive technology ...” |
| **Comma splices** | 1. **Use a period or semicolon to separate two independent clauses, or join them with a coordinating conjunction.**   X We started to unpack our things, pretty soon clothes were strewn all over the place.  √ We started to unpack our things; pretty soon clothes were strewn all over the place.  √ We started to unpack our things, and pretty soon clothes were strewn all over the place.   1. **Use a semicolon as well as a conjunctive adverb to join two independent clauses.**   X Much of the literature advocates stretching preparatory to exercise, however, the mechanisms are not well understood.  √ Much of the literature advocates stretching preparatory to exercise; however, the mechanisms are not well understood.  These are the most common **conjunctive adverbs**:   * however therefore then * therefore nevertheless accordingly * as a result moreover even so * rather indeed for example |
| **Misuse of comma, semicolon, and colon** | 1. **Use a comma after each item in a series of three or more.**   X Many studies indicate favourable results in function, decreased pain and range of motion.  √ Many studies indicate favourable results in function, decreased pain, and range of motion.   1. **Use a comma when you join independent clauses with one of the seven coordinating conjunctions (and, or, nor, but, so, yet , for).**   X Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.  √ Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.   1. **Use a semicolon when you join independent clauses without a coordinating conjunction.**   X Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely.  √ Power corrupts; absolute power corrupts absolutely.   1. **Do not use a comma to separate subject and verb.**   X His enthusiasm for the subject and his desire to be of help, led him to volunteer.  √ His enthusiasm for the subject and his desire to be of help led him to volunteer.   1. **Use a colon to introduce a list or a long or formal quotation after a complete sentence. Otherwise make the quotation part of the grammar of your sentence.**   X Strunk (2009:87) asserts that: “Too many programmes are already underfinanced”  √ Strunk (2009:87) asserts: “Too many programmes are already underfinanced”.  √ Strunk’s assertion (2009:87) that “Too many programmes are already underfinanced” is based on questionable assumptions. |

# Annexure D: Spelling-British and American

**SPELLING British vs America**s Some common words which are spelt differently in British English and American English (American English spellings are shown inside brackets):

**-our (-or)**: behaviour (*behavior*); colour (*color*); favourite (*favorite*); harbour (*harbor*); honour (*honor*); humour (*humor*); labour (*labor*); neighbour (*neighbor*); rumour (*rumor*)

**-re (-er)**: centimetre (*centimeter*); centre (*center*); fibre (*fiber*); litre (*liter*); theatre (*theater*)

**-se (-ze)**: analyse (*analyze*); apologise (*apologize*); organise (*organize*); realise (*realize*); recognise (*recognize*)

**-ce (-se)**: defence (*defense*); a licence (a *license*); an offence (an *offense*)

**-se (-ce)**: to practise (to *practice*)

**-en (-in)**: enquiry (*inquiry*)

**-l (-ll)**: enrolment (*enrollment*); fulfil (*fulfill*); instalment (*installment*); skilful (*skillful*)

**-ll (-l)**: jewellery (*jewelry*); quarrelling (*quarreling*); traveller (*traveler*); woollen (*woolen*)

**-oe (e)**: diarrhoea (*diarrhea*); foetus (*fetus*); manoeuvre (*maneuver*)

**-ae (e)**: anaesthetic (*anesthetic*); encyclopaedia (*encyclopedia*)

**various**: axe (*ax*); bank cheque (*bank check*); cosy (*cozy*); draught (*draft*); grey (*gray*); jewellery (*jewelry*); judgement (*judgment*); kerb (*curb*); kidnapper (*kidnaper*); mould (*mold*); moustache (*mustache*); nought (*naught*); plough (*plow*); programme (*program*); pyjamas (*pajamas*); storey (*story*); sulphur (*sulfur*); traveller (*traveler*); tyre (*tire*); woollen (*woolen*).

Note that American spellings are often used in the UK for computer terms, but not when used for other meanings.

You run a computer **program**, but watch a television **programme**.

A computer stores data on its hard **disk**, but the person who plays music on the radio is called a **disc**-jockey.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **English Spelling** | **American Spelling** | **English Spelling** | **American Spelling** |
| **recognise** | recognize (sometimes Eng. too) | fulfil | fulfill |
| **behaviour** | behavior | fulfilling | fulfiling |
| **recognising** | recognizing (sometimes Eng. too) | fulfilment | fulfillment |
| **paralyse** | paralyze | fulfiller | fulfiler |
| **generalisations** | generalizations (sometimes Eng. too) |  |  |
| **labelling** | labeling |  |  |
| **analyse** | analyze |  |  |
| **programme** | program |  |  |
| **hypoglycaemia** | hypoglycemia |  |  |
| **travelling** | traveling |  |  |
| **revitalise** | revitalize (sometimes Eng. too) |  |  |
| **practise (the verb)** | practice (Am. both verb and noun!) |  |  |
| **apologising** | apologizing (sometimes Eng. too) |  |  |
| **defence** | defense |  |  |
| **channelled** | chanelled |  |  |
| **finalised** | finalized (sometimes Eng. too) |  |  |

# Annexure E: Wordy and old fashioned phrases

| **Wordy and old fashioned** | **Up to date** |
| --- | --- |
| At this point in time | Now |
| In the near future | Soon |
| In the event that | If |
| For the purpose of | For |
| With regard to /Having regard to | About |
| I am of the opinion that | I think |
| Please do not hesitate to let me know | Let me know |
| I wish to take this occasion to express my thanks | Thank you |
| The early part of next week | Monday, Tuesday |
| Your cheque in the amount of | Your cheque for |
| It is quite probable that | Probably |
| A large number of | Many |
| At the present time | Now |
| There is no doubt that | No doubt |
| Most of the time | Usually |
| In the same way | Similarly |
| During the time that | When |
| Remember the fact that | Remember that |
| Not in a position | Cannot |
| In view of the fact that | Since |
| Until such time | Until |
| As per your instruction | As you asked |
| At an early date | As soon as possible |
| Attached herewith | Attached |
| In lieu of | In place of |
| Reduce to a minimum | Minimise |
| In reply I wish to state that | I think that |
| In response to same | In response to |
| Kindly note same | Please note |
| Please be advised that/I would advise | We advise |
| Pursuant to our agreement | As we agreed |
| Refer back to | Refer to |
| Take the liberty of | Will |
| Thanking you in advance | Thank you |
| This will acknowledge/I want to acknowledge | We have received |
| We wish to advise that/We deem it advisable | We advise |
| Allow me to express | I feel |
| Hoping to hear from you soon, we remain | Sincerely |
| Awaiting your reply, we are in due course | We await your reply |

# Annexure F: Prepositions

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Preposition** | **Examples** |
| **About** | * Let us talk ABOUT it. * There is no doubt ABOUT his guilt. * Tom is travelling ABOUT the world. * He likes to boast ABOUT all the important people he knows. * Have you heard ABOUT his accident? * We were anxious ABOUT Jane when she did not return in time. * Do not be cross ABOUT his bad behaviour, he doesn’t know any better. * The papers were lying ABOUT the room. * Mother will talk to him ABOUT his behaviour. * He is angry ABOUT the damage done to his car. |
| **Across** | * Peter is walking ACROSS the street. * They swam ACROSS the river. * When did you come ACROSS it? |
| **After** | * The dog ran AFTER the boy into the road. * The girl takes AFTER her mother. * They enquired AFTER him. * It happens day AFTER day. * We left there AFTER lunch. * Jane looked AFTER the baby. * It was AFTER dark when we left there. * She ate six apples one AFTER the other. |
| **Against** | * She did it AGAINST her will. * AGAINST which team are you playing? * She did it AGAINST her will. * We were running AGAINST a strong wind. * A charge has been brought AGAINST him. * He is AGAINST reform. * I have nothing AGAINST him. * She was warned AGAINST pickpockets. * Opinion is AGAINST the Bill. |
| **Among** | * The white child was living AMONG the Indians. * He divided the apples AMONG the three boys. * They could not agree AMONG themselves. |
| **At** | * John will be here AT six o’ clock. * My car is AT your disposal, please use it. * There is a knock AT the door. * It is usual to dance AT weddings. * She was surprised AT the results. * I am AT my happiest when I am working in the garden. * Peter was AT church on Sunday. * The flowers sell AT thirty cents each. * The stars shine AT night. * She is good AT figures. * They booked accommodation AT a hotel. * They were AT breakfast when I arrived. * He did not aim the gun AT me. * Eric is an expert AT cutting diamonds. * I shall meet you AT the corner. * They stared AT her for a long time. * She could not see the car AT that distance. * She did it AGAINST her will. * Father smiled AT me. * The dog follows me AT my heels. * AT that time he was in hospital. * The two countries were AT war. * She left her luggage AT the station. * You must not shout AT him. * The snake struck AT him. * She was very sad AT leaving her dog behind. * When did he arrive AT his destination (a place, conclusion, definite time)? * My quarrel with Peter is AT an end. * Three man was sitting AT table when I arrived. * The dog barks AT strangers. * Help was near AT hand. * The bull ran AT the man. |
| **Before** | * Jane was there BEFORE seven. * It happened BEFORE Christmas. * She was brought BEFORE the judge. * Her name comes BEFORE mine. * John and James were sitting BEFORE the fire. |
| **Behind** | * He is hiding BEHIND the tree. * She is BEHIND the times (old-fashioned). * You must not do something BEHIND his back. * Look BEHIND you. * There is some mystery BEHIND this. |
| **Between** | * Divide those apples BETWEEN John and Sam. * It is a matter BETWEEN the two of us. * It is difficult to decide, because we are BETWEEN two fires. |
| **Beyond** | * The shop is BEYOND the bridge. * It is a matter BETWEEN the two of us. * It is difficult to decide, because we are BETWEEN two fires. * It is BEYOND a joke. |
| **By** | * They travelled BY car (bus, train, sea, air, etc.). * I met him BY chance. * The orchestra played the item BY request. * The letter arrived BY airmail. * The gangster died BY violence. * The two towns are connected BY a railway. * She was hit BY a pellet. * People learn BY experience. * John took the wrong train BY accident (BY mistake). * They beat our team BY three points. * She made the doll BY herself. * You can enter the door BY either door. * He caught the buck BY the horns. * The fabric must be washed BY hand. * I know him BY name only. * What does she mean BY that? * You must stick BY your friends. * She hired a car BY the day. * We were tired out BY the evening. * BY the nearest road. * You must stick BY your friends. * The machine works BY electricity. * He was attacked BY a tiger. * The carpet was made BY hand. * Some animals hunt BY night. * The cattle were sold BY auction. * Abide BY the decision. * She goes BY that shop every day. * He hired a car BY the day. * We were tired out BY the evening. * Go BY the nearest road. |
| **During** | * DURING the holidays we worked in the garden. |
| **For** | * The house is FOR sale. * They must prepare FOR the meeting. * This letter is FOR you. * I have not seen him FOR a week. * I have known him FOR a long time. * Is Peter eligible FOR membership? * Jane has an aptitude FOR figures. * We went FOR a walk (swim, ride, drive, etc.). * At Maitland you must change trains FOR Cape Town. * He is in debt FOR thousands of rand. * She is grateful FOR his help. * I do not know FOR certain if can go to the party. * Children have many opportunities FOR seeing good films. * You must not blame him FOR the trouble you are in. * He will call FOR the letter later. * I do not care much FOR rugby (fruit, etc.). * How much did you have to pay FOR the work? * John looked everywhere FOR his pen. * Are you ready FOR lunch? * He searched FOR his missing dog. * John asked FOR information. * Peter applied FOR a job (things). * Mother cried FOR joy when she heard the good news. * He read the letter word FOR word. * James died FOR his friend whose life he was trying to save. * The man still mourns FOR his son. * FOR some reason Jane does not like Ann. |
| **From** | * She drinks FROM the glass. * The animals died FROM lack of water. * The man saved the child FROM drowning. * He suffers FROM headaches. * The lamp hangs FROM the ceiling. * You may choose one FROM these. * How far is it FROM here to Durban? * He disappeared FROM sight very quickly. * That table is different FROM this one. * I differ FROM you about politics. * He visits us FROM time to time. * She is exhausted FROM working so hard. * Have you had an answer FROM him yet? * That chair is made FROM wood. * Have you heard FROM home? * The farmer moved FROM the farm to the city. * The prisoners escaped FROM gaol. |
|  | * He broke his leg when he fell FROM the tree. |
| **In** | * You are just IN time for tea. * There are clouds IN the sky. * He cut the apple IN two. * He has taken a degree IN forestry. * Mary was dressed IN red. * I was already IN bed when you phoned. * He believes IN God. * He was hit IN the leg. * He tried so hard to persuade me that, IN the end, I could not refuse. * The girl was IN tears because she had broken her new camera. * Mary plays netball IN a short skirt. * He walked across the cold floor IN his bare feet. * Everyone took part IN the race. * Tom is an expert IN electronics. * It rains IN summer. * John looked at Peter IN anger (surprise, terror, etc.). * I met him when he arrived IN Cape Town. * He helped Sam when be was IN trouble. * The book is IN the drawer. * He took an interest IN it. * He sat IN front of the fire. * The concert was IN aid of the blind. * She came home late IN spite of my warning. * The service was held IN honour of all the soldiers. * He ordered them to open the door IN the name of the law. |
| **Into** | * He came INTO the room. * John dived INTO the water. * She poured the cooldrink INTO the bottle. * South Africa entered INTO an agreement with France. * The burglars broke INTO the shop. |
| **Of** | * They must take advantage OF an opportunity. * She died OF cancer. * Sue is jealous OF Mary. * We are proud OF his behaviour. * He should be ashamed OF his bad behaviour. * She is afraid OF the dog. * He is a doctor OF medicine. * We must be careful OF snakes. * Mary dreamed OF her dog. * Have you heard OF the accident? * She is fond OF oranges. * He had to get rid OF his pet monkey. * The telephone is out OF order. * He complained OF a sore throat. * The house smells OF burnt meat. * If you work hard you can be sure OF success. * He took good care OF his old dog. * Such a deed is not worthy OF you. * He was cured OF cancer. * Father was glad OF the loan. * We have to cross a range OF hills. * The animals died from lack OF water. * He pleaded on behalf OF his friends. * We are in favour OF the meeting. * By way OF a change we slept late. * He is a man OF great intelligence. * Are you certain OF the date? |
| **Off** | * John fell OFF the ladder. * Their house is just OFF the main road. * In the gym class the pupils numbered OFF in two’s. * She is feeling OFF colour. * A button has come OFF her dress. * The hunter is OFF the track. * He eats OFF a silver plate. * She stayed at home because she had an OFF day. |
| **On** | * I saw Peter ON Sunday. * Her nerves are ON edge. * The picture is hanging ON the wall. * His grumbling got ON everybody’s nerves. * The cat is sleeping ON the bed. * They are going ON holiday. * I would like to congratulate you ON your success. * Sheep live ON grass. * The surgeon will operate ON the patient. * His farm borders ON the game reserve. * He serves ON many committees. * Mary wears a ring ON her finger. * There are only a few apples ON the tree. |
| **Over** | * The dog jumps OVER the fence. * He holds an umbrella OVER his head. * She puts a tablecloth OVER the table. * OVER twenty kilometres from here. * OVER the wall. * OVER the page. * Tea is grown all OVER India. * She lives in the house OVER the way. |
| **Through** | * The water passes THROUGH a pipe. * He failed the test THROUGH carelessness. * The party lasted THROUGH the night. * The family went THROUGH a crisis. * The vegetables grow all THROUGH the year. |
| **To** | * She agrees TO your proposal. * They went TO Cape Town. * It was all TO no purpose. * John sent the parcel TO his father. * I shall talk TO him about the problem. * You should apologise TO him. * The student is in debt TO his parents. * They like to walk TO school. * That book belongs TO Jane. * You invite people TO lunch (tennis, dinner). * One must be kind TO animals. * Indians dance TO strange music. * He is very dear TO me. * She helped herself TO some sweets. * Contrary TO popular belief, lions do not walk about the streets in South Africa. * The teacher explained the work TO us. * The shop assistant attends TO customers. * You should be an example TO the younger ones. * He applied TO the Defence Force for exemption from military service (people or institutions). * The woman is good TO her workers. * I thought TO myself that you were wrong. * Jane is married TO a man from Bloemfontein. * Have you had an answer TO your letter yet? * It is an exception TO the rule. * The soldiers stand TO attention. * Man adapts himself TO his environment. * Add this number TO that one. * Help yourself TO some bananas. * She is grateful TO him for his help. * She is looking forward TO seeing her parents again. * The poor animals starved TO death. * It is clear TO me that you are not interested in your work. * I look TO my parents for advice. * They sat down TO dinner. * The house was burnt TO the ground. * She would not agree TO the plan. * If you promise something, you must keep TO your word. * Ann told him TO his face that she did not trust him. * Margate lies TO the south of Durban. * The car came TO a standstill against the wall. * TO my knowledge, he is the tallest boy in the class. |
| **Towards** | * It started to rain TOWARDS evening. * He is not friendly TOWARDS me. |
| **Under** | * The building is UNDER repair. * Let us rest UNDER that tree. * He said it UNDER his breath. * The figure is UNDER ten. * Anything new UNDER the sun. * The country prospered UNDER his rule. |
| **Up** | * The cat climbs UP the tree. * They are walking UP the road. * She has taken UP painting as a hobby. |
| **Upon** | * I acted UPON your instructions. * UPON my word, it is true. * Punishment was inflicted UPON them. * He was used to coming here once UPON a time. |
| **With** | * The grass was wet WITH dew. * Are you cross WITH me? * Please fill the kettle WITH water. * I am happy WITH the grocer on the corner. * John met WITH an accident. * The animals were mad WITH terror. * Will you dine WITH us next Sunday? * She will not part WITH her dog. * Shake hands WITH us. * The injured man groaned WITH pain. * There were two girls WITH her in the park. * The stadium was packed WITH people. * Mary finds fault WITH everything John does. * The dog shivered WITH cold. * I am pleased WITH the results. * She is down WITH mumps. * I shall help you WITH pleasure. * It rests WITH you. * You should comply WITH the request. * He trembled WITH rage. * It is a custom WITH some tribes to decorate their houses * WITH clay. * She does not agree WITH him. * He was covered WITH dust. * John pleaded WITH her. * The children spent the day WITH their parents. * All the pupils passed WITH the exception of Peter. |
| **Within** | * He will be back WITHIN an hour. * It is WITHIN reach/reason. |
| **Without** | * You cannot go in WITHOUT a ticket. * That is WITHOUT doubt what happened. * He is late WITHOUT fail. |