Improving Your Writing Style

A guide to writing well for essays and theses in City and Regional Planning

CARDIFF UNIVERSITY
PRIFYSGOL CAERDYDD

IMPROVING YOUR WRITING STYLE. : A GUIDE

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IMPROVING YOUR WRITING STYLE. : A GUIDE

Introduction

These notes are intended to be read alongside the CPLAN Student Handbook, particularly its sections on the submission of work, marking guidelines, and advice on plagiarism. There is also advice on the avoidance of plagiarism in the Cardiff University Student Handbook. They have been written to give students a clear idea of the standards of writing expected of all students, and to encourage continual improvement.

The comments made here refer to written English, which is the language used for the vast majority of instruction and assessment in CPLAN. Nevertheless, students do have a right to submit their assessed work in Welsh and to write exams in Welsh. However, they need to inform their Year Tutor and the Director of Registry and Academic Secretary of this intention by the end of week five of each semester.

The reasons for issuing these advice notes

From time to time employers (both full-time and year-out placements) and external examiners comment on the importance of good writing as a communication skill, and suggest that there could be a considerable improvement in the standards that staff expect and students achieve. In a recent Quality in Higher Education Project, employers were asked to rank attributes required of graduate employees and 86 per cent identified written communication skills as of critical importance. Other aspects of writing, including analytical ability, ability to summarise key issues and logical argument also scored 82-84 per cent. Good writing skills are not just an academic preoccupation.

But as the Department strives to maintain its top ratings for both its staff research and teaching practice, it is concerned to demonstrate that its graduates achieve high standards both in their assessed work while at university and in their professional practice. CPLAN teaching staff attach great importance to a high standard of written English, invariably rewarding such work with higher grades. Unfortunately, they do not have the time to meticulously correct all grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors, or to rewrite badly written work. If they have to do this, such as when they read badly drafted dissertation chapters, then it greatly distracts them from their primary task - to comment on the substance of the research and ideas presented. This greatly impairs effective instruction on substantive theoretical, methodological and empirical issues.

In an effort to raise the standards of writing, the Department is developing a set of guidelines on written english, and identifying useful sources of further assistance, including University facilities, for both indigenous and international students. It is also introducing a guideline into the student handbook as follows.

CPLAN policy on poorly-written and presented work

WORK WHICH IS VERY BADLY WRITTEN, PRESENTED OR REFERENCED MAY NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR ASSESSMENT, BUT MAY BE RETURNED TO THE STUDENT FOR IMPROVEMENT PRIOR TO BEING MARKED. SUCH WORK WILL BE SUBJECTED TO A PENALTY OP UP TO 10 PER CENT.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATION WILL BE GIVEN TO STUDENTS WHO ARE DYSLEXIC AND THOSE FOR WHOM THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE WAS NOT THE LANGUAGE OF THEIR SECONDARY EDUCATION. IT IS ABSOLUTELY NOT THE INTENTION TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST SUCH STUDENTS.

ALL NEW INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE ASKED TO SIT AN ENGLISH TEST IN THEIR FIRST WEEK, IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THOSE WHO NEED EXTRA TUITION AND ASSISTANCE. THE DEPARTMENT THEN PROVIDES A FREE WEEKLY CLASS FOR SUCH STUDENTS (RUN BY ELSIS).

Appended to these notes is information on the writing course (Appendix 1). which exists to provide one-to-one professional advice on writing to all students, and the English language service for international students (ELSIS): Appendix 2.

The skill and procedure of essay writing

This advice note deals primarily with essay writing, although it should be equally relevant to dissertation writing when the time comes. (You will receive detailed advice on dissertation writing in CP2122 Research Skills in the second year). If you are writing a report or responding to a project brief, then there are different rules to be obeyed. You will receive separate instruction on this matter in CP1061 Professional Skills and CPP653. Much of the advice below is common to a range of texts on writing skills (see further reading at the end of this paper), but we have leaned particularly heavily on Andrew Notledge, The Good Study Guide, Open University (1990) in preparing this guidance.

Writing an essay has several stages. These include:

- thinking about the essay title;
- gathering together lecture materials, readings and data relevant to the title;
- setting down your ideas on paper;
- organising these ideas into a logical sequence and connected argument;
- preparing a first draft;
- re-reading, correcting and editing the draft, paying special attention to the title as set; and
- writing the final draft.

The essay title

Whether you are given the essay title or whether you choose your own, it is important to give it considerable thought. The given essay title or exam question requires careful scrutiny to

- identify all the key words or phrases in the question;
- define these words as you understand them;
- identify the components of the question, normally at least two ('outline... and explain...'), quite often four ('explain..., arguments for and against..., recommend...');
- identify the slant of the question: that is state those things that you are required to discuss, discarding things that you are not. For example, if you are asked to write about the impact of something - you are not invited to write about its origins.

KEY POINT - Answer the question or follow the brief as set

If you are required to choose your own topic, carefully phrase it as a question or series of questions that are worthy of investigation and use this to structure your answer. You will be taught about hypothesis testing as a precise form of question setting in the second year Research Methods course (CP2122).

Gathering material

In the first instance, you should relate your essay title to material you have been or will be taught in the course (i.e. to your lecture notes). But this is never enough and normally essays are set to force you to read more widely and assimilate a range of published material. When you read, take notes of points that are relevant to your essay title and start to think how these are going to be organised. Use your lecture notes and these readings to identify further ideas and points worth investigating.

Getting down your ideas on paper

At this point you start to define relevant points that you have obtained from the readings and to link them in a coherent fashion to make an argument that expresses your point of view on the question as set. You may start by going through your notes and readings and listing a whole set of ideas that are relevant to the question. You can gradually organise them into coherent groups and a logical sequence, discarding those which are superfluous. Instead of lists you can use flow diagrams or 'ideagrams' to link together ideas and points. Lists or thinking diagrams help you to get started with the writing task and can suddenly make it seem a far less daunting assignment (see Figure 1).

Organising your ideas and developing a structure

How you organise your ideas will depend partly on simple logic, partly on the importance you attach to different points, but particularly on how the question is phrased. Does it require 'arguments for or against'? Does it look for 'strengths and weaknesses'? Are you asked to link 'theory and practice' or to discuss 'policy and implementation'? As you organise the points, think about the arguments you want to make and the differential weight you want to give to different points. This is a good point at which to relate the emerging structure to the prescribed length of the essay, allowing you to decide how you are going to apportion your 2,000 to 4,000 words. Clear thinking at this point will save a lot of wasted effort by defining how much space you have to elaborate the key ideas and the level of detail that is appropriate.

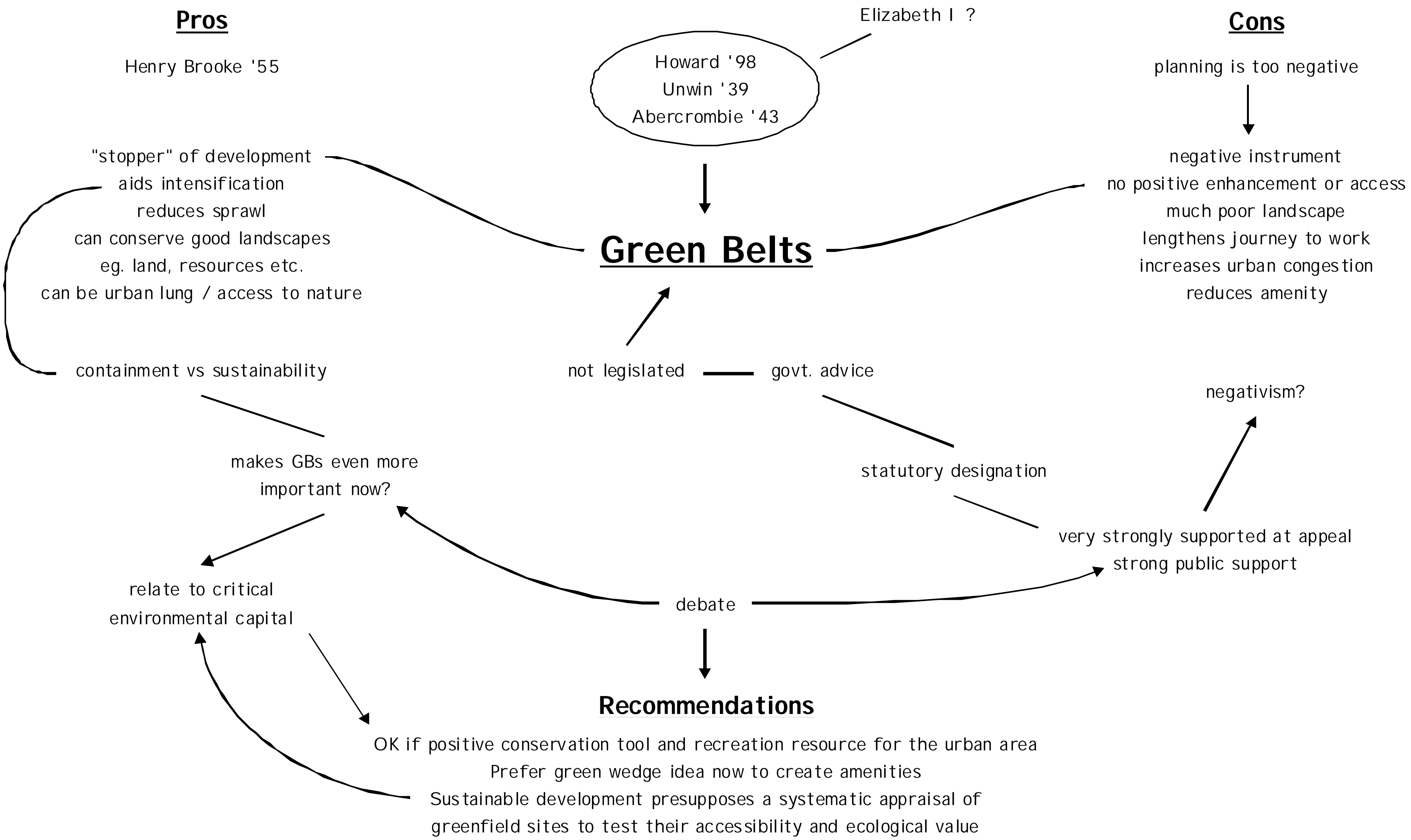
Figure 1: An Example of an Ideagram
Topic: Pros and Cons of Greenbelts and Recommendationsfor Future Policy
Pros
Henry Brooke '55
"stopper" of development
aids intensification
reduces sprawl
can conserve good landscapes
eg. land, resources etc.
can be urban lung / access to nature
containment vs sustainability
Elizabeth I ?
Howard '98
Unwin '39
Abercrombie '43
Green Belts
not legislated
govt. advice
statutory designation
Cons
planning is too negative
negative instrument
no positive enhancement or access
much poor landscape
lengthens journey to work
increases urban congestion
reduces amenity
negativism?
very strongly supported at appeal
strong public support
debate
makes GBs even more
important now?
relate to critical
environmental capital
Recommendations
OK if positive conservation tool and recreation resource for the urban area
Prefer green wedge idea now to create amenities
Sustainable development presupposes a systematic appraisal of
greenfield sites to test their accessibility and ecological value

Writing the first draft

Once you have your plan and your word targets for each section you can begin the task of writing, concentrating upon exactly what you want to say and how you are going to say it. Think about who is your audience -your lecturer? or unknown examiner? a wider research or practice community? councillors or the general public? In each circumstance a different set of assumptions can be made about what the reader will know. However, always remember that you are communicating with a reader and trying to lead them through the argument sequentially and logically.

Except under exam conditions, it is not necessary to start at the beginning and work through to the end as you develop your essay. Some sections will be much easier to write than others, and parts of the essay can easily be written as free-standing elements in the first instance. When it becomes difficult to know what you want to say, or you cannot clearly articulate your ideas, move on to easier points and come back to the difficult issues later. The more of the essay you complete, the better you feel, the more confidence you get, and the more obvious become practicable solutions to the points over which you have stumbled. You may even find you can leave certain issues unresolved as imponderables, or you can write around them.

Redrafting and producing a final version

KEY POINT - Students who do not carefully redraft, proof read and check their essays, adding full references etc. do themselves a great disservice

A second draft can and should lead to an immense improvement in the way the essay answers the question, articulates its ideas, structures its argument and draws its conclusions. It should certainly eliminate all the silly mistakes which drive assessors mad -disconnected ideas, irrelevant passages, directionless description and errors of punctuation, spelling and grammar. Leave the first draft for a day or two and come back to it fresh. You will find you are more objective and critical and able to rectify its faults. Even under exam conditions you should still make time to proof read your answer.

KEY POINT - Read the essay aloud to yourself to make sure it sounds right and that the punctuation reinforces the meaning

Check the introduction, and especially the conclusion, for relevance, precision and emphasis. Check all references and make sure they are complete, and ensure that your references to figures/tables etc. are fully detailed (obviously not necessary under exam conditions).

Consider how the essay looks on the page

With word-processing you now have the opportunity to produce printed pages of professional quality. Choose your typeface, font size and spacings carefully, and make sure that your subheadings and sub-subheadings are appropriately differentiated and spaced on the page. All quotations need to be indented and appropriately spaced. There is separate advice for dissertation presentation, and if you want further ideas for essays, look at the way different planning journals layout their pages.

KEY POINT - Keep a copy of the essay you handed in
Very occasionally a piece of work gets lost in the system. Keep a hard copy or a copy on disk just in case.

Reading and checking the essay comments

When you get your essay or assignment back do not just look at the mark and put it to one side. Carefully read the comments on the assessment sheet and check the words or phrases which are circled or underlined. Where words are circled, crossed through or underlined, there may be errors of expression, spelling or punctuation that need to be taken on board. There may also be points of substance that you need to understand. Take particular note of what the comments sheets stress.

Personally follow up points you do not understand with the lecturer who has marked your work. Do not be afraid to ask for further advice or explanation on where you have succeeded and failed. This is a vital part of your university education. If you cannot find your lecturer, and there is no weekly timetable on his/her door (there should be!), email them. Remember, it is always useful to read someone else's essay on the subject, particularly if it has been highly rated by the lecturer concerned.

Further help on writing

Further help on essay writing is available from

- The Writing Centre
- English Language Service for International Students

See the information sheets appended to the end of this note.

These services are there for your benefit. Use them.

There now follow some more specific pointers on the content or substance of what you write, use of language and grammar, and the minutiae of punctuation and consistent expression. A final section discusses how actually writing can help you develop key ideas in your work.

General advice on substance

Each piece of writing should be an argument rather than an anthology
Because you are invariably asked a question, you have to answer it. Every essay should develop and test an argument and should not simply be a collection of other people's ideas to which you have added nothing. To this end you need to introduce your approach, follow it through with a series of ideas/themes, and then conclude with your main points.

Develop the flow of an argument, making your point clearly and connecting points one to another
Do not take the reader's knowledge for granted. Explain your approach to the question, how your main ideas relate one to another, where you are changing tack and, finally, what are the key points you want to make (see linking and signposting below).

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Your arguments should be as objective, precise and logical as possible

You should try to avoid being subjective, irrational and emotional in your writing. Develop a detachment that allows you to make your arguments calmly, seeing both (all?) sides of the issue, though you may take any position you wish as long as you justify it. Precision in your choice of words helps here.

Your arguments should provide adequate evidence and weigh it carefully, but admit to doubt and potential criticism

Good arguments are always backed up by evidence, but all evidence is partial and subject to other interpretations. There are rarely black and white issues in planning, and alternative arguments should be acknowledged and respected.

Extensive description should usually be replaced with explanation and analysis

Except in a thesis, where you need to build up your evidence, long pieces of description usually mean you are losing the plot and wasting space. Rather than describing things, try to analyse and explain them. You are rarely asked to describe, and even instructions to 'outline' require you to sift out key events, facts and development and explain their significance.

Bullet points are acceptable, particularly in conclusions or where there are obvious space constraints

Bullet points are particularly valuable for high impact and easily accessible conclusions. They are especially valuable, under exam conditions when time is short, in getting across a number of points or for explaining a number of sub-issues under a main idea. They help to give an essay depth and substance. But they support the argument rather than replace it, and they should not be used excessively.

Give examples not anecdotes

The use of appropriate examples to explain points demonstrates that you fully understand the essay's ideas and themes and can apply them to the real world. They also help to individualise your essay and make it unique - an important factor when the marker has 50 or so very similar essays to read. Anecdotes and personal reminiscences are generally problematic and are only rarely acceptable as evidence.

Use illustrations but integrate them into the text

Illustrations in the form of conceptual diagrams, graphs, tables, maps, and photographs are often important to essays on planning. As a general rule such illustrations should not be appendicised unless they are oversize or provide very complex series of data from which the main arguments emerge. Every illustration should be cross-referenced in the text and captioned. Photographs in particular need full captions discussing what they illustrate. Every illustration should be chosen on the basis of how it can help the reader understand your arguments and the context (often a specific locality or place) in which these are made. You can usually photocopy maps of an appropriate scale and annotate them accordingly. You rarely need to draw maps anew.

Ensure your essay has clear conclusions

Your conclusions are a particularly important part of the essay, as the last thing that your audience reads. You should return to the question and your dissection of it in your introduction and give a concise answer to the question, summarising the major points you have made. As a general rule you should not introduce any new arguments into a conclusion, but sometimes it can

be useful to make a comment on the relevance of the question, your answer and the wider ramifications of the subject. An example drawn from the green belt example might be to note that any reform of green belt principles would be fraught with political problems because it is a simple concept which has widespread public support.

Always proof read and edit your work

The most dramatic improvements in writing are achieved when you (i) proof read your work and eliminate all grammatical, spelling and punctuation errors, and (ii) edit your work to improve its clarity, precision and flow. This is best done a day or more after you have written the final draft.

Using other people's ideas and phrases

Use quotations sparingly

Repeated use of long quotations is very rarely justified. Often they become tangential to the main argument and they lose their impact. Such quotations are best used when they are particularly authoritative, elegantly expressed, or have a dense meaning that can give the essay more depth. Do not forget to indent all quotations and space them appropriately, and do not forget to introduce them and conclude from them, integrating them into the flow of your argument.

Write in your own words

We all have a tendency to 'lift' sparkling phrases and well-expressed ideas straight out of other people's writings into our own. This should be done sparingly and always acknowledged. The paraphrasing of significant chunks of text of other writers is also bad practice. Usually the points where your words become someone else's are glaringly obvious and frequently it disrupts the flow of the argument (there is often no argument when semi-digested chunks of other people's writings are being used). You will need to precis other people's work, but try to use your own words as this will help both the clarity and flow of the essay.

Do not plagarise. Acknowledge your sources. Reference all short and long quotations in the text using the Harvard system, and provide a list of all references used at the end of the essay. Complete details of each item are required. Do not list references you have not used.

Further advice on plagiarism is available in the CPLAN Student Handbook and in the UWC Academic Regulations Handbook for Students and Staff. See Appendix 3 for comprehensive advice.

General advice on language and grammar

Do not write in the first person

Generally avoid the use of 'I', 'me', 'we'. Nor is 'one' recommended (unless you are the Prince of Wales!). Use such phrases as 'it can be argued that', or 'in the opinion of the author / researcher'. This is a general rule for professional language, but it should be noted that the use of I is now more common in social science writing (as part of the post-modern acknowledgement of the author in all writing).

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Avoid sexist language

Do not write solely in the masculine form. Use his/her, she/he as appropriate and use your common sense about words like chairman/chairperson.

Avoid tabloid language cliches, colloquialisms and slang

The three rules of journalism have been described as simplify, simplify and exaggerate! Do not exaggerate or oversimplify. Do not use common phrases which are inappropriate and inexact, for example 'over the moon', dead in the water', 'out to lunch', 'ball park figure', etc. Cliches, colloquialisms and slang devalue what you are trying to say and alienate an academic audience. Good broadsheet journalism has much to commend it in terms of its brevity, accessibility and lively style.

Use shorter rather than longer sentences

The shorter the sentence the punchier it is. But not all sentences can be short. Proof reading should indicate how overlong sentences should be split and punctuated.

Sentences require a subject and a verb (and often an object)

Every sentence needs a verb, a 'going or happening word', and every sentence needs a subject - the person or thing involved in the action. The same is true of many sub-clauses, which therefore, by definition, can become separate sentences. This is just the start of the use of grammar, and space does not permit further excursions. Most people resolve grammar by reading what they have written and deciding whether it sounds right. This is the best approach.

Use link and 'signpost' words and phrases to progress your argument

The opening and closing sentences of each paragraph are especially important in providing links in your argument but also indicating shifts to new ideas and points. Link words are also critical to structuring your argument and indicating a change of tack (e.g. but, however, nevertheless, on the other hand, in the case of, etc.), but each of these words or phrases has a specific meaning and use. 'But' implies contrary or qualifying evidence, as do 'nevertheless' or 'however'.

Paragraphs should have a single argument or theme and be used to denote breaks in your argument

Organise your sentences into paragraphs that explore a particular idea, argument, theme or body of evidence. Their length is largely dictated by the structure of your ideas and the point at which you want to differentiate one set of points from another.

Subheadings help you and the reader to find your way around your writing

Use sub-headings to help the reader understand the structure of your essay and the flow of your argument. Remember, you can have sub-subheadings if this is helpful, but adjust font sizes appropriately. Most articles in major planning journals demonstrate how to use subheadings effectively. Your subheadings should have a clear logic and provide a neat structure for the essay. Write them out as a contents page and check that they make sense.

Minutiae that, if ignored, can spoil your essay

Check every word you do not know how to spell with a dictionary or a spell-checker

This will help you build up your vocabulary and subtlety of expression. Badly misspelled words or phonetic spellings tend to indicate you have never seen the word written (i.e. you have done no reading!).

A thesaurus will help you choose alternative words to avoid repetition

A thesaurus is very useful to avoid your over-using words, but you often need to check the meanings of alternatives in the dictionary. This is another means of developing your vocabulary and subtlety of expression which will be critical in all aspects of your professional life.

Keep your language simple

Academics are notorious for obfuscating their meanings(!), so are not necessarily good people to advise on the use of simple language. It should be easy to spot when you are becoming too complex or arcane. One expert (Sir Ernest Gowers) suggests the following - avoid superfluous words, choose familiar words and be precise.

Appropriate punctuation helps the writer convey his/her meaning

Punctuation is critical for conveying what you want to say, the emphases you want to place, and making your essay easy to read. Omitting a comma, or inserting one in the wrong place, can completely alter the meaning of a sentence.

Ensure consistency of tenses and plurals

A basic rule of grammar is to ensure that you are consistent with the use of tenses and that you make sure that the verbs agree with the singular or plural subject.

Ensure consistency and appropriate use of capitals

This can be a very difficult area and to some extent is personal choice. Some writers always capitalise such bodies as Central Government, others do not. You should capitalise 'the Council' when referring to a specific council. The same is true of 'the City' when referring to a particular administration (e.g. Bristol City Council), but capitals would not be used when you refer to the place at large (i.e. 'the city is surrounded by...').

Use abbreviations (or symbols) sparingly

As a general rule, do not abbreviate. It is better to write million, square metres, etc. Do not abbreviate Figure 1 to fig. 1. I.e., e.g. and etc. can be used, but they are regarded as bad form by some. Per cent and percentages should be written in full. These rules are less important for essays, but become important when writing for publication. You can use abbreviations under exam conditions.

Use the apostrophe only when it is the possessive form (e.g. England's, Wales's)

The possessive form its does not have an apostrophe (nor does his or her) and you never abbreviate it is to it's, or use can't, don't etc. There is no apostrophe in plurals, for example 1990s, etc.

Write numbers under l0 in words, but use digits for all those above 10.

Use metric measures (except perhaps for miles).

Learn which words have hyphens

There are no universal rules for the use of hyphens, and you have to learn how they are used in each case (e.g. decentralise. de-designate). Where a vowel ends the prefix and begins the word, you will often use a hyphen (e.g. re-entry). Land use has no hyphen, unless it becomes a compound adjective (e.g. land-use planning).

Acronyms must be written in full the first time you use them

So Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) then allows you to use DETR from then on.

Thinking through writing - then rewriting for your audience

All of the above assumes a highly structured, perfectly ordered and rather mechanical approach to writing. It is predicated upon you knowing what you want to say and how you are going to say it. Very often, particularly with difficult material or complex interlocking ideas, this is not the case. You know there are several ways to get into the subject and structure your arguments, but you are not sure which one you want to use.

In such circumstances most people simply start writing, trying a particular tack until it breaks down or until a better idea comes along. In this process new approaches to the question may emerge and better ways of structuring the answer may become obvious. This kind of thinking through writing can be very creative and penetrating (it is part of a free-writing technique). Although you may discard much of what you have written, there will be some 'nuggets' that you can use again, and you will have helped to resolve some of the key problems of the essay. The mistake is to write the whole of your essay in this way, as a kind of 'stream of consciousness' with no plan, little structure and little thought for the reader. The trick is to use these bursts of writing/creative thinking to resolve key ideas. Then you can edit, order, sharpen, and link these pieces of text into a coherent and comprehensible whole that answers the questions.

Conclusions

Peter Hall always says that it takes him a third of his time to write the first draft, a third of his time to redraft and complete his ideas, and a third of his time to find the illustrations and references and to finalise the document (all this is before referees and editors start to comment on the text). So perhaps good writing is one third inspiration and two thirds perspiration! The key points are that you should devote much more time than you might expect to

(i) dissecting the question and planning your answer; and

(ii) reviewing your writing, clarifying its ideas and expression, and presenting it in a precise, literate and honest way.

In that way you will do yourself more justice in your assessed work and become a more useful professional in the process.

Further reading

This is not a comprehensive list, but rather a set of texts that have found their way on to the author's bookshelves through particular recommendations.

Study guides that include good sections on writing

- Nortledge, A. (1990). The Good Study Guide, Milton Keynes, Open University Press.
- Meredeen, S. (1988). Study for Survival and Success: Guidenotes for College Students, London, Paul Chapman.

On reading, thinking and studying (and planning your essay)

- Buzan, Tony (1974). Use Your Head, London, BBC Publications.

On vocabulary and language

- Gowers, E. (1987). The Complete Plain Words, London, Penguin (3rd edition).

APPENDIX 1 :

The Writing Centre

Do you have problems with any of the following:

- **Planning your essays?**
- **Organising your work?**
- **Layout and presentation?**
- **Referencing?**
- **Writing a bibliography?**
- **Punctuation?**
- **Grammar?**
- **Spelling?**

The Writing Centre can help!

- **It's a free, friendly and effective service.**
- **No need to make an appointment: just call in.**

We are open on TUESDAYS during teaching semesters, beginning on 15th October 2002

- **From 12 noon – 2.00pm**
- **Room 5.16 (Humanities)**

For further information please contact:
Dr. Christine Pegg. (Room 5.15, x5411)

APPENDIX 2 :

English Language Service for International Students

What is the English Language Service?

It is the official Cardiff University English language teaching centre for international students. It is permanently based at the university to provide English language courses for university students and staff, pre-university students, and the public.

What sort of training is available?

Pre-University English

(an integrated course in English for Academic and General Purposes)

The course is designed for:

- people who plan to study at a university in the UK; and
- people who want to improve their social or professional English and are not planning to attend university in the UK

Pre-Sessional English Summer Courses 2002

(an intensive summer course designed for students who are going to study at Cardiff University)

The course is designed for:

- people holding offers from or applying to Cardiff University at postgraduate or undergraduate level.

General English Summer Courses 2002

The course is designed for:

- people who want to improve their social or professional English; or
  people who want to improve their English before joining the Pre-University English course or the International Foundation Programme.

In-sessional Academic Study Skills:

A portfolio of courses designed for:

- current international students on academic schemes at Cardiff University.

Certificate in the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages

The course is designed for:

- people starting a career in teaching English, who are native speakers of English or at an equivalent level.

There are courses of each type at different levels and times of the year. We can advise you on the appropriate course, depending on your particular needs and future plans.

What other services are available to me during my course?

The University is an official examinations centre for:

- British Council International English Language Testing Service (IELTS)
- Trinity Board Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

Plus:

- University educational counselling service
- Advice on postgraduate and undergraduate courses
- Use of libraries, resource centres and computer workstations
- E-mail and internet access
- Access at student rates to sports and social facilities

How will I be taught and assessed?

Teaching on the Pre-University, Pre-Sessional and General courses takes place in groups of 14 students or fewer. You will work from a core syllabus, usually with a main coursebook, and make use of authentic and commercial resources. Ways of monitoring your progress may include:

- A placement test and exit assessment test
- 1:1 tutorials with your Tutor during courses of one term or longer
- A written progress report for courses of one term or longer

What qualifications will I receive?

You can prepare for an internationally recognised qualification. If you want to apply for university in Britain, you can take the British Council International English Language Testing Service (IELTS) exam. This exam can be taken at Cardiff University. Or, you can sit the Cambridge Board examinations in Wales.

Teacher trainees prepare for the Trinity Board Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages.

How long can I study English?

You can study for as long as you want subject to course dates. If you know your current level of English you can contact us for advice on how long to study to achieve university entry level or to pass a specified public examination.

What facilities do we offer?

Students taking full-time courses at the English Language Service will have:

- Access to the modern and well-equipped University language laboratory.
- Access to the University libraries and computing centres.
- Use in class of modern coursebooks, TV, audio, and video equipment.
- Access to the Students Union facilities (banks, bars, shops, cafes).
- Access to the University health, welfare and careers advisory services.
- Use of the University sports facilities.
- Access to all the facilities in your hall of residence, such as a bar, refectories and shops.

Students on the summer courses can participate in an active social and recreational programme, including regular excursions to places of interest, such as Oxford, Bath and Stratford, and local seaside resorts, castles and museums. We also organise a reception and other social evenings.

APPENDIX 3 :

Referencing Sources

Every year hundreds of marks are thrown away by students who fail to reference sources properly in their work. This guide has been produced to help you avoid these mistakes. It contains information on when to reference, how to construct a bibliography, academic conventions on abbreviations and is concluded with a learning activity. You will find it useful to refer to this guide when writing essays and reports or compiling bibliographies.

When to reference

When collecting information for an essay or report you should always record the source of your data. You might, for example want to do this on a card index system or set up a separate word-processing file to which you add every source you use from which you then, later cut-and-paste. Recording sources in this way makes referencing much easier and allows you to quickly locate particular ideas or arguments at a later date. When writing essays or reports you MUST REFERENCE ALL SOURCES. This is more than an exercise in academic pedantry. If you do not do this you lay yourself open to accusations of plagiarism: deliberately copying or misrepresenting other people's work as if it were your own. The penalties for plagiarism are severe: your work will be awarded a mark of zero! All assessed work attributes marks to referencing and if you reference inaccurately you will lose marks. However, if you follow the guidelines below and continue to use them throughout the course you should not experience any problems.

YOU MUST REFERENCE WHEN YOU...	EXAMPLES OF THE TECHNIQUE
Use quotations. For short quotations of one or two lines use single quotation marks ('). For longer quotations of two lines or more you should indent the extract from the body of the text. You must indicate the year of publication and page number of the quotation.	Consumption in/for the home carries a 'heavy burden of ideological conformity' (Madigan and Munro 1996: 41).
Summarise or explain the ideas of other authors. This type of referencing is used when a direct quotation is not necessary to illustrate the point you are making but you wish to indicate that the idea (or research finding etc.) has been established by somebody else. You must reference with the author's surname and the date.	There has been a resurgence of interest in interpretative perspectives in urban research during the 1990s (Franklin 1990. Jacobs 1993. Ratner 1996). Within housing studies this trend can be seen in a number of contributions (Clapham 1997. Gurney 1997. Franklin 1998. Hastings 1998) which have argued for a social constructivist perspective influenced by the work of Schutz (1962). Berger and Luckman (1966). Garfinkel (1967). Strauss (1978) and Fischer and Forester (1993).
Refer to a specific idea or piece of information. Even though this is not a direct quotation you should still make reference to the author, year and page number.	Work elsewhere on discourses of power and resistance has failed to come to terms with the praxical paralysis that a Foucaultian conception of power implies. If power is everywhere and possessed by all people, argues Porter (1996: 76), how do we go about changing the world?
Refer to an author in your text. On such occasions there is no need to mention the author's name again in the brackets.	More recently, Saunders (1990) draws on the results of research in Burnley, Slough and Derby to argue that important cultural differences between owners and renters persist. In simple terms he suggests that the meaning of home, attachment to dwelling and neighbourhood and the desire to personalise the dwelling all exhibit variations based on whether people own or rent their accommodation.
Refer to somebody else's ideas as described by another author. On such occasions you must reference the secondary source.	It has been claimed for instance that 'communism can never win in a nation of home owners' (Hoyt, quoted in Harris and Hamnett 1987: 175) and that home ownership has 'great utility as automatically interesting the owners in government, neighbourhood and the general community' (Woods and Kennedy, quoted in De Neufville and Barton 1987: 189).
Source: based on Drew and Bingham (1997: 94)	

The Bibliography

When using the Harvard system of referencing (NB an alternative is the Vancouver system -see http://www.ama-assn.org/public/journals/jama/sc6336.htm for details) you must fully cite all sources in the text in a separate bibliography at the end starting on a new page and sorted alphabetically and by date. This is easily accomplished in a word-processing package (In Word-for-Windows select Table/Sort Text). You MUST be consistent in your use of referencing conventions: this includes giving volume and page numbers of journal articles and place of publication and publisher for books. The bibliography below provides examples of all the different types of material you might reference. Note the way in which multiple publications, forthcoming or 'in press' publications, books, chapters in books, reprints, Government reports, statistical reports, Journal articles, Working papers or miscellaneous publications, conference papers and web sites are referenced.

Bové, P. (1994) 'The end of humanism: Michel Foucault and the power of disciplines', in B. Smart (ed.) Michel Foucault: critical assessments Volume 2. London: Routledge: 313-328 (originally published in Humanities in Society 1980 3: 23-40).

Darke, J. (1994) 'Women and the meaning of home'. In: R. Gilroy and R. Woods. (eds.) Housing Women. London: Routledge: 77-30.

Department of the Environment and Welsh Office (1971) Fair deal for housing. Command Paper 4728. London: HMSO.

Doyle, L. (1996) 'A woman's place is in the home: a study of homeless women'. Paper presented to Housing Studies Association autumn conference: Housing and Social Exclusion. University of Birmingham, September 16-17.

Forrest, R. and Murie, A. (1990a) 'A dissatisfied state? consumer preferences and council housing in Britain'. Urban Studies 27: 617-635.

Forrest, R. and Murie, A. (1990b) Moving the housing market: council estates, social change and privatization. Aldershot: Avebury.

Franklin, A. (1986) Owner occupation, privatism and ontological security: a critical reformulation. SAUS Working Paper 62. Bristol: School for Advanced Urban Studies.

Franklin, B. (1998) 'Editorial: Reflections on housing research'. European Network for Housing Research Newsletter 2/98: 3-4.

Gurney, C. (1998) 'Pride and prejudice: discourses of normalisation in public and private accounts of home ownership'. Housing Studies 14: 2 (forthcoming).

Kemeny, J. (1981) The myth of home ownership: private versus public choices in housing tenure. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Office of National Statistics (1998) Social Trends 28. London: The Stationery Office.

Puwar, N. (1997) 'Reflections on Interviewing Women MPs', Sociological Research Online. Vol. 2, No. 1, <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/1/4.html>

Abbreviations

When reading for an essay or other piece of assessed work you will regularly come across a bewildering range of abbreviations which hold little meaning outside of the world of publishing and academia. It is surprising just how many people do not understand these terms or fail to use them correctly. The most common are presented in tabular form below.

ABBREVIATION	EXPLANATION
Ch., chs (or chap., chaps)	Chapter(s)
Ed., ed., Eds., eds.	Editor(s)
6 edn or 6e	Sixth edition (of book etc.)
et al.	et alia; and others. Used when a book etc. has more than two authors
et seq	et sequentes; and following. Used when referring to one page and a number consecutive pages.
ibid.	ibedem; in the same work. Normally only used in reference notes and footnotes when referring again to the work of somebody already cited (Walker and Smith ibid.).
loc. cit	in the same place already cited. Used only in reference/footnotes to indicate that the same passage is being referred to.
n.d.	no date. Used when the book. or more usually a pamphlet has no publication date (Shelter n.d.).
op cit.	opere citato; in the work already cited. Used only with a page number (op cit.: 19)
passim	throughout the work. Use this if referring to an argument which runs through an entire publication rather than on just one or two pages.
(sic)	thus so. This is used to emphasise that the quotation is an exact quotation when it might otherwise appear an error or overstatement etc. 'We called Johnny "Mother Superior" because ay the length ay time he'd hud his habit' (sic) (Welsh 1993: 6).
Source: based on Drew and Bingham (1997: 89)	

Activty

Go to the Bute Library and get hold of a copy of two refereed journals (Housing Studies and Urban Studies, for example). Each journal will contain a page giving instructions to authors. Compare the instructions in each journal to see if there are any differences in referencing conventions.