

## Frequent problems in English scientific writing (FPESW)

**1. Wordy:** Too many words used to express an idea that can be expressed more simply. See “Be clear and brief” at <http://www.inter-biotech.com/biowc/style.html>

Editors of journals all say that the most important thing when writing is: **be clear**.[...] The first step towards being clear is to **be brief**. You should use the minimum number of words to make your points.

- Avoid long phrases that may be better said with one or two words.
  - **Instead of:** *are found to be in agreement*, **use:** *agree*.
- Avoid **tautology**.
  - **Instead of:** *exact duplicate*, **use:** *duplicate*.

**2. Redundant:** Avoid unnecessary repetition of words or word meanings and **tautology** (*wordiness* and *redundancy* are similar and often overlap).

- **Instead of:** *fewer in number*, **use** *fewer*.

<http://www.inter-biotech.com/biowc/correctuse/redun.html>

### 3. Gallicism:

A **Gallicism** can be:

- a mode of speech peculiar to the French
- a French idiom
- in general, a French mode or custom
- loanwords, words, or phrases borrowed from French
- A tendency to use Latinate words over Anglo-Saxon equivalents (*ameliorate* instead of *improve*; *reinforce* instead of *strengthen*).
- A tendency to use abstract nouns and passive verbs in wordy phrases (*XX was used to obtain a characterization of* instead of “*We used XX to characterize...*”).

A frequent example is the “**of**” phrase.

- **Instead of:** *results of the clinical study*, **try:** *clinical study results*.

**Special cases:** Some words (e.g., **activity, level, context, value, important, phenomenon, etc.**) are routinely used in French but *not necessarily* in English, where **a more specific word** may be used, or else the idea of *activity, level, context, value, or phenomenon, etc.*, may be **understood or implied**. From the Hansard debates in the Canadian House of Commons:

- **Activity:** *Ils sont d'avis que la meilleure façon de s'assurer qu'elle ne recommencera pas ses activités criminelles est de lui donner une sentence appropriée.*
  - They believe that the best way to ensure that he or she stops **offending** is by imposing an appropriate sentence.
- **Level:** *De plus, ce système est très coûteux au niveau financier.*
  - What is more, this system is very **expensive**.
- **Context:** *Il a été emprunté, dans le contexte des amendements apportés par les partis de l'opposition au projet de loi C-9, pour restreindre l'imposition d'une peine avec sursis.*
  - It was borrowed to serve as a limit to the availability of conditional sentences **by the amendments** of the opposition parties to Bill C-9.
  - *Dans le contexte économique actuel,*

- In today's **economy**,
- ...nuisent au fonctionnement du Parlement dans **un contexte de** gouvernement minoritaire.
- ...it has undermined Parliament in a minority **situation**.
- **Value:** *Depuis trop longtemps on calcule le coût du développement des régions éloignées sans mettre dans la colonne des **plus-values** le développement que les richesses naturelles permettent de réaliser dans les régions industrielles davantage urbanisées.*
  - For too long now, the cost of developing remote regions has been calculated without taking into account on the **positive side** of the ledger the development natural resources confer to the more urbanized regions.
- **Important:** *Le Québec possède un **important** secteur forestier.*
  - Quebec has a **large** forestry sector.
  - ...je désire souligner un dernier aspect **important** du projet de loi.
  - ...I want to emphasize one final, **essential** aspect of the bill.
- **Phenomenon:** *On pourrait discuter des raisons de ce **phénomène**, mais c'est la réalité:*
  - We can debate why **this is so**, but the reality is this:
  - *L'on ne saurait imaginer **phénomène** humain plus important pour la société.*
  - It is difficult to imagine a human **condition** that is more important to society.

**Note:** in English, "phenomenon" has taken on the meaning:

  - a. An unusual, significant, or unaccountable fact or occurrence; a marvel.
  - b. A remarkable or outstanding person; a paragon.

and "phenomenal" is commonly taken to mean extraordinary; outstanding: *a phenomenal feat of memory.*

<http://www.tsrali.com/>

**False friends / Faux amis:** In speaking or writing English, a Gallicism often results from a *direct translation* from French, giving an unidiomatic expression. **False friends** often provide occasions for Gallicisms: For example, using the verb *to assist* to mean *to be present at* (as in the French *assister à*) is a Gallicism. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gallicism>. Another frequent example is **important**, which in French means *large* or *substantial* as well as *significant*, whereas in English, it can mean *significant*, *authoritative*, or *meaningful*, **and not necessarily large** or *substantial*. **False friends** (or **faux amis**) are pairs of words in two languages or dialects (or letters in two alphabets) that look or sound similar, but differ in meaning.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False\\_friend](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/False_friend)

For example, **modification and évolution** (in French) are *not necessarily* translated by **modification and evolution** in English, depending on the context. From the Hansard Debates (Parliament of Canada), translated by the Canadian Translation Bureau:

- - *La motion nécessite-t-elle une **modification** législative pour forcer le gouvernement à faire ce qu'il demande?*
  - Does the motion require any legislative **change** that would force the government to do what he wants to do?
- - *J'aimerais savoir si, selon elle, il y a eu une **évolution** dans ce dossier-là.*
  - I would like to know if, in her opinion, there has been any **change**.

**4. The definite article:** To decide if you should use the word *the*, ask yourself these four questions:

1. Is the noun **indefinite** (unspecified) or **definite** (specific)? Example: A man is walking down the street. There is a dog with *the* man. (At first mention, it could be any man. At the second mention, we are referring to a specific man.)
2. Is the noun modified? (**premodification** and **postmodification**) Example: *The woman who lives next door* is my cousin. (A specific woman, because she is described.)
3. Is the noun generic? Example: It's astonishing what *gymnasts* can do; (or) It's astonishing what *a gymnast* can do. (Any gymnast, not a specific one.)
4. Is it an invention, a body part, a species, etc.? Example: The Internet, the telephone, the brain, the Alpine wallaby.

See also Special Uses of Articles:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/english-as-a-second-language/definite-article>

- Note that “**the**” is often omitted in scientific and academic writing for the sake of brevity.

**5. Readability:** Readability is defined as **reading ease**, especially as it results from a writing style. Extensive research has shown that easy-reading text improves comprehension, retention, reading speed, and reading persistence. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Readability>

- **Plain writing:** In our own time, this historical call for objective and clear scientific and scholarly writing has evolved into a “plain English” movement. **Readable writing is now “plain” writing**—writing that the reader can **readily understand without unnecessary work**.

You can achieve clear communication, which is the prime objective of scientific reporting, by presenting ideas **in an orderly manner** and by expressing yourself **smoothly and precisely**. By **developing ideas clearly and logically and leading readers smoothly from thought to thought**, you make the task of reading an agreeable one.

Fundamentally then, the concept of readability simply *places readers at the center of written communication*, allowing them to understand the information presented without having to expend undue time and effort rereading.

Ask yourself: **How does it sound when I read it out loud?**

See more at: <http://www.questia.com/googleScholar.qst?docId=5002395870>

**6. Style:**

- **Never use a long word when a short one will do. If it is possible to cut a word out, always cut it out.** Never use the **passive** when you can use the **active** (not always applicable to scientific writing, however).
- “*Never use a foreign phrase, a scientific word, or a jargon word if you can think of an everyday English equivalent.*” – George Orwell

- “*Vigorous writing is **concise**. A sentence should contain **no unnecessary words**, a paragraph **no unnecessary sentences**, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts.*” – Strunk and White, *The Elements of Style*
  - **Instead of:** *I personally think that absolute perfection is called for in the coming future.*
  - **Try:** *I recommend perfection in future.*
- Use **shorter words** that get your meaning across instead of longer words that mean the same thing: instead of *utilize, use*; instead of *disclose, show*; instead of *endeavor, try*; instead of *inquire, ask*. Typically, the most memorable pieces of writing demonstrate **conciseness**.

**Note:** conciseness doesn't mean that you write short, choppy sentences, or that you cut out detail; it means that you simply **take out empty words and phrases**. But when you're stuck trying to fix a wordy phrase or sentence, step back and see if you need it at all.

- **Avoid verb phrases.** Substitute a **succinct single verb**: **instead of:** *can be compared to*, **try:** *resembles*.
- Avoid **inflated language**: do you *inaugurate* things or *start* them? Do you *exhibit* things or *show* them? Do you  *dwell* at home or *live* there? Do you *utilize* things or *use* them?
- **Details:** Adding specific, tangible details will make your writing livelier and give it texture. Details support, explain, illustrate, describe, clarify, develop, and give life to your ideas. **Instead of:** *Expensive cars were parked in front of the funeral home*, **try:** *The Cadillac, Lamborghini, and Mercedes were idling in front of the funeral home.*

And many more pieces of advice at

[http://www.esc.edu/esonline/across\\_esc/writerscomplex.nsf/0/336aa1a4426e652a852569c3006c815d?OpenDocument](http://www.esc.edu/esonline/across_esc/writerscomplex.nsf/0/336aa1a4426e652a852569c3006c815d?OpenDocument)

## 7. Past tense:

- Use the **simple past** for events that were completed sometime in the past.
  - We *tested* for gender effects....
- Use the **present perfect** (have, has + the past participle) for events that were either repeated in the past up to now, or might continue into the future, or both.
  - Many studies *have found* gender effects on....
- Use the **past perfect** (*had* and the *past participle*) for an action that was completed in the past previous to another action in the past.
  - The samples *had been previously tested* for...

See more at: <http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/StudyZone/410/grammar/ppvpast.htm>

**8. Adjectives:** See some basic guidelines for adjectives at <http://www.chompchomp.com/terms/adjective.htm>

- **Adjective order:** Adjectives must follow a specific order. For example, “*many well-made elongated boxes*,” **NOT** “*many elongated well-made boxes*.”

- **Series of adjectives:** Note that “**and**” is not usually required for a series of adjectives. For example, “*a temperature-controlled airtight environment*,” **NOT** “*a temperature controlled **and** airtight environment*.” A comma is often used to separate *coordinate* adjectives. For example, “I saw a *happy, lively poodle*,” but not when the adjectives are not coordinate: “I saw a *young golden retriever*.” For a detailed explanation, see **Major Comma Uses** at <http://www.towson.edu/ows/modulecomma.htm> .) See some basic guidelines for adjectives at <http://www.enchantedlearning.com/grammar/partsofspeech/adjectives/>
- **Nouns used as adjectives:** The noun used as an adjective is **usually singular**, e.g., *wave* recordings, **NOT** *waves* recordings, with a few exceptions: *news* items, *assets* management. This is because adjectives do not agree with the noun for number or gender. They remain unchanged. See a good description at <http://www.englishclub.com/grammar/nouns-group-adjective.htm>
- **Compound adjectives:** A compound adjective is formed when **two or more adjectives work together to modify the same noun**. For example, “*environment-related issues*.” These terms should be **hyphenated** to avoid confusion or ambiguity.
  - However, **combining an adverb (usually a word ending in “ly”) and an adjective** does not create a compound adjective. No hyphen is required because it is already clear that *the adverb modifies the adjective* rather than the subsequent noun. For example, “*a cleverly worded advertisement*,” where “*cleverly*” modifies the adjective “*worded*,” not the noun “*advertisement*.” Therefore, it does not become part of a compound adjective.
  - When a compound adjective **follows** the term it applies to, a hyphen is typically not used. For example, “*that gentleman is well respected*,” not “*that gentleman is well-respected*.”
  - An adjective is often preceded by a word like **very, well, beautifully, or extremely** (these are adverbs.) Usually, there is no need to link an adverb to an adjective using a hyphen.
    - **Incorrect:** The *remarkably-hot* day turned into a *remarkably-long* week.
    - **Correct:** The *remarkably hot* day turned into a *remarkably long* week.

See some rules and exceptions at:

[http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/lrw/grinker/LwtaCompound\\_Adjectives.htm](http://www.kentlaw.edu/academics/lrw/grinker/LwtaCompound_Adjectives.htm)

**9. This or that? These or those?** *These/those* are the plural forms of *this/that*, and behave in the same way. As a determiner, *this* is used to identify a specific person or thing *close at hand* or *being experienced*. *This* and *these* are often used to connect the ideas in a sentence to those of a previous sentence. As a determiner, *that* refers to the *more distant* of two things near to the speaker, or to a specific thing mentioned *in the past*.

Note: “close at hand” can mean in *space or time*, e.g., nearby or recently, immediately preceding.

See more at: <http://www.askoxford.com/asktheexperts/faq/usage/these?view=uk>

**10. Parallel structure (PS):** Taking out repetitive words and combining similar sentences and ideas is called **parallel structure**, **parallel construction**, and **parallelism**. For example, “It is used *for* measuring *and* monitoring...” (NOT *for* measuring and *for* monitoring).

- When using parallel structure, the main rule to remember is that **the things in the list must be the same grammatical form**. The items in the list must be all nouns, all infinitives, all prepositional phrases, all gerunds, or all clauses. For example, “measuring” and “monitoring” are both gerunds, a verb form used as a noun in this case.

See a good explanation, examples, and exceptions at:

<http://www.myenglishteacher.net/parallelism.html>

**11. The en dash and the em dash:** The *hyphen* ( - ) is not always appropriate. The **en dash** ( – ) is used to **indicate a closed range**, to **contrast values**, or to **illustrate a relationship between two things**. For example, *June–July*, or *the Montreal–New York flight*, or *a mother–child dyad*. Traditionally an **unspaced em dash**—like this— or a **spaced em dash** — like this — have been used for a dash in running text. It is used to separate out extra information. The **spaced en dash** – like this – is the house style for certain major publishers ([Penguin](#), [Cambridge University Press](#), and [Routledge](#) among them). However, some longstanding typographical guides such as [The Chicago Manual of Style](#) still recommend **unspaced em dashes** for this purpose. In practice, there is little consensus, and it is a matter of personal or house taste. The idea is to be consistent throughout the document.

See an extensive description of the rules for most punctuation symbols at

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dash#En\\_dash\\_versus\\_em\\_dash](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dash#En_dash_versus_em_dash)

**12. As well as:** This expression is overused. In most cases, simply “and” is more appropriate. Use “as well as” **only when absolutely necessary to avoid confusion** or when you want to say: **not only ... but also**.

- She is clever **as well as** beautiful. She is obstinate **as well as** stupid.  
<http://www.perfectyourenglish.com/usage/as-well-as.htm>

**13. Punctuation:** The comma and other punctuation marks (e.g., quotation marks) are used very differently between French and English. Some guidelines for **comma use** are found at:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/607/02/>

- 1. Use commas to **separate independent clauses** when they are joined by any of these seven coordinating conjunctions: *and*, *but*, *for*, *or*, *nor*, *so*, *yet*.
  - The game was over, but the crowd refused to leave.
  - The student explained her question, yet the instructor still didn’t seem to understand.
  - Yesterday was her brother’s birthday, so she took him out to dinner.
- **The Oxford comma:** The **serial comma** or **series comma** (also known as the **Oxford comma** or **Harvard comma**) is the comma used immediately before a grammatical

conjunction (usually *and* or *or*, sometimes *nor*) preceding the final item in a list of three or more items. For example, a list of three countries can be punctuated as either “Portugal, Spain, and France” (with the serial comma) or as “Portugal, Spain and France” (without the serial comma).

**Use of the Oxford comma has been generally recommended** to cover all case (e.g., American English and other English styles).

- **Commas after introductions:**

Introductory elements often require a comma, but not always. Use a comma in the following cases:

- After an introductory clause: *If they want to win,...*
- After a long introductory prepositional phrase or more than one introductory prepositional phrase: *As a frequently cited argument,...*
- After introductory verbal phrases, some appositive phrases, or absolute phrases: *At the end of the day,...* *Given our results,...*
- After an introductory word, if there is a distinct pause (when you read the sentence aloud, do you find your voice pausing a moment after the introductory element?) or to avoid confusion. (Might a reader have to read the sentence more than once to make sense of it?): *Consequently,...* *Nonetheless,...* *Still,...* *However,...*
- If the introductory expression contains about three words or less, sometimes you can skip the comma, depending on the case. As a general rule, if you can switch the position of the introductory phrase without changing the meaning of the sentence, it does not need a comma: *In 2009 we showed that...* (or) *We showed in 2009 that...*

#### 14. Proper usage of *that* and *which*

The dependent clause introduced by the relative pronoun is either *restrictive* (defining) or *non-restrictive* (continuative). A **restrictive clause** provides **information that is critical** to the understanding of the main clause, whereas a **non-restrictive clause** provides **information that is not critical** to the understanding of the main clause. In the case of a restrictive clause, *that* is the appropriate relative pronoun; and in a non-restrictive clause, *which* is the proper choice. The non-restrictive clause is set off with commas.

Example:

- The sample ***that*** *was not cured* was tested for ... (It is critical to know which sample we are talking about: the cured sample or the uncured sample.)
- The sample, ***which*** *was not cured*, was misplaced. (The fact that it was not cured is an additional fact, and is not needed to identify the sample. This extra information is separated out using two commas.)

<http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~cpercy/courses/6362-lee.htm>

#### 15. Negative, Expletive, and Parallel Constructions:

An **expletive** construction is an expression that occupies the *subject position* of a sentence or clause. The two common expletives are *it* and *there* and a form of the verb *to be*.

- **Expletives**, while grammatically correct, are often unnecessary and create *wordy* sentences. An expletive *inverts* the usual order of subject and verb.
  - *Incorrect*: **There is** a case of meningitis that **was** reported in the newspaper. (extra verb – *there is*; extra clause – *that was reported* – passive voice)
  - *Correct*: The newspaper **reported** a case of meningitis. (a single verb – *reported* – active voice)
- **Negatives**: When you express an idea in a **negative** form, not only do you have to use an extra word (same=not different), but you also force your readers to do some type of algebraic factoring.

not different → similar  
not the same → different  
not allow → prevent  
not notice → overlook  
not many → few  
not often → rarely  
not stop → continue  
not include → omit  
not sufficient → insufficient

- *Incorrect*: There should be **no** submission of payments **without** notification of this office, **unless** the payment **does not** exceed \$100 (confusing – requires some kind of plus-minus calculation. Also, who does what?).
- *Correct*: **If you pay more than** \$100, **notify** this office **first** (immediately clear).

See more at: [http://paws.wcu.edu/kprice/pdfs/305/Style/style\\_neg-exp.pdf](http://paws.wcu.edu/kprice/pdfs/305/Style/style_neg-exp.pdf)

## 16. Few / A few / Little / A little

- “**A few**” means “*a small number of*” or “*some*.” It is a positive expression, and can be modified by such words as “only” (*only a few / only some*).
  - For example, “*A few ducks* flew back early this year on account of the unusually warm weather in March.” “*Only a few ducks* flew back early...”
- But “**few**” is a **negative** expression that means “*not many*.” You **cannot** use “*only not many*.”
  - For example, “*Not many ducks* stay in Canada all winter.”
- Similarly, “**a little**” means “*a small amount*,” whereas “**little**” means “*not much*.”
  - “*A little knowledge* is dangerous” (meaning: *a small amount of knowledge* is dangerous).
  - “*Little attention* has been paid in the literature to...” (meaning: *not much attention* has been paid ... ).

Note that “a few” and “few” are countable (e.g., *a few ducks / few ducks*) but “a little” and “little” are non-count (e.g., *a little information / little information; a little rain / little snow*).



**17. Probability and likelihood:** "...in statistical usage there is a clear distinction: whereas "*probability*" allows us to predict unknown *outcomes* based on known *parameters*, "*likelihood*" allows us to estimate unknown *parameters* based on known *outcomes*.

See more at, e.g., [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likelihood\\_function](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Likelihood_function)

**18. Among, of, from, in:**

Definitions of "among" include:

1. In the midst of; surrounded by: *a pine tree among cedars*.
2. In the group, number, or class of: *She is among the wealthy*.
3. In the company of; in association with: *traveling among a group of tourists*.
4. By many or the entire number of; with many: *a custom popular among the Greeks*.
5. By the joint action of: *Among us, we will finish the job*. (outdated usage)
6. With portions to each of: *Distribute this among you*.
7. Each with the other: *Don't fight among yourselves*. See Usage Note at [between](#).

**Do not confuse "among" with "of," "from," or "in."**

- **Incorrect:** *Among the total sample, 50 percent was addicted nine-and-a-half years or longer, yet 59 percent never had a period of continuous daily use that exceeded two years.*
- **Correct:** *Of the total sample, 50 percent was addicted nine-and-a-half years or longer, yet 59 percent never had a period of continuous daily use that exceeded two years.*
- **Incorrect:** *Complement activation induced by ischemia-reperfusion in humans: a study among patients undergoing partial hepatectomy*
- **Correct:** *Complement activation induced by ischemia-reperfusion in humans: a study in patients undergoing partial hepatectomy*
- **Incorrect:** *Listeners are given a single word they must identify among a closed list of six words.*
- **Correct:** *Listeners are given a single word they must identify from a closed list of six words.*

**19. Count and Noncount nouns**

• **Food Quantifiers**

Referring to specific amounts or units

Food substances are not usually countable unless they have quantifiers!

Quantifiers or Units for Food

- Any container, weight or measurement device can be used as a quantifier. In addition, there are shape quantifiers that are specific to the item.

RICE



a grain, a bowl, a sack, a box

PASTA



a piece, a package, a bag  
BREAD



a loaf, a slice, a piece  
CHOCOLATE



a piece, a square, a bar

BEER



a mug, a glass, a bottle, a keg

HONEY



a spoonful, a jar,

## MEAT



a slice, a steak, a chop, a roast, a fillet

## BUTTER



a piece, a slice, a pat, a stick, a pound, a cup

## COFFEE



a cup, a pot

## NON-COUNT NOUNS (just a few!)

- Fluids: water, coffee, tea, milk, oil, wine, beer, soda, etc.
- Solids: ice, bread, butter, cheese, meat, etc.
- Particles: rice, corn, flour, sugar, popcorn, pepper, salt, cinnamon, oregano (spice names), tea, coffee, etc.
- Groups: food, fruit, meat.

Use a negative word before a quantity of expression to indicate *little or none*.

Use *not a* before a unit amount to indicate *few or none*. Optionally, use *the* before the noun.

- *There's not much of the bread left. / Little of the bread is left. (some)*
- *There's not a lot of bread left. (some)*
- *Not any of the bread is left. (no amount)*
- *Not a slice of bread is left. (0 slices)*
- *None of the bread is left.*
- *Not a one/ Not a bit/ Not a slice is left. (none / no slices)*

- **Categories**

Some commonly used **noncount** nouns in scientific writing include: *research, information, performance, strength, classification, activity, variation, deprivation, detection, identification, access, investment*, and so on. The plural form of these nouns usually has a different meaning and is used in different contexts.

- For example, compare: “*Subjects showed poor **performance** on the task,*” (**noncount** noun – manner or quality of functioning) with, “*The orchestra gave **two performances** a night,*” (**count** noun – two separate shows).
- Compare: “*This year, as a result of federal and provincial business tax changes since 2006, Canada will have the lowest overall tax rate on new business **investment** in the G7 and below the average of the OECD,*” (**noncount** noun – process or method).  
“*It was created in 2007 with **an investment** of \$45 million over three years,*” (**count** noun – a specific amount of money; a separate investment).

**Note:** because the noun is noncount, there is no “a” or “an” before it, because “a” and “an” mean “one.”

- **Incorrect:** The subject showed **a good performance** on the test.
- **Correct:** The subject showed **good performance** on the test.

See a good overall discussion of count and noncount nouns at <http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwesl/egw/nouns/online.htm>

## 20. As such

The phrase *as such* is sometimes misused as an all-purpose (but grammatically incorrect) transitional phrase. *Such* is a pronoun that must have an **identifiable antecedent**. If it doesn't have one, its use is incorrect.

Example 1 (correct):

*She is the board president. As such, she is responsible for scheduling the meetings.*

Explanation: Here, the antecedent of *such* is *president*. It can replace *such*: *She is the board president. As president, she is responsible for scheduling the meetings.*

Example 2 (incorrect):

*Congress intended to provide an exhaustive list of examples, and it did not mention websites. As such, the statute does not cover websites.*

Explanation: *Such* has no antecedent here; it cannot be replaced with *list* or any other word in the first sentence. The writer of example 2 incorrectly used *as such* as a generic transitional phrase. The word *therefore* would be a better choice.

## 21. Indeed, in fact, actually

Use **indeed** for emphasis by interjection or as an intensifier:

- *The chef made a gingerbread house. It was **very fancy indeed**.* (very...indeed)
- *People were **indeed interested** in how he made it.* (emphasis on verb)
- *People were **delighted, indeed amazed**, to see his work.* (a restatement)

Use **in fact** for emphasis by fact or exceptional detail:

- *He's a master at building gingerbread houses. **In fact**, he's a teacher at the Culinary Academy.*

- *He made it fairly quickly. **In fact**, he did most of it in just one day.*
- *He loves to work by himself. **In fact**, he wouldn't have it any other way.*

**Contrast:** *Gas has become so expensive. **Indeed**, we pay way too much for it! (emphasis)*

**With:** *Gas has become so expensive. **In fact**, we pay twice as much as we used to. (fact)*

**Actually:** In some other languages a word of similar spelling means “now” or “currently,” (e.g., Portuguese *atualmente*, Spanish *actualmente*, French *actuellement*). **Therefore, do not use “actually” when you really mean “now.”** In English, actually means *in act* or *in fact*; *really*; *in truth*; *positively*.

In practice, **actually** and its synonyms are often used to preface an opinion rather than a fact: *This is **actually** a really beautiful song.*

## 22. While and since

Use words in their primary meanings. Do not use a word to express a thought if such usage is uncommon, informal, or primarily literary. Examples are using “since” when you really mean “because” or “as,” and “while” when you really mean “although” or “whereas.”

“While” and “since” are strongly **time associated**. For example, “**While** we were waiting, it started to rain.” “**Since** last winter, we have had unusually good weather.”

## 23. Placement: only, both, mainly, either, etc.

Watch the placement of words such as “only.” They have different meanings in different places in the sentence.

*Only the largest group was injected with the test compound.* (Meaning: and no other group).

*The largest group was only injected with the test compound.* (Meaning: and not given the compound in any other way).

*The largest group was injected with only the test compound.* (Meaning: and no other compounds).

*The largest group was injected with the only test compound.* (Meaning: there were no other test compounds).

## 24. Spelling guide: U.S. and U.K. spellings

For example, *behaviour* vs. *behaviour*; *centre* vs. *center*; *analyse* vs. *analyze*

See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:SpNeo/Spelling\\_Guide](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/User:SpNeo/Spelling_Guide)

## 25. General guidelines for publishing.

Among others, see the *Chicago Manual of Style Crib Sheet* at <http://www.docstyles.com/cmscrib.htm>

See an excellent guide to scientific writing, *The ACS Style Guide: A Manual for Authors and Editors*, Second Edition Edited by Janet S. Dodd

at: <http://www.oup.com/us/samplechapters/0841234620/?view=usa>

**25. The Canadian Translation Bureau / Bureau de la Traduction du Canada**

<http://www.btb.termiumplus.gc.ca/site/termium.php?lang=eng&cont=001>

Free trilingual terminology and linguistic databank. Excellent for finding the correct translation and proper usage of specialized terms.

( Compiled by M. McKyes)