ENGLISH HANDBOOK

2nd edition

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Introduction

Underpinning all English usage is our need and desire to express ourselves, to communicate effectively with others, and to participate in and understand a rich cultural heritage.

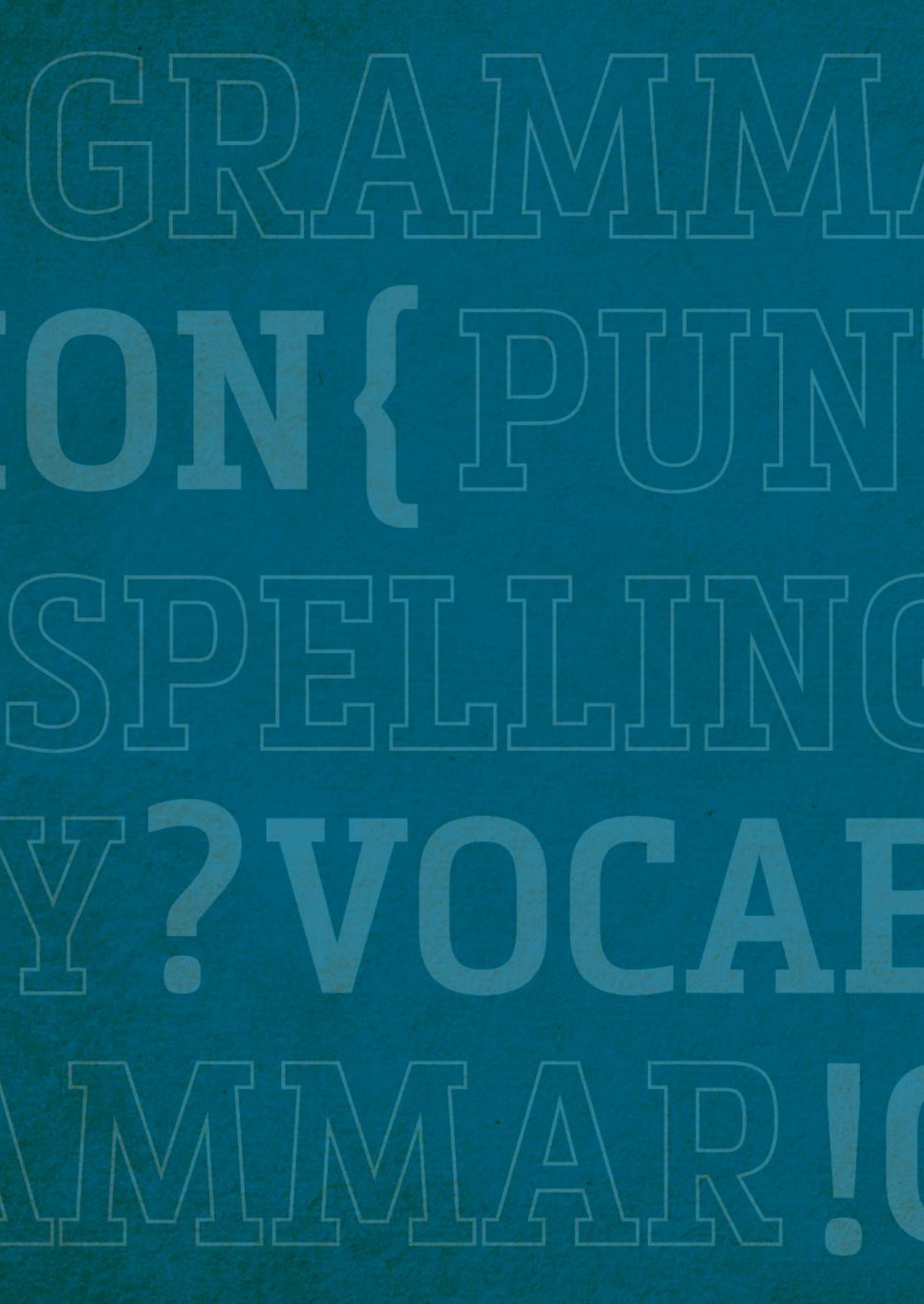
Insight's *English Handbook 2nd edition* is designed to help secondary school students to improve their understanding and use of English. Developing skills in using the English language goes far beyond knowing grammatical rules – hence the inclusion of sections on writing, media texts and literature.

Section 1 is a comprehensive and self-contained reference. It provides numerous examples to illustrate the definitions and conventions of grammar and punctuation, as well as covering tips and strategies for learning spelling rules and developing vocabulary.

Sections 2, 3 and 4 focus on the skills of writing and reading, building confidence with the basics as well as with the finer points of writing in a range of styles and text types, understanding the diverse and rapidly expanding world of media texts, and analysing the layered and nuanced meanings of literature.

In this second edition of the *English Handbook*, the digital version of the book contains numerous activities that enable skills in each of the fundamental areas of English to be tested and developed. The activities are closely tied to the definitions and explanations of key terms and concepts, providing opportunities for the knowledge in any section of the *English Handbook 2nd edition* to be applied and consolidated.

Insight's *English Handbook 2nd edition* is comprehensive, informative and practical – an essential reference for all students and teachers.


GRAMMA
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AMMAR!

SECTION 01

Grammar, punctuation, spelling, vocabulary

Learning the rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling will enable you to express yourself with confidence and precision. The ability to express yourself accurately and eloquently will also equip you to think more precisely and in greater depth.

This section of the *English Handbook 2nd edition* outlines the key rules for grammar, punctuation and spelling. These rules are illustrated by examples and accompanied by tips and strategies for learning and applying them. The final chapter in this section looks at the origins of the English language, identifies common Latin and Greek roots, and offers advice about developing your vocabulary to enrich both your spoken and your written communication.

NOTE: Particularly in the areas of grammar and punctuation, there can be disagreement among experts or variations in practice regarding the rule or guideline for using a particular language element. Where such variation exists, this book notes the different practices and recommends the approach advocated by the Australian Government *Style Manual* (www.stylemanual.gov.au).

Grammar

CHAPTER
01

This chapter outlines key grammatical rules and principles. The chapter begins with the basic building blocks of the English language – the letters of the alphabet – before moving on to explain the parts of speech. A part of speech identifies a function that a word has in a language: the rules of grammar are the rules for classifying, forming and combining the different parts of speech.

The chapter then examines different types of sentences and the relationships between their parts. Finally, strategies for avoiding common causes of confusion are identified.

Letters and syllables

The English alphabet is derived from the Roman alphabet, which was developed from the Greek alphabet more than 2000 years ago. The Roman alphabet is used for writing the languages of Western Europe, North and South America and Southern Africa. It is also used to write many Eastern European, Australian, Asian and Pacific languages.

Some languages that use the same basic alphabet as English also use diacritics – distinguishing marks placed on certain letters that affect their pronunciation. For example, French, among other languages, uses circumflexes and German uses umlauts.

côte (circumflex; French for 'coast') füllen (umlaut; German for 'to fill')

These diacritics are usually not retained when a word is adopted into the English language.

Other similar alphabets may also differ from the English alphabet in terms of:

- the number of letters (for example, the Spanish alphabet has 27 letters)
- the pronunciation of letters (for instance, in German the letter *z* is pronounced 'ts').

Vowels and consonants

The 26 letters in the English alphabet are divided into two groups – vowels and consonants.

The five **vowels** are *a*, *e*, *i*, *o* and *u*.

The remaining 21 letters are **consonants**.

- Sometimes the consonant *y* is used as a vowel sound as, for example, in 'fly'.
- Similarly, the vowels *o* and *u* may occasionally be used to create consonant sounds as, for example, in 'one' or 'ukulele'.

Syllables

Syllables are the building blocks of words. A syllable is a unit of sound. It is usually made up of a *syllable nucleus* (commonly a vowel) and possibly beginning and/or concluding *margins* (commonly consonants).

cat (one syllable)

donkey (two syllables – don + key)

elephant (three syllables – el + eph + ant)

The word 'communication' has five syllables.

There are no absolute rules regarding how to correctly divide a word into syllables. Often, words may reasonably be divided in more than one way. However, the following guidelines will help you to identify the best way to separate a word into syllables.

- Each syllable must contain at least one vowel or vowel sound.

  crying → cry + ing pattern → pat + tern

- Generally, it is preferable for second and subsequent syllables to begin with a consonant, except where a suffix beginning with a vowel, such as 'ing', is added to a word to form the final syllable.

  questioning → ques + tion + ing water → wa + ter

- If a word ends in 'ed', the 'ed' becomes a separate syllable only if it is pronounced separately.

  crooked → crook + ed wretched → wretch + ed

- If the 'ed' ending is not pronounced separately, it should form part of the preceding syllable.

  complained → com + plained looked → looked (one syllable)

- Generally, if it contains a doubled consonant the word should be divided between these consonants.

  bigger → big + ger snaffle → snaf + fle

- However, generally, if a word consists of a root word ending in a doubled consonant and a suffix, the doubled consonant should not be separated.

  grabbing → grabb + ing thinner → thinn + er

No matter how a word is divided, it will always contain the same number of syllables.

The grave accent

The grave accent is a diacritical mark used in English to indicate that a vowel that is usually silent should be pronounced. It is most commonly seen in poetry or Shakespearean dialogue, when the addition of an extra syllable is required to make the word fit the rhythm of the poem. The example below is from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Hence from Verona art thou banishèd.

The word 'banished' is usually pronounced as two syllables, but here the addition of the grave accent on the *e* indicates that it should be pronounced as banish + ed. This ensures that the line has ten syllables, consistent with the form of verse in which Shakespeare wrote.

A grave accent is also occasionally used to identify the difference between two words that are spelled the same but pronounced differently.

learned (the one-syllable past tense of 'learn')

learnèd (a two-syllable adjective used to describe someone who is well educated)

Articles

The **definite article** – 'the' – is used to refer to a specific object.

the tiger

The **indefinite articles** – 'a' and 'an' – are used to refer to a non-specific noun.

a phone an idea

Generally, 'a' is used before words beginning with a consonant, while 'an' is used before words beginning with a vowel. However, if a word begins with a vowel that makes a sound like a consonant, 'a' is used instead of 'an'.

a ukulele a unicorn a one-hit wonder

In the same way, if a word begins with a consonant that makes a sound like a vowel, 'an' is used before it.

an honest person an honour an hour

Nouns

A noun is a naming word that refers to a person, place, object, quality or action. Nouns can be divided into two main groups.

Common nouns refer to items belonging to a general group. Because they refer to general things, they are not capitalised.

computer ocean souvlaki

Proper nouns refer to specific or unique people, places or things. Proper nouns are always capitalised.

Annabel Malaysia Tuesday

All nouns can be classified as either common or proper. They can also be classified as belonging to one or more of the following categories.

Countable and uncountable nouns

A **countable noun** refers to a distinct object that can be counted. When there is more than one of these objects, the noun takes its plural form.

earring → two earrings

girl → three girls

orange → a dozen oranges

An **uncountable noun**, sometimes called a mass noun, does not refer to a distinct item and so cannot be counted.

furniture love milk

Uncountable nouns have no plural form. However, it is possible to use some of these words in a plural sense by adding particular countable nouns in front of them.

furniture → four pieces of furniture

milk → two cups of milk

Occasionally it may be appropriate to use a plural form of an uncountable noun.

The milks from cows and sheep are quite different.

See pages 9–11 for more on plural nouns.

To determine whether a noun is countable or uncountable, try placing a number before it to see if it makes sense.

✓ three flowers
Correct: 'Flower' is a countable noun.

✗ three furnitures
Incorrect: 'Furniture' is an uncountable noun.

Concrete nouns

A concrete noun refers to a visible, tangible object or a behaviour that can be observed. It can also refer to natural phenomena that can be measured in some way.

dictionary (tangible object)
laughter (observable behaviour)
wind (measurable natural phenomenon)

Abstract nouns

An abstract noun refers to something that cannot be seen or touched. Many abstract nouns refer to feelings.

love enthusiasm freedom

Collective nouns

A collective noun names a group or collection. The following table includes a number of the most common collective nouns, as well as some more unusual ones.

a **board** of directors	a **squadron** of swans	a **parliament** of owls
a **cast** of actors	a **flight** of doves	a **peep** of chickens
a **choir** of singers	a **flock** of birds	a **paddle** of ducks
a **class** of students	a **gaggle** of geese (on land)	a **skein** of geese (in flight)
a **congregation** of worshippers	a **suite** of rooms	a **watch** of nightingales
a **constellation** of stars	a **team** of athletes	a **pack** of wolves

a **convoy** of trucks	a **bed** of oysters	a **pod** of whales
a **crowd** of spectators	a **colony** of ants	a **pride** of lions
a **gang** of thieves	a **cete** of badgers	a **school** of dolphins
a **grove** of trees	a **coterie** of prairie dogs	a **shoal** of fish
an **orchestra** of musicians	a **den** of snakes	a **swarm** of bees
a **ream** of paper	a **herd** of cattle	a **troop** of monkeys
a **round** of drinks	a **litter** of puppies	a **bevy** of quail
a **covey** of grouse	a **mob** of sheep	a **brood** of hens
an **exaltation** of larks	a **tiding** of magpies	a **charm** of goldfinches

Plural nouns

In English there are many ways to form plural nouns. The following table shows some of the most common, and some of the exceptions to the rules.

Noun group	How to form the plural	Examples
Most nouns	add **s**	books, chocolates, friends
Nouns ending in **ch**, **sh**, **s**, **ss** or **x**	add **es**	riches, wishes, buses, classes, foxes
Nouns ending in **ie**	add **s**	brownies, goalies, pies
Nouns ending in **o**	add **es**	dingoes, heroes, potatoes BUT: hippos, pianos, radios
Nouns ending in **oo**	add **s**	igloos, tattoos, zoos
Nouns ending in **vowel + y**	add **s**	monkeys, saveloys, ways
Nouns ending in **consonant + y**	change the **y** to **ie** and add **s**	baby → babies enemy → enemies poppy → poppies

»

Noun group	How to form the plural	Examples
Nouns ending in **f** or **fe**	change the **f** to **v** and add **es**	half → halves leaf → leaves wife → wives BUT: cliffs, reefs, puffs
Nouns of Latin origin ending in **us**	change **us** to **i**	alumnus → alumni cactus → cacti focus → foci
Nouns of Latin origin ending in **is**	change **is** to **es**	basis → bases crisis → crises thesis → theses
Nouns of Greek origin ending in **on**	change the **on** to **a**	criterion → criteria phenomenon → phenomena
Nouns ending in **um**	change **um** to **a**	bacterium → bacteria millennium → millennia maximum → maxima*
Personal and geographical names	add **s** or **es**	Mary → Marys Jones → Joneses America → Americas

* In common usage, *s* is often used to form the plural of many nouns of Latin origin ending in 'um'. For example, it is more common to see or hear 'curriculums' and 'maximums' than 'curricula' and 'maxima', and many dictionaries now prefer the 's' form of these plural nouns.

Unusual plural noun forms

Some nouns change their form to make the plural.

foot → feet person → people tooth → teeth

Some nouns do not change at all in the plural. Names of animals often fall into this category.

offspring → offspring salmon → salmon sheep → sheep

Some nouns are only used in the plural and have no singular form, even if they refer to a single object.

clothes news scissors trousers

Uncountable nouns are only used in the singular form and have no plural form.

deceit honesty mathematics wisdom

Compound nouns

Compound nouns consist of two or more parts of speech used together to form one word. They may or may not have a hyphen.

break-in girlfriend father-in-law

Plural forms of compound nouns

See pages 55–7 for more on using hyphens to form compound words.

Compound nouns may form the plural in a number of ways.

- Most unhyphenated compound nouns simply add *s*.

  headband → headbands boyfriend → boyfriends

- For most hyphenated compound nouns, the word that is actually changed in number takes the plural form.

  passer-by → passers-by daughter-in-law → daughters-in-law

- Rarely, both parts of the compound noun are pluralised.

  manservant → menservants

Gerunds

A gerund, sometimes referred to as a 'verbal noun', is the '-ing' form of a verb, which functions as a noun in a sentence.

Listening is as vital to effective oral communication as speaking.

Reading and writing are good ways to develop your ability to think critically.

Noun phrases

A noun phrase is a group of words consisting of a noun and one or more **modifiers** (words that characterise or describe another word or phrase – in this case, the noun).

The Pythagorean theorem has many interesting and diverse applications.

In navigation it can be used to find the shortest distance between points.

Pronouns

A pronoun takes the place of a noun in a sentence. Using a pronoun avoids repetition of the noun.

> Ralph Baer invented the first video games system, known as 'The Brown Box'. He invented it in 1967.

The underlined words are pronouns which stand in for 'Ralph Baer' and 'The Brown Box'. The three main types of pronouns are:

- **first-person pronouns** for the person speaking, or the group the speaker is representing
- **second-person pronouns** for the person being spoken to
- **third-person pronouns** for the person or thing being spoken about.

Pronoun inflections

Pronouns take different forms depending on whether they are the **subject** or **object** of a sentence. (See pages 18 and 20 for definitions of subject and object.)

Person	Subjective pronoun	Objective pronoun	Possessive pronoun	Reflexive pronoun
First-person singular	I	me	mine	myself
Second-person singular	you	you	yours	yourself
Third-person singular	he	him	his	himself
	she	her	hers	herself
	it	it	its*	itself
First-person plural	we	us	ours	ourselves
Second-person plural	you (plural)	you	yours	yourselves
Third-person plural	they	them	theirs	themselves

* The possessive pronoun 'its' should not be confused with the contraction 'it's' (short for 'it is'). The possessive pronoun 'its' never takes an apostrophe. See page 68 for more information on this common error.

Whether to use a subjective or an objective pronoun can be a source of confusion, particularly with the pronouns 'I' and 'me'.

In spoken English it is common to hear a sentence such as the following.

✗ Aaliyah and me worked on a project about early video games.
This construction is incorrect.

To determine whether a sentence requires a subjective or an objective pronoun, try saying or writing it using the pronoun only, and leaving out the other person or element.

✗ Me worked on a project about early video games.
Incorrect: By removing Aaliyah from the sentence, we can see that 'Aaliyah and me' would be incorrect. This sentence requires a subjective pronoun to make sense.

✓ Aaliyah and I worked on a project about early video games.
Correct: This sentence uses a subjective pronoun.

✓ The teacher returned the project to Aaliyah and me.
Correct: This sentence uses an objective pronoun.

✗ The teacher returned the project to I.
Incorrect: By removing Aaliyah from the sentence, we can see that 'Aaliyah and I' would be incorrect in this case. This sentence requires an objective pronoun to make sense.

Possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns demonstrate ownership.

His invention paved the way for the spread of video games as a popular form of entertainment.

Reflexive pronouns

A reflexive pronoun indicates that the person who performs an action is also the recipient of the action. It refers back to the nearest preceding noun.

Some video games allow players to play themselves within a fictional world.

Reflexive pronouns can also be used for emphasis.

I did it all myself.

Demonstrative pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns refer to specific things. The four demonstrative pronouns are 'this' and 'that' (singular), and 'these' and 'those' (plural).

'This' and 'these' are used when referring to things closer in space or time to the speaker. 'That' and 'those' are used to refer to things further away in space or time.

That game features complex characters and an intriguing plot.

These are my favourite video games.

Indefinite pronouns

Indefinite pronouns are used to refer to non-specific people or things.

The **singular indefinite pronouns** include the following.

anyone/anybody	everything	either
everyone/everybody	something	neither
someone/somebody	nothing	little
no one/nobody	each	much
anything	another	

These pronouns are used with a singular verb.

In Australia, everyone over the age of 18 is required to vote. However, up until 1973 nobody under the age of 21 was allowed to vote.

See page 19 for an explanation of singular and plural verb forms.

Plural indefinite pronouns include the following.

both	many	several
few	others	

These pronouns are used with a plural verb.

Many other countries have a system of voluntary voting.

Several countries with compulsory voting do not enforce it.

Using gendered pronouns

When indefinite pronouns are used in sentences that require another third-person singular pronoun such as 'he', 'his' or 'himself', it used to be the case that these second pronouns always took the singular male form.

Everyone should turn off his phone.

However, it is no longer acceptable to default to the male form of the pronoun when an indefinite group of people, which may contain women or non-binary people, is the subject of the sentence. One of the solutions to this problem is to use the gender-neutral plural pronoun 'their' in sentences such as the above.

Everyone should turn off their phone.

While this construction does not follow the rule that singular indefinite pronouns should be used with singular personal pronouns, it is considered an appropriate and acceptable way of avoiding gender bias.

See pages 42–3 for more information on gendered pronouns.

Interrogative pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are used to ask questions. The five interrogative pronouns are 'what', 'which', 'who', 'whom' and 'whose'.

Who was the first Australian prime minister?

To which political party did he belong?

Relative pronouns

Relative pronouns operate similarly to conjunctions (see pages 30–1) in that they join clauses of a sentence.

The relative pronouns are 'who', 'whom', 'which', 'whose' and 'that'.

Julia Gillard is a woman. She became the first female Australian prime minister.

= Julia Gillard was the woman who became the first female Australian prime minister.

This is a famous speech. She gave this speech in parliament.

= This is the famous speech that she gave in parliament.

When referring to people, use 'who' or 'whom'. When referring to animals or inanimate objects, use 'that'. This also applies to interrogative uses.

The man from whom Gillard took over the role of prime minister was Kevin Rudd.

Did you hear the speech that she gave in parliament?

Adjectives

Adjectives are describing words that modify nouns or pronouns.

Positive, comparative and superlative adjectives

A **positive adjective** is the basic form of an adjective.

prolific writer long book original work young sister

A **comparative adjective** is used to compare two things. The comparative is formed in one of two ways.

- 'More' is added before the adjective. This method generally applies to adjectives of two or more syllables.

  Charlotte Brontë was a more prolific writer than her sister, Emily.

OR

- The suffix '-er' is added to the end of the adjective. This method generally applies to adjectives of one syllable.

  Jane Eyre is a longer book than *Wuthering Heights*.

Superlative adjectives are used to compare three or more things. The superlative is formed in one of two ways.

- 'Most' is added before the adjective. This method generally applies to adjectives of two or more syllables.

  Some critics believe *Wuthering Heights* to be the most original novel of all those written by the Brontë sisters.

OR

- The suffix '-est' is added to the end of the adjective. This method generally applies to adjectives of one syllable.

  Anne Brontë was the youngest member of the Brontë family.

Superlative adjectives should be used when comparing three or more things. If only two things are being compared, a comparative adjective should be used.

✓ Of Charlotte and Emily, Charlotte was more famous in her lifetime.
Correct: Two sisters are being compared so a comparative adjective is appropriate.

✗ Of Charlotte and Emily, Charlotte was the most famous in her lifetime.
Incorrect: The superlative should only be used to compare three or more people or items.

In addition to describing a quality or attribute, adjectives can perform a number of functions. These include the following.

- quantifying

  three sisters several novels most readers

- indicating order

  first novel final word penultimate story

- limiting or defining

  this book these arguments whose idea

- indicating possession

  her brother their history our opinion

Attributive and predicative use

Adjectives may be used in two ways.

- In **attributive** use, the adjective appears before the noun.

  the fascinating biography

- In **predicative** use, the adjective appears after the verb, which is often a form of 'to be'.

  This biography is fascinating.

Most adjectives can be used either attributively or predicatively. However, some can only be used in one way or the other.

A mere four of the six Brontë children survived to adulthood.

(Attributive use: you cannot say 'The four surviving Brontë children were mere'.)

Branwell Brontë was often alone.

(Predicative use: you cannot refer to 'the alone Branwell Brontë'.)

Verbs

Verbs are words that indicate an action, an occurrence or a state of being – they are sometimes referred to as 'doing', 'having' or 'being' words.

am believe explore have invent write

A **finite verb** is one that is inflected (modified) to show subject (who or what is doing, having or being), number (singular or plural) and tense.

I think. She thinks. They thought.

When a verb is preceded by the word 'to', it is known as the **infinitive**.

to be to celebrate to think to work

A **split infinitive** occurs when the two parts of an infinitive – 'to' and the verb – are separated within a sentence. In this sentence the infinitive 'to go' is split by the word 'daily'.

Experts say that, in the future, work will not be a place to daily go, but an activity that can be done anywhere.

Split infinitives were once considered grammatically incorrect, but now grammarians generally agree that they are sometimes acceptable. Nevertheless, for reasons of style and clarity, it is not advisable to allow too many elements to come between 'to' and the verb.

✗ Technological advances are predicted to surprisingly but fortunately create more jobs than they will replace.
Incorrect: Separating 'to' from 'create' with the long phrase 'surprisingly but fortunately' makes the sentence harder to understand and more awkward to read.

✓ Technological advances are predicted, surprisingly but fortunately, to create more jobs than they will replace.
Correct: Placing the phrase 'surprisingly but fortunately' before 'to create' makes the sentence much easier to read.

Subject-verb agreement

The **subject** of a verb is the person or thing performing the action.

Historians doubt that the ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras actually discovered the Pythagorean theorem.

Subject-verb agreement refers to the fact that the **person, number and tense** of the verb must match the subject of the verb.

Person

Verbs take different forms to show who is performing the action.

- The **first-person** form of the verb is used when the person doing the action is the speaker.
- The **second-person** form of the verb is used when the person doing the action is the person being spoken to.
- The **third-person** form of the verb is used when the person doing the action is the person or thing being spoken about.

✓ I like learning about the history of mathematics.
Correct: The word 'like' is the first-person form of the verb, matching the first-person pronoun 'I'.

✓ She claims the Babylonians and Indians discovered the theorem long before Pythagoras.
Correct: The word 'claims' is the third-person form of the verb, matching the third-person pronoun 'she'.

Number

The number of the verb is **singular** if one entity is performing the action, or **plural** if there is more than one.

✓ He was a philosopher.
Correct: The word 'was' is singular to correspond with the singular noun 'he'.

✗ He were a philosopher.
Incorrect: The word 'he' is singular but 'were' is a plural verb.

A collective noun is usually followed by a singular verb because it refers to just one group.

✓ The pod of whales was hunted.
Correct: The singular verb 'was' corresponds to the singular noun 'pod'.

✗ The pod of whales were hunted.
Incorrect: The plural verb 'were' does not correspond to the singular noun 'pod'.

Occasionally it is appropriate to use a plural verb with a collective noun if the members of the group are being thought of as acting individually, rather than as a group.

✓ The orchestra take their seats.
Correct: The members of the orchestra each individually take a seat, so the plural form 'take' is appropriate.

Tense

Verb tense indicates whether the action of a verb takes place in the past, present or future.

> Pythagoras was regarded as a great philosopher in his lifetime.
>
> (The verb 'was regarded' is in past tense, consistent with the action being in the past.)
>
> Today, many people still regard Pythagoras as a brilliant philosopher.
>
> (The verb 'regard' is in present tense to show this opinion is held in the present.)
>
> People will study the work of Pythagoras for as long as they do philosophy.
>
> (The verb 'will study' is in future tense, to show this statement refers to what people will be doing in the future.)

Direct and indirect objects

The **direct object** is something different from the subject (except in the case of reflexive pronouns – see page 13) and usually follows the verb. To identify the direct object, ask 'who/what?' after the verb.

> Scientists proposed the big bang theory, which suggests that the universe began with a massive explosion.
>
> Question: Scientists proposed what?
>
> Answer: They proposed the big bang theory.
>
> **Direct object** = the big bang theory

The direct object:

- usually comes after the verb
- may be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.

The **indirect object** is the person or thing that receives the action of the verb. To identify the indirect object, ask 'for whom/what?' or 'to whom/what?'.

> The teacher showed the science class a film about the origins of the universe.
>
> Question: To whom did the teacher show the film?
>
> Answer: The teacher showed the film to the science class.
>
> **Indirect object** = the science class

The indirect object:

- indicates who or what is affected by the direct object
- may be a noun, pronoun or noun phrase.

Auxiliary verbs

Auxiliary verbs are 'helping verbs': they are used to give more information about the main verb in a sentence, for instance by indicating tense. The auxiliary verbs are shown below.

am	can	has	may	shall	were
are	could	have	might	should	will
be	had	is	must	was	would

Auxiliary verbs always precede the verb they are helping.

> In the past few decades, climate change has become an important global issue.

Some auxiliaries – am, be, had, has, have, is, was and were – can be used as verbs on their own.

> The global average surface temperature of the Earth is significantly higher than it was 100 years ago.

The others, known as modal verbs or modal auxiliaries, can only be used with other verbs.

Modal verbs

Modal verbs only have one form. That is, they are not inflected to show subject, number or tense. The table below shows the different functions of various modal verbs.

Modal verb	Function	Example
can, could	to express ability	Biofuels can help reduce carbon emissions.
can, could, may, might, must, shall, would	to express certainty and possibility	The global temperature increase since the 20th century may be attributed to human activity such as use of fossil fuels and deforestation.
can, could, may, would	to give or request permission	Would you mind if I turned off the light?
can, could, may, shall	to make a request, offer or suggestion	Shall we attend the climate change convention?
will, shall	to make a prediction	Increased global temperatures will cause sea-level rises.
must, should	to express obligation	We must slow down global warming.

Verb conjugations

Verbs are conjugated (inflected or changed) to show person, tense and number.

Regular verbs conjugate according to a consistent pattern, as shown in the following table.

Tense	Use	Person	Singular	Plural
Present	• regular or habitual actions	first person	I look	We look
		second person	You look	You look
		third person	He/She/It looks	They look
Present progressive	• an action that is going on at the time the statement is being made	first person	I am looking	We are looking
		second person	You are looking	You are looking
		third person	He/She/It is looking	They are looking
Present perfect	• finished part of a continuous action • completed actions in an unfinished period of time • recent events (no time mentioned) • past action with a result in the present • experiences (no time mentioned)	first person	I have looked	We have looked
		second person	You have looked	You have looked
		third person	He/She/It has looked	They have looked
Present perfect progressive	• an action that began in the past, continues in the present, and may continue into the future	first person	I have been looking	We have been looking
		second person	You have been looking	You have been looking
		third person	He/She/It has been looking	They have been looking

Past	• actions that finished at a specific time in the past	first person	I looked	We looked
		second person	You looked	You looked
		third person	He/She/It looked	They looked
Past progressive	• actions that were happening in the past while another action occurred	first person	I was looking	We were looking
		second person	You were looking	You were looking
		third person	He/She/It was looking	They were looking
Past perfect	• actions before a specific time in the past	first person	I had looked	We had looked
		second person	You had looked	You had looked
		third person	He/She/It had looked	They had looked
Past perfect progressive	• an ongoing action that began in the past and was completed before some other action	first person	I had been looking	We had been looking
		second person	You had been looking	You had been looking
		third person	He/She/It had been looking	They had been looking
Future	• predictions • spontaneous decisions or offers	first person	I will look	We will look
		second person	You will look	You will look
		third person	He/She/It will look	They will look

»

Tense	Use	Person	Singular	Plural
Future progressive	• an ongoing action that will take place in the future	first person	I will be looking	We will be looking
		second person	You will be looking	You will be looking
		third person	He/She/It will be looking	They will be looking
Future perfect	• action that will have been completed in the future	first person	I will have looked	We will have looked
		second person	You will have looked	You will have looked
		third person	He/She/It will have looked	They will have looked
Future perfect progressive	• an ongoing action in the future that will be completed before some other action	first person	I will have been looking	We will have been looking
		second person	You will have been looking	You will have been looking
		third person	He/She/It will have been looking	They will have been looking

There are thousands of regular verbs in English. Examples include the following.

agree	compare	happen	observe	satisfy	visit
answer	disappear	learn	promise	talk	walk
belong	educate	move	remember	use	work

Irregular verbs do not conjugate according to a predictable pattern, so their conjugations must be learned by heart. Some of the most common are shown in the following table.

Present tense	Past tense	Present perfect tense
am	was	been
begin	began	begun
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
eat	ate	eaten
feel	felt	felt
forget	forgot	forgotten
get	got	got
have	had	had
hold	held	held
know	knew	known
lead	led	led
make	made	made
read	read	read
say	said	said
see	saw	seen
speak	spoke	spoken
take	took	taken
tell	told	told
understand	understood	understood
wake	woke	woken
wear	wore	worn
write	wrote	written

Intransitive and transitive verbs

Intransitive verbs do not take a direct or indirect object (see page 20); they require no further elements to make their meaning clear.

In the early 20th century the poetic movement called 'Imagism' emerged.

Sentences containing intransitive verbs may contain other elements related to the verb, but these are not essential to the sentence's meaning.

Transitive verbs take a direct or indirect object.

Imagist poetry conveys the essence of an image.

In this example, the sentence would not be complete without the direct object 'the essence of an image'.

Many verbs may be either transitive or intransitive depending on how they are used.

Ezra Pound wrote. (intransitive)

Ezra Pound wrote the poem 'In a Station of the Metro'. (transitive)

Voice

In the **active voice**, the subject of a verb *performs* the action.

In the **passive voice**, the subject of a verb *receives* the action.

Active voice	Passive voice
Basho and Buson wrote haiku poetry.	Haiku poetry was written by Basho and Buson.
Japanese poets also developed tanka poetry.	Tanka poetry was also developed by Japanese poets.

It is usually preferable to use the active voice in writing as it is more direct and engaging. However, in the passive voice it is possible not to specify the agent (the person or thing performing the action), and there are circumstances when the passive voice is more suitable. For example:

- when it is not necessary to mention the agent

  The earliest poetry was recited rather than written down. (The exact person or people doing the reciting is not important.)

- when the agent is unknown

  Containing the earliest examples of African poetry, the Pyramid Texts were written in the 25th century BC. (It is not known who wrote the texts.)

Participles

Participles are derived from the infinitive forms of verbs. There are two sorts of participles – the **past participle** and the **present participle**. The present participle ends in 'ing', whereas the past participle ends in 'ed'.

Participles can perform one of three main functions in a sentence. They can be:

- used with auxiliary verbs to form a compound verb or verb group

  The Romantic poets were interested in nature and emotion.
  (auxiliary verb + past participle)

- used as nouns (known as gerunds)

  Singing is similar to reciting poetry.
  (present participle)

- used as adjectives

  'He walks at Yarralumla
  'Neath the shining Southern Cross.'
  (from 'The Tribal Ghost' by Kevin Gilbert)
  (present participle)

Adverbs

Adverbs are used primarily to modify or to describe verbs. They may also be used to modify verbal nouns (gerunds), adjectives and other adverbs. Adverbs give information about **manner** (how), **place** (where), **time** (when), **degree** (to what extent) and **frequency** (how often).

During the French Revolution, the monarchy was violently overthrown.
(adverb of manner)

The Parisian prison, the Bastille, had recently begun to be considered a bastion of royal power.
(adverb of time)

Comparative adverbs are used to compare two actions. They are formed in two ways:

- by adding 'er' to the end of an adverb of one syllable

  Anti-monarchist feeling continued to grow stronger.

- by using the word 'more' before an adverb of two or more syllables

  The royal family began to take the danger more seriously and one night, in June 1791, they fled the palace dressed in their servants' clothes.

Superlative adverbs are used to compare three or more actions. They are formed in two ways:

- by adding 'est' to the end of an adverb of one syllable

  'The person who has lived the most is not the one who has lived longest, but the one with the richest experiences.' (Jean-Jacques Rousseau, French writer and thinker whose works inspired the leaders of the French Revolution)

- by using the word 'most' before an adverb of two or more syllables

  Resentment was most vigorously inflamed by the perceived indifference of the nobility to the plight of the less privileged.

Adverbs often end in 'ly'. However, this is not always the case; for instance, adverbs of place (such as 'here' or 'there') usually do not end in 'ly'. There are also many words that end in 'ly' that are not adverbs. For example, 'friendly' and 'lonely' are adjectives.

Prepositions

Prepositions describe the relationship between things. Generally, they describe how, where or when something occurred. There are four types of prepositions:

- time

  David Unaipon was the first Australian First Nations writer to be published, in 1924.

- manner

  He wrote with a strong understanding of English literature.

- place

  He is featured on the Australian $50 note.

- direction

  He was born in South Australia but later travelled widely throughout the country.

Prepositions can appear before:

- nouns
- pronouns
- the 'ing' form of a verb
- noun phrases.

The word or phrase that the preposition introduces is called the object of the preposition.

There are more than 100 prepositions in English. Some of the most common are below.

about	before	by	of	under
above	behind	during	off	underneath
across	below	for	on	until
after	beneath	from	onto	up
along	beside	in	over	upon
among	between	into	to	with
around	beyond	like	towards	within
at	but	near	throughout	without

While it was once considered incorrect to end a sentence with a preposition, this rule is now usually only observed in formal writing, and even then with exceptions.

It is often possible to rearrange a sentence to avoid ending with a preposition.

✗ Preaching and inventing were two other pursuits Unaipon became well known <u>for</u>.
Incorrect: This sentence ends with a preposition.

✓ Preaching and inventing were two other pursuits <u>for which</u> Unaipon became well known.
Correct: This sentence has been rearranged to avoid ending with a preposition.

In formal writing, the second sentence (above) is preferable, while in speech the first construction is more common.

Sometimes it is better to end a sentence with a preposition when the alternative would sound awkward or might be confusing. For example:
Where did David Unaipon come from?

This construction is preferable to the unnatural sounding alternative:
From where did David Unaipon come?

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are linking words that join other individual words or groups of words within a sentence. There are three types of conjunctions: coordinating conjunctions, correlating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions.

Coordinating conjunctions

Coordinating conjunctions may join single words or groups of words, but they must always join similar elements: e.g. subject + subject; clause + clause; sentence + sentence.

The main coordinating conjunctions are:

- **for** (to give reasons)

  Graphic novels are often studied in English classrooms, for they often contain a powerful combination of words and visual language.

- **and** (to introduce non-contrasting ideas or items)

  Popular graphic novels include *Maus* by Art Spiegelman and *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi.

- **nor** (to introduce a non-contrasting negative item)

  Despite the name, many graphic novels are not fictional, nor are they the length of traditional novels.

- **but** (to introduce a contrasting idea or item, or an exception)

  Some people argue that the difference between graphic novels and comics is not the content but the target audience.

- **or** (to introduce an alternative idea or item)

  Others say that many graphic novels can be read by either children or adults.

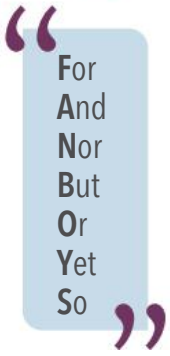
- **yet** (to introduce a contrasting idea or item)

  Will Eisner's 1978 A *Contract With God* is one of the earliest graphic novels, yet he disliked the term.

- **so** (to introduce a consequence)

  In Japan, comic books are popular with both adults and children, so the general term manga is used to refer to them all, regardless of their target audience.

The acronym **FANBOYS** is a useful way to remember these conjunctions.



Correlating conjunctions

Correlating conjunctions are always used in pairs to coordinate two items in a sentence.

The correlating conjunctions are:

- **either … or**

  DNA may be likened to either a recipe or an instruction manual that contains the information for an organism to live and develop.

- **neither … nor**

  Author Richard Dawkins has said, 'DNA neither cares nor knows. DNA just is.'

- **not only … but also**

  Credit for the discovery of DNA goes not only to Crick and Watson but also to Franklin and Wilkins.

- **whether … or**

  DNA can be used to tell whether a person's risk of certain diseases is higher than average or normal.

- **both … and**

  DNA is inherited from both the female parent and the male parent.

- **not … but**

  Not all four scientists, but only Crick, Watson and Wilkins were awarded a 1962 Nobel Prize for their discovery.

Subordinating conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions join dependent clauses to independent clauses and show the relationship between the two.

See pages 32–3 for definitions of independent and dependent clauses.

The main subordinating conjunctions are shown below.

after	before	since	till	whether
although	how	than	when	while
as	if	that	where	

Although English chemist Rosalind Franklin contributed to our understanding of DNA, her work wasn't widely recognised in her lifetime.

Sentences

A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. It begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, a question mark or an exclamation mark.

A complete sentence contains a **subject** and at least one **finite verb**. The subject:

- usually appears at or near the beginning of the sentence
- comes before the verb
- may be a noun, a pronoun or a noun phrase.

See page 18 for a definition of finite verbs.

There are four types of sentences:

- statement

  Dracula is a novel about vampires.

- question

  Did you know that the term vampire first became popular in the 18th century?

- exclamation

  I'm terrified of vampires!

- imperative (an order or instruction)

  Cover your neck.

In addition, sentences may be classified according to their complexity, using the following three categories:

For more on these three types of sentences, see pages 33–4.

- simple sentences

  I am reading the novel *Twilight*.

- compound sentences

  I am reading the novel *Twilight*, but I prefer the film version.

- complex sentences

  When I have time I will read Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, since it is the best known vampire novel.

Clauses

A clause is a group of words containing a finite verb. There are two types of clause.

- **Main clauses** (also called **independent clauses**)**:** a main clause can stand alone as a complete sentence.

  Multilingualism improves brain function.

- **Subordinate clauses** (also called **dependent clauses**)**:** a subordinate clause contains a verb but cannot stand alone. The meaning of a subordinate clause is completed by the main clause.

  As recent research has shown, multilingualism improves brain function.

  Subordinate clause = 'As recent research has shown'

  This clause does not make sense on its own, but requires the main clause to complete its meaning.

Subordinate clauses can be divided into different types according to their function in the sentence. There are three main types of subordinate clause.

- **Noun clauses:** a noun clause performs the same function as a noun, and may be a subject or an object. It can begin with a conjunction such as 'that', 'what' or 'whether'.

  What surprised researchers was that multilingualism appeared to delay the onset of Alzheimer's disease.

- **Adjectival clauses:** an adjectival clause gives additional information about the main clause. It often begins with a word such as 'that', 'which', 'who', 'whose' or 'whom'.

  The attentional executive system, which is crucial for all higher thought, is enhanced in multilingual people.

  In the above example the subordinate clause is contained within the main clause, and is therefore also known as an **embedded clause**.

- **Adverbial clauses:** an adverbial clause performs the same function as an adverb. It modifies the verbs in the main clause and gives information about when, where, how or why.

  After he had spent time in multilingual New Guinea, the researcher was inspired to investigate the link between multilingualism and brain functioning.

Simple sentences

A simple sentence consists of a subject and a predicate, and includes one finite verb. The **subject** is who or what the sentence is about. The **predicate** is the remainder of the sentence, which expresses something about the subject. The finite verb is part of the predicate.

The earliest version of the internet appeared in the 1960s.

Subject = The earliest version of the internet

Predicate = appeared in the 1960s

Finite verb = appeared

Remember that verbs must agree with their subject. In the example on the previous page, the singular verb 'appeared' corresponds to the singular subject 'the earliest version of the internet'.

Some sentences can appear confusing because the number of the subject and predicate are different.

For example, sometimes a singular subject is linked to a plural predicate.

> Instagram has more than one billion users worldwide.

In the above example, 'Instagram' is the subject, so the singular verb 'has' is correct, despite being followed by the plural noun 'users'.

Alternatively, a plural subject may be linked to a singular predicate.

> Improved social connections are a benefit of social media platforms.

In the above example, the plural verb 'are' is correct, as 'improved social connections' is the subject of the sentence, despite 'are' being followed by the singular noun 'benefit'.

It is always the number (singular or plural) of the subject, *not* the predicate, that determines the number of the verb.

Compound sentences

A compound sentence is made up of two or more main clauses joined by a conjunction. It contains two or more finite verbs.

> Facebook is the most popular social networking platform, but Six Degrees was the first.
>
> **Main clause 1** = Facebook is the most popular social networking platform
>
> **Conjunction** = but
>
> **Main clause 2** = Six Degrees was the first

Complex sentences

A complex sentence contains one or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses that provide more information.

> Launched in February 2004, Facebook originally limited its membership to Harvard University students.
>
> **Main clause:** Facebook originally limited its membership to Harvard University students
>
> **Subordinate clause:** Launched in February 2004

Note that the main clause can stand alone as a simple sentence, but the subordinate clause requires the main clause to complete its meaning.

Common causes of confusion

This section outlines some common causes of grammatical confusion and gives advice for avoiding common grammatical errors.

Could have / should have / would have

'Could have', 'should have' and 'would have' can be abbreviated to 'could've', 'should've' and 'would've'. These are acceptable contractions, though in formal writing it is more appropriate to write them out in full.

However, perhaps due to the similarity in pronunciation, many people mistakenly say or write 'could of', 'should of' or 'would of' instead of 'could have', 'should have' and 'would have' for the appropriate abbreviated form.

Using 'of' with these words is never correct.

✗ We would of gone if we could of bought tickets.

✓ We would have gone if we could have bought tickets.

Different from / different to / different than

In spoken English it is not uncommon to hear 'different from', 'different to' and even 'different than' in comparisons. Preference is partly dictated by location – in the United States, 'different from' is preferred in writing, but 'different than' may be used in speech. In the United Kingdom and Australia, 'different from' is also the preferred written form, but 'different to' is often used when speaking.

Traditionally, grammarians have argued that 'different from' is the only correct construction, since the word 'different' is derived from the verb 'differ' which is always used with 'from'. 'Different from' remains the most commonly accepted form in the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. However, some experts argue that 'different to' and 'different than' may be considered acceptable alternatives, with the former considered generally more acceptable than the latter.

Roti is different from naan, but both types of bread are great with curry. (preferred)

Roti is different to naan, but both types of bread are great with curry. (acceptable)

Roti is different than naan, but both types of bread are great with curry. (acceptable, but considered by some experts to be non-standard)

Lay/lie

Perhaps one of the reasons the verbs 'lay' and 'lie' cause confusion is that the past tense form of **lie** (meaning to recline) is **lay** and is thus indistinguishable from the use of **lay** in the present tense.

✗ She lies the book on the table.
Incorrect: 'Lies' is the third-person present form of 'lie', an intransitive verb which does not take an object, so cannot be used with 'the book'.

However, the two verbs are distinct in meaning and usage.

✓ She lays the book on the table.
Correct: 'lay' means to put down, or to place something somewhere. It is a transitive verb – that is, it is always used with an object.

'Lay' conjugates as follows.

Tense	First person	Second person	Third person
Present	I lay (singular) we lay (plural)	you lay (singular) you lay (plural)	he/she/it lays (singular) they lay (plural)
Past	I laid (singular) we laid (plural)	you laid (singular) you laid (plural)	he/she/it laid (singular) they laid (plural)
Past perfect	I had laid (singular) we had laid (plural)	you had laid (singular) you had laid (plural)	he/she/it had laid (singular) they had laid (plural)

'Lie', meaning to recline, is an intransitive verb, meaning that it doesn't take an object.

I lie on the bed.

'Lie' conjugates as follows.

Tense	First person	Second person	Third person
Present	I lie (singular) we lie (plural)	you lie (singular) you lie (plural)	he/she/it lies (singular) they lie (plural)
Past	I lay (singular) we lay (plural)	you lay (singular) you lay (plural)	he/she/it lay (singular) they lay (plural)
Past perfect	I had lain (singular) we had lain (plural)	you had lain (singular) you had lain (plural)	he/she/it had lain (singular) they had lain (plural)

Less/fewer

Using 'less' – which relates to amount or degree – to refer to number (countable nouns) is a very common error.

✗ Worldwide, there are less speakers of English as a first language than there are of Chinese.
Incorrect: 'Speakers' is a countable noun, so should not be modified by 'less'.

✓ The earliest computers had less memory than modern ones.
Correct: 'Less' is used only to refer to uncountable nouns (see pages 7–8).

✓ There were far fewer computers in the 1980s than there are today.
Correct: The correct word to use when referring to countable nouns is 'fewer'.

Opposite to / opposite from / opposite of

When the word 'opposite' is used as an adjective indicating position, it is used with 'to'. It is also often acceptable to use 'opposite' as an adjective without a preposition.

There is a legend that the creator of the Taj Mahal, Shah Jahan, planned to build a black mausoleum opposite to the existing white one.

The building would have been opposite the current Taj Mahal across the Yamuna river.

'Opposite from' is also an acceptable construction in some cases.

The second Taj Mahal would have been located on the opposite side from the original.

When 'opposite' is used as a noun, it is followed by 'of'.

The outcome was the opposite of the result he wanted.

Than/then

'Than' and 'then' sound similar in spoken English, which may explain the confusion that can occur between them in written English. Despite their similarity, they have quite distinct meanings.

'Then' is used to show the sequence of events. It indicates that something occurred *after* another event. It can also be used to refer to a specific time in the past or the future, or to show consequence.

»

» In 1893 women in New Zealand gained the right to vote, then in 1894 women in South Australia received the same right.
(one thing occurred after another)

Although New Zealand women could vote, back then they could not run for parliament.
(referring to a specific time in the past)

In many countries, if someone has a criminal conviction, then they cannot vote.
(showing consequence)

'Than' is used in comparisons.

New Zealand granted the vote to women earlier than any other country.

That/which

'That' and 'which' are often used interchangeably. However, they have distinct usages.

'That' introduces essential clauses.

Most teams that have won the World Cup have won it more than once.

'Which' introduces non-essential clauses.

The World Cup, which is held every four years, was won in 2018 by France.

The clause 'which is held every four years' is non-essential – it could be removed and the sentence would still make sense.

In practice, and especially in speech, 'which' is often used for essential clauses, and 'that' for non-essential clauses. While some experts suggest that both uses are common enough for them to have become acceptable, in writing it is preferable to preserve the distinction between 'that' and 'which'.

There are also sentences that could be expressed with either 'that' or 'which', depending on whether the clause containing the word is considered to be essential or non-essential.

- ✓ The World Cup is a global soccer tournament that is held every four years.
  Correct: The clause 'that is held every four years' could be considered essential if it is the key to the description the writer is giving of the World Cup.
- ✓ The World Cup is a global soccer tournament which is held every four years.
  Correct: The clause 'which is held every four years' could be considered non-essential if it is regarded as extra information that elaborates on the writer's main point (that the World Cup is a global soccer tournament).

Try to / try and

'Try to' is standard usage in written and spoken English.

> Aesop's fable 'The Fox and the Grapes' involves a fox that tried to reach some grapes but was unable to and so decided that they were probably sour anyway.

'Try and' is a variation more common in spoken English. While some experts regard it as grammatically incorrect, others argue that it is appropriate in some circumstances. For instance, it has been suggested that 'try and' may be more appropriate for making promises or encouraging others to action.

> Try and identify the moral of Aesop's fable.

However, 'try to' remains more appropriate in written or formal contexts.

Who/whom

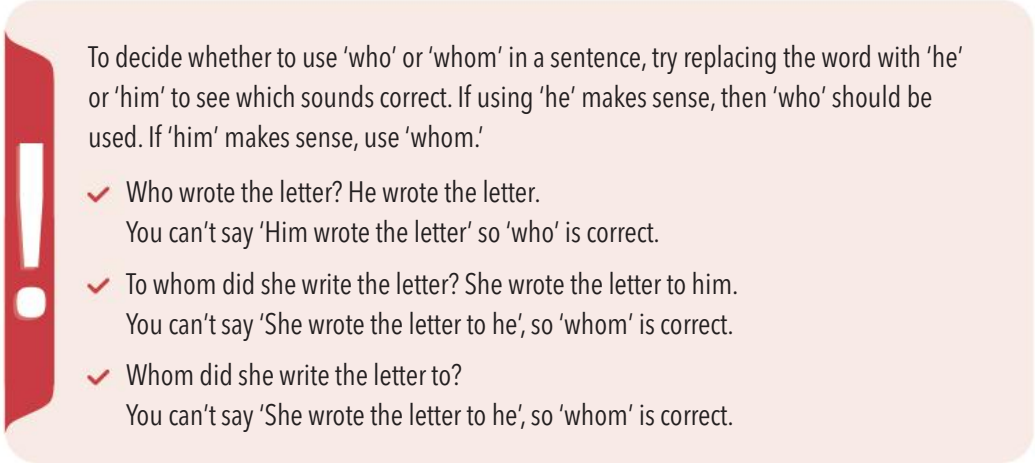
'Who' is used when referring to the *subject* of the sentence.

> Who wrote the letter?

'Whom' is used when referring to the *object* of the sentence.

> To whom did she write the letter?

Nowadays 'whom' is uncommon in spoken English, but the distinction between 'who' and 'whom' is retained in formal writing.



To decide whether to use 'who' or 'whom' in a sentence, try replacing the word with 'he' or 'him' to see which sounds correct. If using 'he' makes sense, then 'who' should be used. If 'him' makes sense, use 'whom.'

- ✓ Who wrote the letter? He wrote the letter.
  You can't say 'Him wrote the letter' so 'who' is correct.
- ✓ To whom did she write the letter? She wrote the letter to him.
  You can't say 'She wrote the letter to he', so 'whom' is correct.
- ✓ Whom did she write the letter to?
  You can't say 'She wrote the letter to he', so 'whom' is correct.

However, note that it is more common to use 'who' in this last sentence, particularly in spoken English, even though it is not technically correct.

Apostrophes in plurals

Plurals are not formed with apostrophes, except in very rare cases.

See page 52 for examples of plurals formed using an apostrophe.

✓ Early riddles can be found in Old English poetry.
Correct: The plural noun 'riddles' does not require an apostrophe.

✗ Early riddles' can be found in Old English poetry.
Incorrect: The noun 'riddles' does not require an apostrophe.

Dangling modifiers

Modifiers are words or phrases that limit or alter the sense of another word or phrase. A dangling modifier occurs when a modifier is detached from the word or phrase it is intended to modify, causing confusion.

Sometimes a modifier does not appear to be attached to any particular item.

✗ Having opened the paper, a pen was sought for the crossword.

In this sentence the modifying phrase 'Having opened the paper' does not logically attach to any subject, and the reader is left confused as to who opened the paper and searched for a pen.

The sentence needs to be revised to include the subject.

✓ Having opened the paper, Henry sought a pen for the crossword.

At other times, the modifier is attached to a different item from the one intended.

✗ Appearing in Italy in 1890, Giuseppe Airoldi designed the first crossword.

In this example, the noun 'Giuseppe Airoldi' follows the phrase 'Appearing in Italy in 1890', suggesting that Airoldi appeared in Italy at that time. In fact, the phrase 'Appearing in Italy in 1890' is intended to refer to the later noun phrase 'the first crossword'. The sentence needs to be rewritten with the subject of the modifier appearing next to the modifying clause.

✓ Appearing in Italy in 1890, the first crossword was designed by Giuseppe Airoldi.

How to identify dangling modifiers

To identify dangling modifiers, follow these three steps.

- Check the beginning of your sentence for a modifying word, phrase or clause. Underline the modifier.
- Next, underline the first noun that follows the modifier.
- Check that the underlined modifier and noun go together logically. If not, revise the sentence.

How to revise dangling modifiers

To revise dangling modifiers, use one or more of the following strategies.

Strategy 1: Identify the noun you wish to modify and make this person or item the subject of the main clause.

✗ Increasing in difficulty throughout the week, the *New York Times* publishes the easiest crossword puzzles on Mondays.
Incorrect: The noun 'the *New York Times*' begins the main clause, indicating that it is modified by the phrase 'Increasing in difficulty throughout the week'. However, clearly it is not the *New York Times* that increases in difficulty throughout the week, but the crossword puzzles that appear in the paper.

✓ Increasing in difficulty throughout the week, crossword puzzles in the *New York Times* are easiest on a Monday.
Correct: The noun 'crossword puzzles' appears at the beginning of the main clause, indicating that it is the noun modified by the phrase, 'Increasing in difficulty throughout the week'.

Strategy 2: Change the dangling phrase into a complete introductory clause that names the person or thing doing the action in the main clause.

✗ The most prolific crossword compiler, it is recorded that Roger Squires of Shropshire, UK, has published over 70 000 crosswords.
Incorrect: The dangling modifier, 'The most prolific crossword compiler', is connected with 'it', creating confusion. It would be clearer if the phrase specified where this information is recorded or published, as in the example below.

✓ According to Wikipedia, the most prolific crossword compiler is Roger Squires of Shropshire, UK, who has published over 70 000 crosswords.
Correct: The introductory phrase now modifies the sentence as a whole, and therefore is not considered to be dangling.

Strategy 3: Combine the modifying phrase and the main clause into a single sentence with no modifying clause.

✗ Unable to solve the cryptic crossword, the pen was thrown across the room in disgust.
Incorrect: The sentence suggests that the pen was unable to solve the crossword.

✓ Sunil threw the pen across the room in disgust when he was unable to solve the cryptic crossword.
Correct: The sentence has been revised by combining the modifying phrase and the main clause into a sentence with a main clause and a subordinate clause, thus removing the dangling phrase.

Gendered pronouns

Traditionally, the convention used in sentences containing indefinite pronouns and a third-person pronoun was that the third-person pronoun should be singular and gendered.

Somebody left his book on the chair.

This gives rise to a gendered pronoun problem, since 'somebody' might also be female or non-binary. The gendered pronoun problem can also arise when a group of people or a type of person is being referred to.

An IT specialist should not condescend to his clients.

Each member of the class is required to bring his calculator into the exam.

Conventionally, in such cases, the pronoun was always male in gender, even where a mixed gender group or an individual of unknown gender might be referred to. However, it is now generally recognised that this default to the male gender is discriminatory.

Various solutions have been proposed to deal with the problem created by requiring a singular pronoun to accompany an indefinite pronoun. These include:

- using the plural form

  IT specialists should not be condescending to their clients.

- omitting the pronoun

  Each member of the class is required to bring a calculator into the exam.

- repeating the noun

  An IT specialist should not be condescending to the specialist's clients.

- using 'he/she' or 'he or she'

  Somebody left his or her book on the chair.

- ensuring there is a balanced use of gendered pronouns within a document

  An IT specialist should not be condescending to his clients.

  Each member of the class is required to bring her calculator into the exam.

- revising the sentence using the gender-neutral pronoun 'you'

  You should bring your calculator into the exam.

- using the gender-neutral pronoun 'they'

  An IT specialist should not be condescending to their clients.

The last option is now perhaps the most common solution, despite the fact that it violates the traditional rule requiring subject-pronoun agreement. Different sentences may be suited to different approaches. The number of acceptable options now available means that avoiding unintentional gender bias should not be difficult.

Parallel structures

When presenting ideas in a list or series, the ideas should be expressed in the same parts of speech. This is known as parallel structuring.

✓ Research suggests that meditation increases wellbeing, reduces stress and improves immune function.
Correct: The three items in the list – 'increases wellbeing', 'reduces stress' and 'improves immune function' – all follow the same pattern of singular third-person verb + noun.

✗ Research suggests that meditation increases wellbeing, can reduce stress and immune function is improved.
Incorrect: The structure here is not parallel. The items in the list are all in different forms – singular third-person verb + noun, verb + verb + noun, and noun + passive verb form.

This rule applies to words, phrases, clauses and parallel ideas joined by conjunctions.

Try running, swimming or cycling to improve your physical and mental health. (nouns)

Retraining your brain to think more positively means that your productivity will be increased, your performance will be enhanced and your mental health will be improved. (clauses)

Spending money does not increase happiness levels, but doing something kind for someone else does. (ideas joined by the conjunction 'but')

Switching tenses

A verb's tense indicates when an action takes place, so verbs within a sentence should generally all be in the same tense. Tense should only be changed when there is a change in the time being referred to.

✓ The United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) scores nations on three factors – lifespan, educational attainment and income – and develops a measure of their welfare.
Correct: All verbs are in the present tense.

✗ The United Nations' Human Development Index (HDI) measured the welfare of different nations and scores them on three factors – lifespan, educational attainment and income.
Incorrect: The word 'measured' is in the past tense while 'scores' is in the present, with no logical reason for the tense shift.

Sometimes, however, there may be a good reason to change tenses, as in the examples below.

He says, 'Australia was ranked third on the HDI this year.'

'Says' is in the present tense because the statement is being made in the present; 'ranked' is in the past tense because the speaker is referring to an event that is already completed by the time he is speaking.

The researchers received the latest set of data for the HDI report last week and now they are finishing their table of rankings.

'Received' is in the past tense because it refers to a past event, while 'are finishing' is in the present progressive tense because it refers to a related activity that is taking place now.

Punctuation

CHAPTER 02

Punctuation makes a writer's meaning clear by signalling to the reader when to stop, when to take a pause and when to take special notice of something.

The appropriate use of punctuation is like a road map for readers, guiding them through your words and making the meaning clear. Learning the following punctuation rules and guidelines will ensure that you do not distract or mislead readers with wrong or missing punctuation.

Full stops

Full stops are used at the end of statements to show that the sentence has reached its conclusion.

> 'I should define punctuation as being governed two-thirds by rule and one-third by personal taste.' (GV Carey, *Mind the Stop*)

Full stops are also used:

- in abbreviations of Latin terms (see pages 64–6)

  e.g.

- in dates

  8.7.11

- after numbers or letters in lists

  Question 1.

Question marks

Question marks are used at the end of all **direct questions.**

Do you know how many languages there are in the world?

Indirect questions, however, take a full stop at the end.

She asked how many languages there were in the world.

A question mark is also used in **tag questions** (sentences that retain the word order of statements but contain question words at the end).

You knew that there were around 7000 languages in the world, didn't you?

Exclamation marks

Exclamation marks indicate strong emotion. They may be used after exclamations, interjections (interruptions), greetings and imperatives (instructions or orders).

I can't believe it! (exclamation)

Hey! (interjection)

Hi! (greeting)

Get out! (imperative)

Commas

Generally, commas indicate where you would pause in a sentence if you were reading it aloud. Commas are one of the most commonly used forms of punctuation, but also one of the most often misused. The appropriate uses of the comma are outlined on the following pages.

See page 67 for advice about a common error in the use of commas.

Separating items in a list

Commas are used to separate items in a list. These items are often nouns, but may also be adjectives, verbs or adverbs.

Shakespeare's tragedies include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear* and *Hamlet*. (nouns)

Early critics described *Romeo and Juliet* variously as terrible, confusing, pleasing and unsuccessful. (adjectives)

When Juliet wakes to find Romeo dead, she despairs, weeps and finally stabs herself. (verbs)

Romeo and Juliet love recklessly, passionately and unwisely. (adverbs)

The Oxford comma

Note that, in the sentences on the previous page, the comma does not appear between the last two items in a list. This is more common in British and Australian practice. American usage favours the inclusion of a comma between all items in a list, including those separated by 'and'. So, for example, the first example sentence opposite would be written:

Shakespeare's tragedies include *Romeo and Juliet*, *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, and *Hamlet*.

Although the British and Australian custom is often to drop this final comma (known as the Oxford comma), it is retained where confusion might arise if it were left out.

Shakespeare had three children – Susanna, Judith and Hamnet who died at 11.

Shakespeare had three children – Susanna, Judith, and Hamnet, who died at 11.

The first sentence is ambiguous, since it is not clear how many of Shakespeare's children died at the age of 11. The comma after 'Judith' in the second sentence makes it clear that only the last-mentioned child, Hamnet, died at 11.

Adjective series and commas

Not all series of adjectives require commas to separate them. If the adjectives are equally important and modify the noun in the same way, a comma is used.

Shakespeare was a talented, prolific writer.

These are known as **coordinating adjectives**.

To test if adjectives are coordinating, try replacing the comma with 'and'. If the sentence still makes sense and sounds natural, then the adjectives are coordinating.

If the sentence does not make sense when you replace the comma with 'and', then you are using **cumulative adjectives**. A series of cumulative adjectives does not require commas.

Shakespeare was a talented 16th-century writer.

It would not make sense to say 'Shakespeare was a talented *and* 16th-century writer', therefore these are cumulative adjectives and require no comma.

Separating clauses

Commas are also used to separate clauses. Sometimes this is a matter of style and opinion, rather than of a definite rule. However, if a sentence's meaning can change depending on whether a comma is included, the correct use of a comma will avoid ambiguity.

Coordinating clauses

Coordinating clauses may be separated by a comma if the clauses are relatively long, but do not require a comma if they are short.

> Shakespeare was well respected in his own time, but it was not until the 19th century that his reputation as arguably the greatest playwright of all time arose. (The long clauses are separated by a comma before 'but'.)
>
> *Macbeth* is a tragedy but *As You Like It* is a comedy. (No comma is needed as both clauses are short.)

Defining and non-defining clauses and phrases

A **defining clause or phrase** gives essential information about the subject, and does not require surrounding commas. A **non-defining clause or phrase** contains extra, but non-essential, information about the subject. A non-defining clause or phrase requires commas before and after it.

The examples below illustrate the difference between defining and non-defining clauses.

> The early critics who disliked *Romeo and Juliet* argued that the play did not conform to the traditional rules of drama. (defining clause)
>
> The early critics, who disliked *Romeo and Juliet*, argued that the play did not conform to the traditional rules of drama. (non-defining clause)

These two sentences have different meanings. In the first sentence the subject is restricted to those early critics who disliked *Romeo and Juliet*. The clause 'who disliked *Romeo and Juliet*' is a defining clause and no commas are needed. In the second sentence the subject is *all* the early critics of the play. The clause 'who disliked *Romeo and Juliet*' is therefore a non-defining clause which tells us that all early critics disliked the play.

Adjectival clauses and phrases

Introductory adjectival clauses and phrases are followed by commas.

> Distressed and guilt-ridden, Lady Macbeth begins to imagine that her hands are stained with blood.

Adverbial clauses and phrases

Introductory adverbial clauses and phrases are also generally followed by commas, unless they are very brief.

> Throughout the period when he achieved considerable success as a playwright, Shakespeare continued to act on the stage. (A comma is required to signify a pause between the long introductory clause and the following main clause.)

After his death Shakespeare's fame continued to grow. (A comma is not required as the introductory phrase 'After his death' is brief.)

Adverbial clauses and phrases that separate a subject and its verb are set off by commas.

Lady Macbeth, by challenging Macbeth's bravery, persuades him to kill King Duncan.

Separating introductory words or phrases

Words and phrases such as 'for example', 'generally', 'however', 'in contrast', 'interestingly', 'nevertheless' and 'on the other hand' are followed by a comma when used at the beginning of a sentence.

Interestingly, none of Shakespeare's grandchildren had children themselves, thus ending his direct line of descent.

These words and phrases may also be set off by commas when they are used within a sentence, but do not always have to be. Whether to use commas or not is often a matter of style. This is also the case with the word 'therefore'.

King's New School in Stratford was close to Shakespeare's house and it is therefore assumed that he was educated there.

It is assumed, therefore, that Shakespeare attended King's New School.

Both these examples are correct; however, it would also be acceptable to include the commas in the first example or to omit them in the second. The choice depends on how the sentence is intended to be read, which is influenced by the information the writer or speaker wishes to emphasise, considerations of style and personal preference.

In apposition

An **appositive** word or phrase is one that defines or expands on the noun or noun phrase that precedes it.

The playwright William Shakespeare died in 1616.

Here 'The playwright' is the noun; it is defined by the phrase 'William Shakespeare' that follows it, telling the reader which playwright is being referred to.

If the appositional expression is defining, no commas are used, as in the example above.

Shakespeare's birthplace in Stratford-upon-Avon.

If the appositional expression is non-defining, it should be set off by commas.

Hamlet, one of Shakespeare's great tragic characters, is plagued by indecision.

Apostrophes

The apostrophe has two main uses – to indicate missing letters in words and to indicate possession.

Omissions

The original use of the apostrophe was to indicate that a letter or letters had been left out of a word. They are used in:

- contractions

  cannot → can't I am → I'm should have → should've

- abbreviations

  fish and chips → fish 'n' chips government → gov't

- place names and surnames.

  D'Angelo L'Aquila O'Connor

Possession

Since the 18th century, the secondary use of the apostrophe has been to indicate possession.

Possession and singular nouns

To show possession with singular nouns, including names ending in any letter except *s*, an apostrophe is placed between the last letter of the noun and the possessive *s*.

Alejandro's socks the cat's pyjamas the band's album Ms Black's glasses

Singular **common nouns ending in *s*** form the possessive in the same way.

the bus's door a dress's hem the lens's cover an octopus's tentacles

However, for **names ending in *s*** the rule for forming the possessive is less straightforward. There are two options.

- Add apostrophe + *s* in the same way as you would for names not ending in *s*.

  James's job

OR

- Add an apostrophe after the name but do not add an *s*.

  James' job

There is no definite consensus among experts as to which option is best. Often the choice is a matter of style and preference. Whichever option you choose, however, should be used consistently.

Note that for many classical and biblical names, such as Sophocles and Jesus, it is still customary to omit the extra *s*, even if the alternative option is used for names ending in *s* elsewhere in the same document.

Possession and plural nouns

Plural nouns ending in *s* form the possessive by the addition of an apostrophe after the final letter.

the boxes' dimensions the Nkosis' dinner party the dogs' tails

Plural nouns ending in any letter except *s* form the possessive by the addition of an apostrophe + *s* after the final letter.

the children's game men's beards the mice's cheese

To check if an apostrophe is placed correctly, try changing the order of the phrase so that the part before the apostrophe becomes the last word. If the meaning is unchanged, then the apostrophe is correct.

✓ **Correct:** the people's choice → the choice of the people

✗ **Incorrect:** the peoples' choice → the choice of the peoples

Possessive phrases and joint ownership

In possessive phrases, the apostrophe + *s* attaches to the last word.

my best friend's wedding

the merry-go-round's music

If two or more people possess something in common, the apostrophe + *s* is taken by the last of the owners.

Paul, Yvette and Danielle's mother

Mum and Dad's anniversary

However, if the possession is not shared, each name takes an apostrophe + *s*.

Ali's and Ben's rooms

the teacher's and the student's remarks

Note that the possessive pronoun *its* does not require an apostrophe.

The dog bit its own tail. (Correct; no apostrophe is needed.)

Place names with possessives

In Australia, place names with possessives do not take an apostrophe. This is also largely the case in the United States.

Frenchs Forest Kings Cross St Albans

In Britain and Canada, however, the situation is less clear-cut, and place names both with and without possessive apostrophes exist.

Bishop's Castle Earls Court St James' Park

Expressions of time

It was once customary to use a possessive apostrophe in plural expressions of time.

three days' holiday five weeks' leave two years' wages

These types of phrases are now often considered to be descriptive rather than indicative of possession, and therefore it is acceptable to omit the apostrophe.

three days holiday five weeks leave two years wages

However, singular expressions of time still require an apostrophe.

a year's calendar a day's schedule an hour's journey

Plurals

Apostrophes are almost never used to form plurals. The only exception is for the plurals of lower-case letters of the alphabet, where an apostrophe can help avoid misunderstanding.

It is important to dot your i's and cross your t's.

Even in these cases, it is sometimes thought preferable to use a different font style (such as italics) for the letters instead of an apostrophe.

It is important to dot your *i*s and cross your *t*s.

Quotation marks

Quotation marks (also known as inverted commas) are used to:

- quote the words of others
- indicate direct speech
- set apart titles of poems, songs, stories or articles
- indicate that a term is new, unusual or being used ironically.

Whether to use double or single quotation marks is generally a matter of style. The tendency in the United States is to favour double quotation marks, while in Australia and the United Kingdom both types are used. The recent trend in Australia towards minimal punctuation has seen a rise in the preference for single quotation marks, and most style guides endorse this preference. Double quotation marks are then used to indicate a quotation within another quotation.

> He said, 'Her advice was "never let the sun go down on your anger" and she herself lived by this creed.'

Quotations

Direct quotations, whether full sentences, fragments or single words, are enclosed in quotation marks.

> Confucius wrote, 'An oppressive government is more to be feared than a tiger.'
>
> The Minister claimed that he knew 'nothing at all' about the incident.

The rules regarding the use of other punctuation with closing quotation marks vary from country to country. In the United States the practice is to place quotation marks *after* commas but *before* colons and semicolons. In Australia and the United Kingdom, the general rule is that if the punctuation does not belong to the quotation, it appears *after* the closing quotation mark.

> The famous sentence by Zora Neale Hurston, 'There are years that ask questions and years that answer', is from her 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Quotations longer than 30 words should be indented as **block quotations**. Because they are set off from the surrounding text in this way, they do not require quotation marks.

> Jack Handey is famous for his off-beat sense of humour and punchy one-liners. Here is one to give you the idea:
>
> > I can't stand cheap people. It makes me real mad when someone says something like, 'Hey, when are you going to pay me that $100 you owe me?' or 'Do you have that $50 you borrowed?' Man, quit being so cheap!

Direct speech

Direct speech is indicated by quotation marks at the beginning and end of the speech.

> Yoda said, 'Do, or do not. There is no try.' (*The Empire Strikes Back*)

In fiction, dialogue that is broken up by speech tags or other description is generally punctuated by placing a comma *inside* the closing quotation mark, even where it is not a part of the quotation.

> 'When I use a word,' Humpty Dumpty said in rather a scornful tone, 'it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.' (Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*)

Titles

Quotation marks are used to indicate titles of the following text types:

- songs

  'Purple Rain' by Prince (whereas the album *Purple Rain* is underlined or italicised)

- chapters in books

  'The Night Shadows' in *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens

- short stories

  'The Dead' in *Dubliners* by James Joyce

- poems

  'I Heard a Fly Buzz When I Died' by Emily Dickinson

- newspaper and journal articles

  'Safety experts say school bus passengers should be belted'

- essays

  'A Modest Proposal' by Jonathan Swift

- lectures and speeches

  'I Have a Dream' by Martin Luther King, Jr.

Unusual, colloquial or ironic terms

Quotation marks are often used to draw attention to a new or unusual word, a colloquial expression or a word used ironically.

> *Macquarie Dictionary's* word of the year for 2020 was 'doomscrolling'.
>
> They considered themselves 'intellectuals'.

Be careful not to overuse ironic quotation marks (sometimes also known as 'scare quotes'). It is usually better to find a precise way to express the point you are trying to make.

Example: He said he was 'too busy' to help with my assignment.
Better: He claimed to be too busy to help with my assignment.

Hyphens

Hyphens perform a number of functions within words, as outlined below.

Compound words

Hyphens are used to join two words together to make a compound word.

city-state go-ahead mother-in-law

Not all compound words are hyphenated. Sometimes words that were originally hyphenated have, over time, lost the hyphen. In other cases, the decision whether or not to hyphenate depends on the sentence in which the compound word appears. Below are some guidelines for the types of words that usually take a hyphen.

Compound nouns

Compound nouns are usually hyphenated:

- when both elements of the compound have equal status

  city-state

- where both elements rhyme

  heebie-jeebies

Compound adjectives

Compound adjectives made up of two adjectives, or an adjective plus a noun, or a combination including a past or present participle, are always hyphenated.

Her eyes were grey-green. (two adjectives)

Li Na was an accident-prone child. (noun + adjective)

The committee described the decision as 'far-reaching'. (adverb + present participle of 'reach')

A well-known writer won the prize. (adverb + past participle of 'know')

However, a hyphen is not used if the compound adjective:

- consists of a participle or an adjective preceded by an adverb ending in 'ly'

  a beautifully written book a bravely fought battle

- is modified by a word such as 'very', 'extremely' or 'especially'

  a very well respected lawyer an extremely low energy building

- is made up of a participle and a comparative or superlative adjective or adverb

  the best kept secret a less experienced actor

Compound verbs

Compound verbs consisting of an adjective plus a noun, or a noun plus a verb, are usually hyphenated.

to double-click to down-shift to gift-wrap

Compound adverbs

Compound adverbs generally do *not* take a hyphen, but are written as one word.

to run barefoot to swim upstream

Adjectival phrases

If an adjectival phrase is being used before a noun, it may be hyphenated if it is necessary to make the meaning of the sentence clear. Compare the following sentences.

Dr Jones was a barking-mad professor.

Dr Jones was a barking mad professor.

The first sentence is correct as it is clear that the phrase describing Dr Jones is 'barking-mad'. The second sentence is incorrect as it is ambiguous – the reader might be misled into thinking that Dr Jones was both 'barking' and 'mad'.

Generally, such adjectival phrases do not require a hyphen when they are used predicatively (see page 17): that is, when they are used *after* the noun.

The professor was barking mad.

Prefixes

Hyphens are used to join a prefix to a word in the following circumstances:

- where the absence of a hyphen would create confusion as to pronunciation

  de-ice pre-eminent

- where the absence of a hyphen could create confusion between the compound word and a similar word

  re-cover (to cover again; 'recover' means to get better)

  re-create (to make again; 'recreate' means to enjoy leisure time)

  re-sign (to sign again; 'resign' means to quit)

- where the word following the prefix begins with a capital letter

  non-English speaking pre-Christian un-Australian

- where the prefix is attached to a date

  pre-1970 post-1400s

Hyphens are often used to clarify pronunciation when a prefix ending in a vowel is added to a word starting with a vowel. However, a number of well-known words formed in this way are now often spelled without the hyphen. Three common examples are 'cooperate', 'coordinate' and 'extraordinary'.

It is useful to memorise the spellings of these and similar words.

Suffixes

The suffix 'odd' when used with numbers always takes a hyphen, whether the numbers are written out or numerals.

20-odd one-hundred-odd

The suffix 'fold' takes a hyphen *only* when used with numerals.

10-fold 1000-fold

BUT

tenfold thousandfold

Numbers

Hyphens are used when writing numbers and fractions.

- All numbers from twenty-one to ninety-nine are hyphenated.

  twenty-seven eighty-four

- When numbers and words are used together in an adjectival phrase, hyphens are used to connect them.

  a 23-year-old man a four-year-old child

- Even if the noun does not follow the adjectival phrase, a hyphen is used as the noun is implied.

  A seventy-year-old was the most senior participant in the marathon.

- Fractions are hyphenated.

  two-thirds of the way there three-quarters full

Breaking words between lines

A hyphen is used to break a word when it won't fit onto one line. Words should only be broken between syllables.

> 'So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back cease-
> lessly into the past.'
> (F Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*)

Colons

Colons are used at the end of clauses to introduce information that expands on or explains the information in the clause. They may also be used to introduce lists, subtitles and block quotations (see page 59).

Introducing extra information

Colons may be used to introduce information including consequences, descriptions, definitions and appositional phrases or clauses.

> *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose focuses on twelve jurors in a murder trial: it explores themes of justice and prejudice.

Lists

Items in a list may be introduced by a colon.

> Important characters in *The Crucible* include the following: John Proctor, Elizabeth Proctor, Abigail Williams, Mary Warren, Giles Corey, Rebecca Nurse and Reverend Hale.

Colons are also used to introduce a bulleted list.

> Langston Hughes' plays include:
>
> - *Tambourines to Glory*
> - *Simply Heavenly*
> - *Black Nativity.*

Subtitles

If the title of a written work includes a subtitle, it is usually introduced by a colon.

> *August: Osage County* by Tracy Letts

Block quotations

Long quotations from a text (usually more than 30 words) are indented and sometimes set in smaller type. These block quotations are generally introduced with a colon.

> Adapting his play *Speaking in Tongues* for film, playwright Andrew Bovell chose a new title, *Lantana*, saying:
>
> > To me the lantana vine visually manifested the interweaving and mysterious nature of the story I was trying to tell. It's an impenetrable vine with twisted and entangled branches that conceal a dark interior.

Dialogue

Colons are also used in scripts and transcripts to introduce dialogue. They appear after the speaker's name.

> BLANCHE: I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.
> (Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*)

Semicolons

A semicolon introduces a pause that is stronger than that created by a comma, but weaker than that created by a full stop. Semicolons are used to link clauses that have a close logical relationship with each other. They can also be used to separate items in a list that contain commas (see below).

Linking clauses

Semicolons can be used to link two main clauses that are very closely linked in meaning. Both clauses must be able to stand on their own as complete sentences.

> 'I have great respect for the semicolon; it's a very useful little chap.'
> (Abraham Lincoln)

Semicolons are often used to separate two clauses that make contrasting points about a subject. A conjunction such as 'but' or 'however' is used after the semicolon.

> Former US president Lincoln found the semicolon useful; however, writer Kurt Vonnegut advised against using it.

While such clauses could be linked by a comma and a conjunction, or separated by a full stop, the use of a semicolon makes clear the close relationship between the clauses.

Lists

If one or more of the items in a list or series contain commas, semicolons are used to separate the items in order to avoid confusion.

> Semicolons may be used to link two main clauses, whether they make related or contrasting points; to separate items in a list, such as this one; and to signify a winking face in text messages.

Ellipses

An **ellipsis** occurs when a word or words are omitted. This is a regular part of writing and speech; words are often implied rather than unnecessarily repeated in order to produce a more compact and economical form of expression. The examples that follow are from Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

> 'To lose one parent, Mr Worthing, may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.'

In this example, there is an ellipsis after 'both' as the word 'parents' is understood but not stated.

Ellipsis points, or **ellipses**, are three full stops used to indicate that one or more words have been omitted from a quotation. For example, the previous quotation could be shortened by omitting 'Mr Worthing'.

> 'To lose one parent . . . may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like carelessness.'

Ellipses are also used to show hesitation or incompleteness; they are commonly used for this purpose in fiction and drama.

> 'It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me . . . I actually don't know who I am by birth. I was . . . well, I was found.'

If a sentence ends with ellipsis points, there is no need to add another full stop.

Brackets

Brackets are used to enclose extra information that is less important than the main text. The two main types of brackets are round brackets (or parentheses) and square brackets.

Round brackets

Round brackets enclose additional information, including definitions, explanations, clarifications and comments.

> Parentheses (also known as round brackets) enclose extra information.

Often, commas or dashes could be used in place of parentheses but parentheses are preferable when the information is less important.

Parentheses are also used to enclose references.

> Round brackets enclose additional information, including definitions, explanations, clarifications and comments (Insight Publications 2021).

Square brackets

Square brackets are used to enclose information or comments from someone other than the author. This person is often the editor of the written piece.

> Square brackets are used to enclose *editorial* [emphasis added] comments.

Parentheses and punctuation

If a complete sentence is enclosed in parentheses, the concluding punctuation is also within the parentheses.

> (The full stop is placed inside the brackets, like this.)

However, if the parentheses enclose only part of the sentence, then concluding punctuation falls outside the final bracket.

> The full stop is placed outside the brackets (like this).

A comma is used after parentheses only if the sentence would contain a comma even without the section in parentheses.

> If the sentence would not naturally contain a comma (if the parentheses were removed) then there is no need to use a comma after the concluding bracket.

Normal punctuation rules apply to the section of the sentence contained within parentheses. If this clause or phrase would normally contain punctuation such as a comma or quotation marks, these are used in the usual way within the parentheses.

> Include the usual punctuation (commas, quotation marks and question marks etc.) inside the brackets where necessary.

Capitalisation

The most important function of capital letters is to signify the **beginning of a sentence**.

> Universal grammar is a theory proposed by Noam Chomsky. It states that some rules of grammar are hard-wired into the brain and do not need to be taught.

Proper nouns and proper adjectives

All proper nouns (see page 7) and adjectives formed from proper nouns are capitalised.

> Noam Chomsky, an American linguist and writer, was born in Pennsylvania.

Titles

The main words in the **titles of texts** such as films, nonfiction books, novels, plays and collections of poems and stories are usually capitalised.

> *Eats, Shoots and Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* by Lynne Truss

Some publications use **minimal capitalisation** (also referred to as sentence case): this means that only the first word in the title is capitalised.

> *Eats, shoots and leaves: the zero tolerance approach to punctuation*

Many **job titles and positions** are capitalised. Certain forms of respectful address are also capitalised.

> Managing Director Her Royal Highness Your Excellency

Direct speech

The first word in direct speech is capitalised.

> Lynne Truss said, 'Proper punctuation is both the sign and the cause of clear thinking.'

If the quotation is interrupted mid-sentence, the second half of the quotation does not take a capital letter (unless it is a proper noun or other word that would ordinarily be capitalised).

> 'Proper punctuation,' said Lynne Truss, 'is both the sign and the cause of clear thinking.'

Abbreviations, acronyms and contractions

Practice varies regarding the punctuation of abbreviations, acronyms and contractions. This section outlines general guidelines for the most common practice.

Full stops and capitalisation

Indicating abbreviations, acronyms and contractions with a full stop was once standard, but is now becoming far less common.

While grammarians sometimes disagree as to when a full stop is preferred, the table on the following page summarises the most common practice.

Type of shortened word	Definition	Rules	Examples
Abbreviations	shortened version of a word that contains its first letter and some subsequent letters, but often not the final letter	A full stop is not usually required. Capitalise only if the unabbreviated word is capitalised.	contd (continued) Tues (Tuesday) co (company)
Latin abbreviations	abbreviations of Latin phrases	A full stop is sometimes required.	e.g. (for example) etc. (and so on) i.e. (that is) BUT NB (note well) PS (postscript) vs (versus)
Acronyms and initialisms	acronym: a set of initial letters that is pronounced as a word initialism: a set of initial letters NOT pronounced as a word	Do not use full stops. Generally capitalise the whole word, except in the case of very common acronyms.	scuba (acronym for self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) FAQ (initialism for Frequently Asked Questions)
Contractions	a shortened form of a word or group of words, with apostrophes often used to indicate the missing letters	Do not use a full stop. Capitalise only if the full word is capitalised.	don't should've you've
Units of measurement	units used for quantities in a standard system of weights and measures (such as the metric or SI system)	Do not use a full stop. Capitalise only if the full name of the unit is capitalised. Plural shortened forms of units of measurement do not take an *s*.	cm (centimetre) kg (kilogram) s (second) V (Volt) W (Watt) kWh (kilowatt hours)

Common abbreviations

The following table contains a list of commonly abbreviated words and their accepted abbreviations.

Word	Abbreviation
Anno Domini (Latin for 'in the year of our Lord'; meaning the number of years since Jesus was born)	AD
anonymous	anon
ante meridiem (Latin for 'before noon')	am
automated teller machine	ATM
Before Christ	BC
Before Common Era	BCE
care of	c/o
cash on delivery	COD
centimetre	cm
circa (Latin for 'about', 'approximately')	c.
Common Era	CE
confer (Latin for 'compare')	cf.
continued	contd
Deoxyribonucleic acid	DNA
department	dept
doctor	Dr
et alii (Latin for 'and others')	et al.
et cetera (Latin for 'and so on')	etc.
exempli gratia (Latin for 'for example')	e.g.
foliis (Latin for 'and on the following pages')	ff.
frequently asked questions	FAQ

gram	g
id est (Latin for 'that is')	i.e.
intelligence quotient	IQ
kilogram	kg
Member of Parliament	MP
metre	m
millimetre	mm
Mister	Mr
nota bene (Latin for 'note well')	NB
number	no. (a full stop is used to avoid confusion with the word 'no')
numbers	nos
page	p.
pages	pp.
per annum	p.a.
personal identification number	PIN
post meridiem (Latin for 'after noon')	pm
postscript	PS
prisoner of war	POW
self-contained underwater breathing apparatus	scuba
United Kingdom	UK
United Nations	UN
United States of America	USA
versus	vs OR v.

Common errors

The misuse or absence of punctuation distracts readers and can also make it difficult for them to understand what is meant. Avoid the following common errors to ensure your writing is as clear and effective as possible.

Apostrophes for plurals

Apostrophes should *not* be used to form plurals, except in very rare circumstances.

key → keys NOT key's

The only situation in which it is acceptable to use an apostrophe to form a plural is when referring to lowercase letters, to help prevent misreading (see page 52).

Comma splice

A comma splice occurs when two main clauses are joined together by a comma. This error is also referred to as a run-on sentence.

✕ Experts estimate that up to 70 per cent of jobs in 2030 have not been invented yet, conflict resolution and peacemaking are predicted to be major growth areas.
Incorrect: This sentence has two independent clauses joined by a comma.

There are three ways to correct this sort of error.

- Separate the independent clauses into two sentences, with appropriate concluding punctuation after the first, and a capital letter for the beginning of the second.

  Experts estimate that up to 70 per cent of jobs in 2030 have not been invented yet. Conflict resolution and peacemaking are predicted to be major growth areas.

- Alternatively, the two clauses could be joined by an appropriate conjunction. The comma can be retained for long clauses.

  Experts estimate that up to 70 per cent of jobs in 2030 have not been invented yet, and conflict resolution and peacemaking are predicted to be major growth areas.

- Less commonly, the two clauses could be separated by a semicolon.

  Experts estimate that up to 70 per cent of jobs in 2030 have not been invented yet; conflict resolution and peacemaking are predicted to be major growth areas.

It's/its

The difference between 'it's' and 'its' is a source of confusion for many. 'Its' is a possessive pronoun, like 'her', 'his' and 'their'. A common error is to add the apostrophe to the possessive pronoun, which doesn't require it.

✗ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly at it's 183rd meeting.
Incorrect: The possessive pronoun 'its', without an apostrophe, is needed.

✓ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948 by the United Nations General Assembly at its 183rd meeting.
Correct: 'Its' is a possessive pronoun and does not have an apostrophe.

It's – with an apostrophe – is a contraction of 'it is'.

✓ It's considered a landmark document.
Correct: 'It's' is short for 'it is' and so requires an apostrophe to indicate the missing letter.

Quotation marks for emphasis

Quotation marks may be used to mark unusual words or those that are used in an ironic sense. However, they should *not* be used to emphasise a word. If you wish to draw attention to a word for emphasis, underline it or use bold or italics.

See pages 54–5 for more on using words ironically.

✓ The Declaration is a *really* important document.
Correct: Italics are used to emphasise the word 'really'.

✗ The Declaration is a 'really' important document.
Incorrect: Quotation marks should not be used to add emphasis.

Spelling

CHAPTER
03

Like correct punctuation, accurate spelling is a courtesy to your reader and helps to ensure that your message is communicated clearly. The English language can be particularly challenging in terms of spelling, with its occasionally inconsistent rules and multiple ways of representing the same sound.

Unlike many other languages such as German and French, English is not a phonetic language – that is, the spelling of a word often does not reflect its pronunciation. In fact, the same combination of letters may be pronounced quite differently in different words. For example, the letter combination 'ough' can be pronounced in three different ways:

- as 'ow' in bough
- as 'off' in cough
- as 'oo' in through.

Despite the challenges posed by the English language, following the guidelines, principles and strategies in this chapter will ensure your spelling is consistently correct.

Spelling rules

The English language contains many words that do not conform to one set of spelling rules. This is partly because of the language's complex history and the variety of other languages that have contributed to English vocabulary. When words have come into English from other languages their original spelling has often been retained, creating a combination of spelling systems rather than one consistent set of rules. For this reason, the same sound can be spelled in more than one way, depending on the origin of the particular word in which it appears.

It is also difficult to master spelling in English because there is often a relatively weak relationship between spelling and pronunciation. This situation results largely from dramatic changes in pronunciation since the European invention of printing in the middle of the 15th century. The Great Vowel Shift occurred at around this time, which meant that the pronunciation of vowels was changing even as written English was beginning to be standardised.

Learning the following guidelines will help you to remember how to spell many commonly used words.

See Chapter 4 for more on the origins of words in the English language.

Rule	Examples	Exceptions
i before *e*	believe friend thief	counterfeit either forfeit
i before *e* except after *c*	ceiling deceit receive	Use *ie* after *c* for words with a 'shen' sound. ancient efficient sufficient
e before *i* for the sound 'a' as in weigh	neighbour rein sleigh	no exceptions
Double the final consonant when adding 'ed', 'ing' or 'er' to single-syllable words that end in a consonant and have a vowel before the consonant.	plan → planned, planning, planner spot → spotted, spotting, spotter	no exceptions
If a single-syllable word ends in two consonants, the last letter is not doubled.	drink → drinking print → printer	no exceptions
If a word has more than one syllable and ends in *l*, double the *l* when adding an ending.	travel → traveller shovel → shovelling	no exceptions
If a word ends in a consonant + *y*, change the *y* to an *i* before adding an ending.	baby → babies carry → carried	Do not change the *y* if adding an ending that begins with *i* such as 'ing', or if the *y* is preceded by a vowel. cry → crying prey → preys

If a word is stressed on the last syllable and ends with a vowel + consonant, double the final letter when adding an ending.	begin → beginning prefer → preferred	no exceptions
If a word is *not* stressed on the last syllable, do *not* double the last letter.	happen → happened pardon → pardoning	no exceptions
For words ending in *ic,* add *k* in front of the vowel that begins an added ending to preserve the hard *k* sound.	picnic → picnicking traffic → trafficking	Do not add *k* if adding the ending 'al' or 'ally' to an adjective ending in *ic*. comic → comical stoic → stoically
If a word ends in a consonant + silent *e*, omit the final *e* when adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as '-ed' or '-ing'.	come → coming line → lining	ageing
If a word ends in a consonant + silent *e*, retain the final *e* if the ending begins with a consonant, such as '-ment'.	judge → judgement manage → management	US spelling rules do not always require the final *e* to be retained. judge → judgment
If a word ends in a vowel + silent *e*, omit the *e* when adding any ending.	argue → argument true → truly	no exceptions
There is no reliable rule for word endings such as -able/-ible, -ance/-ence (or -ant/-ent)	admirable, sensible, incredible attendance, intelligence	Spelling of these words simply has to be memorised.
There is no reliable rule regarding words that include letters that are not pronounced when the word is spoken.	campaign, doubt, gauge, heir, mortgage, rhythm	Spelling of these words simply has to be memorised.

Spelling tools

Because many words in English do not conform to the rules outlined on the previous pages, you will need to use other tools and strategies to check your spelling. Some of these are explained on the following pages.

Computer spellcheckers

A very convenient tool for checking your spelling is your computer's spellchecker. Make sure, though, that it is set on English (Australia) and not on English (US) as there are many differences between Australian and US spelling.

Most word-processing programs automatically indicate spelling errors by underlining the word in red. It is always useful to have the word-processing program set to check spelling as you type, or at least to run the spellchecker before submitting your work. However, remember that spellcheckers are not completely reliable. These are some of the main problems with relying exclusively on a computer spellchecker.

- A spellchecker cannot reliably recognise context. Therefore, it might not pick up errors such as the following.

  The last book I red was *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood.

  The correct spelling here should of course be 'read', but because the computer recognises 'red' as a word, it cannot identify that this word doesn't fit the context of the sentence.

- Spellcheckers do not recognise many proper nouns, including names of people and places. They may also be unable to recognise some legitimate but new or uncommon words.

  Arabella unfriend jeggings

- Spellcheckers can't pick up spelling mistakes or typographical errors (typos) when these form actual words that are grammatically correct.

  She was involved in an unfortunate cat accident.

  Clearly the underlined word above should be 'car', but a spellchecker cannot recognise that the word 'cat' does not make sense in this context.

Dictionary

A more reliable tool for checking your spelling is a dictionary. You should always have a good dictionary close at hand for checking the spelling of new or difficult words. Online dictionaries are also available; however, be aware that many of these use American rather than Australian spelling. Always use a reliable and recognised site, such as www.macquariedictionary.com.au.

Spelling strategies

Discussed below are four strategies that will help you to improve your spelling.

VAKT

An especially useful way of learning difficult words is the VAKT method. This involves using all your senses to help you memorise the spelling of a word. VAKT stands for:

Visual – See the word and try to remember how it looks.

Auditory – Sound out the word and pay attention to the syllables.

Kinetic – 'Experience' the word by writing it down and noting the movement, flow and direction of the letters.

Tactile – Feel the word by tracing over the letters with your fingers or writing it in different media (such as sand, paint or crayon).

Look, Say, Cover, Write, Check

This method is an effective way to memorise the spelling of particular words, and to check your knowledge of them.

Look – Look at the word and pay attention to the letters and the shape they make on the page.

Say – Say the word aloud, paying attention to the individual sounds it contains.

Cover – Place your hand or a piece of paper over the word and try to remember how it appears and sounds.

Write – Write the word down.

Check – Check the word you have written to see if it is correct. If it isn't, repeat the process until you have spelled the word correctly.

Spelling pronunciation

To help you remember the spellings of tricky words, practise pronouncing the words as they are spelled. For example, when you see the word 'ingenue' (pronounced 'an-junh-ooh'), if you pronounce it in your head as 'in+jen+oo-e', you will be more likely to remember the correct spelling. Remember that this way of pronouncing the word is *only* to help you remember its spelling – its correct pronunciation might be quite different.

Word lists

It is useful to keep your own word lists to reinforce your spelling knowledge. You can organise the lists in a number of ways.

- **Alphabetical organisation:** use an alphabetised address book and add words under their first letter, as you learn them.
- **Spelling patterns:** organise words into groups according to the basic spelling rules. For example, you could develop lists of words containing 'ie' or beginning with 'sh'. Include a section entitled 'Exceptions' for each group, where you can record all the words that do *not* fit the spelling pattern.
- **Subject organisation:** group words according to subject. For example, you might develop lists headed 'Animals', 'School subjects' or 'World leaders'.

Learn these

The following list shows the correct spelling of many commonly misspelled words. In some cases it is a simple case of knowing the correct spelling; in other cases, confusion arises when there are two similar words with different meanings (such as 'complement' and 'compliment'), or which belong to different parts of speech (such as 'advice' and 'advise'). It is a good idea to learn these by heart, using one or more of the spelling strategies outlined on the previous pages.

Word	Definition	Tip
accommodation	place to stay	'accommodation' (and 'accommodate', 'accommodating' etc.) has a double *c* and double *m*
advice	recommendation, opinion	'advice' is a noun e.g. My teacher gave me some useful advice about spelling rules.
advise	counsel, suggest	'advise' is a verb e.g. My teacher advised me to develop word lists.
a lot	a large amount or number	'a lot' is always two words
beginning	start	'beginning' has a double *n*
cannot	to be unable	'cannot' is one word, not two
coming	arriving	'coming' (and 'come', 'came' etc) has one *m*
commitment	dedication, loyalty	'commitment' has three *m*s and two *t*s
complement	add to or go with	'complement' meaning to go with is spelled with an *e* e.g. Her bag complemented her shirt.
compliment	praise	'compliment' meaning to praise is spelled with an *i* e.g. He complimented me on my excellent spelling.
definite	certain	'definite' has two *i*s
desert	area with very low rainfall	'desert' meaning a geographical area has one *s*
dessert	sweet course at the end of a meal	'dessert' meaning the sweet course of a meal has a double *s*
dining	eating	'dining' has one *n*
embarrass	shame	'embarrass' has a double *r* and a double *s*

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Word	Definition	Tip
grammar	features and construction of language	'grammar' ends in *ar*
loose	not tight	'loose' meaning not tight has a double *o*
lose	to misplace	'lose' meaning to misplace has one *o*
necessary	essential	'necessary' has one *c* and a double *s*
occasionally	sometimes	'occasionally' has a double *c* and one *s*
separate	apart	'separate' has two *a*s
their	belonging to them	'their' meaning belonging to them ends with *eir*
there	at that place	'there' meaning at that place ends with *ere*
they're	short for 'they are'	'they're' short for 'they are' ends with *y're*

Vocabulary

CHAPTER
04

Having a varied and interesting vocabulary is key to good writing. This chapter looks at the history of the English language and the origins of many common English words and word elements. Learning these will aid your vocabulary development by giving you a better understanding of the meanings of words, as well as more confidence in using them correctly. This section also contains general advice for improving your vocabulary and consolidating your knowledge of new words.

Understanding word origins

Learning about word origins builds your vocabulary by helping you to recognise and remember spelling patterns that originated in other languages. It can also help you work out the meanings of unfamiliar words by applying your knowledge of the common word elements. This section gives a brief overview of the history of the English language and examples of some of the many English words that have their origins in other languages.

A short history of the English language

Old English was not actually a single language but a collection of languages brought to Britain by Germanic settlers from the 5th to the 7th centuries. These settlers became known as the Anglo-Saxons. The word 'English' is derived from the name of the Angles, but actually Old English was so different from modern English that most people today would find it almost impossible to understand.

Viking invasions in the 8th and 9th centuries meant that Old English was influenced by Old Norse, while the dominance of Latin in the religious and intellectual spheres of Europe led to the formation of many English words with Latin origins. The Norman conquest of England in the 11th century then gave rise to heavy borrowings from Norman–French.

English has also absorbed many Greek words or built new words with Greek roots. Originally these borrowings were often indirect, coming either from Greek-influenced Latin or from ancient Greek texts.

English has adopted, and continues to adopt, words from countless other languages as well. Some of the main influences on modern English are outlined on the following pages.

Latin roots

Many words in modern English contain a short Latin word, or root, that forms the basis of a word's meaning. The following table shows some Latin roots and examples of words in English that are derived from them.

Root	Meaning	Examples
bene	well	benediction, beneficence, beneficial
bi	two	biennial, bicycle, bipolar
centum	one hundred	centenary, centigrade, centipede
contra	against, opposed	contraband, contraindicated, contrary
gen	give birth to	gene, genealogy, generate
gress	walk	digress, progress, transgress
jus, juris, jurare	law, right, to testify	jurisdiction, juror, perjury
magnus	large, great	magnanimous, magnificent, magnify
mal	wrong	malady, malevolent, malignant
port	carry	export, portage, transport
script, scribe	write	description, inscription, transcribe
vert	turn	convert, revert, subvert

Greek roots

English has also borrowed heavily from Greek. Some Greek prefixes and roots found in modern English words are shown in the table opposite.

Root	Meaning	Examples
anthro	human	anthropology, anthropomorphic, misanthrope
bio	life	biography, biology, biosphere
chronos	time	chronic, chronology, chronometer
cracy, crat	type of government	bureaucrat, democracy, theocracy
demos	people	democracy, demographic, endemic
dict	say	dictate, diction, dictum
graph	write	autograph, calligraphy, graphic
logo	word, study	logic, logo, sociology
mono	one	monologue, monorail, monotony
morph	form	amorphous, anthropomorphic, morphology
pan	all, everything	panacea, pandemic, pandemonium
phon	sound	cacophony, phonograph, telephone

Other borrowed words

English has adopted and adapted words from many other languages. There are literally thousands of these borrowed words; the following table contains just one interesting example for each language of origin.

Word	Origin
aardvark	Dutch
bog	Irish
boutique	French
cashew	Portuguese
cauliflower	Italian
guru	Sanskrit

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hurricane	Spanish
magazine	Arabic
orangutan	Malay
parka	Russian
robot	Czech
sabbatical	Hebrew
sabre	Hungarian
satay	Indonesian
shampoo	Hindi
smorgasbord	Swedish
taekwondo	Korean
tsunami	Japanese
vampire	Serbian
waltz	German

Prefixes

A prefix is a word element that is added to the beginning of a base word to form or modify its meaning.

When adding a prefix to a word, remember that the spelling of the word does not change. All letters of the prefix *and* the base word are retained.

mis + spell = misspell

Below is a list of common prefixes, their meanings and examples of words they are used in.

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
ante-	before	antecedent, antenatal, anteroom
anti-	opposite	anti-ageing, antibacterial, antifreeze
auto-	self	autobiography, automatic, autonomy

bi-	two	bipartisan, biplane, bisect
dis-	not	discomfort, dislocate, disobey
ex-	out, out of	excommunicate, export, extrovert
im-*	not	immaterial, immobility, improper
inter-	between	interact, intermediate, international
mis-	wrong	misguided, misinform, misstep
multi-	many	multifaceted, multilingual, multipurpose
neo-	new	neoclassical, neonate, neophyte
pre-	before	pre-emptive, prenatal, prepubescent
re-	again	reboot, recollect, recycle
sub-	under	submarine, subordinate, suburban
trans-	across	transceiver, transcontinental, translate
un-	reverse, not	unbend, unknown, unoccupied

* The prefixes **im-**, **il-**, **in-** and **ir-** all mean 'not' or 'the opposite of'. Which one is used depends on the first letter of the base word. So, for instance, the opposite of sane is *in*sane, but the opposite of responsible is *ir*responsible.

To determine which prefix should be used to form the opposite of a word, follow these rules.

- Use **il-** before words starting with *l*.
  logical → illogical
- Use **im-** before words starting with *m* or *p*.
  mature → immature
- Use **ir-** before words starting with *r*.
  responsible → irresponsible
- Use **in-** before words starting with any other letter.
  justice → injustice

For information about prefixes and hyphenation, see page 57.

Suffixes

A suffix is a word element that is added to the end of a base word to form or modify its meaning, or to change the word's part of speech.

Below is a list of some common suffixes, their meanings and examples of words they are used in.

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-able*	adjective; having the ability	believable, comfortable, moveable
-ant**	noun or adjective; full of, or, one who practises the base verb	defendant, expectant, repentant
-er	noun; one who performs the action of the base verb	driver, runner, writer
-ful	adjective; full of	careful, plentiful, wonderful
-ist	noun; doer	dentist, publicist, realist
-ment	noun; state of being	excitement, judgement, management
-ous	adjective; full of	ambitious, mysterious, wondrous
-ship	noun; skill, quality	friendship, leadership, citizenship

* **'-able'** and **'-ible'** are both suffixes used to convey capability. Which one is used depends on whether the base word is a complete word or not.

- If the base is a complete word, use **-able**

  live → liveable

- If the base is not a complete word, use **-ible**

  legible

"For more information on suffixes and hyphenation, see page 57."

** **'-ant'** and **'-ent'** are suffixes used to form adjectives meaning 'full of' (e.g. abundant), or nouns meaning 'one who' (e.g. celebrant). The endings **'-ance'** and **'-ence'** form nouns that are related to the '-ant' and '-ent' adjectives, and describe a state of being. There are no definite rules for when to use which of these endings, so consult a dictionary if you're unsure. The following list gives some common examples.

abundant/abundance
elegant/elegance
significant/significance
independent/independence
different/difference
existent/existence

See pages 70–1 for a summary of spelling rules to follow when adding an ending to a word.

Synonyms and antonyms

Synonyms are pairs of words with the same meaning.

amiable – friendly
sadness – sorrow
happiness – joy

Many words have more than one synonym.

Antonyms are pairs of words with opposite meanings.

love – hate
beautiful – ugly
wise – foolish

Some words have more than one antonym.

cheap – expensive/dear
kind – unkind/cruel/mean

Word groups with the same sound or spelling

The English language contains many words that are spelled or pronounced in the same way but have different meanings.

Homonyms and homophones

Homonyms are words with the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins and, sometimes, spelling.

cite (to quote or reference)
sight (vision)
site (location)
bear (to carry)
bear (an animal)
bare (naked)

The term **homophone** is often used as a synonym for homonym; however, some experts distinguish between 'homonym' and 'homophone' by specifying that, while also sounding alike but having different meanings, homophones always have different spelling.

bow (gesture of respect)
bough (tree limb)
sea (ocean)
see (observe)

Heteronyms and homographs

Heteronyms are words that are spelled the same but are pronounced differently and have different meanings.

bass (voice)	bass (fish)
polish (shine)	Polish (from Poland)
tear (rip)	tear (water from the eye)

Like heteronyms, **homographs** are words that are spelled alike but are different in meaning; but they may or may not also differ in pronunciation.

bow (front of a ship) bow (used to fire arrows) bow (gesture of respect)

Building a wider vocabulary

The following strategies will help you to develop your vocabulary and improve your writing.

Create word lists

Keeping word lists is a very effective way to expand and record your vocabulary. You may like to use an alphabetised notebook or a file on your computer. Set yourself a weekly target – for example, three new words – and add these words and their definitions to your list each week.

You might encounter these new words in your reading, in conversation or in the lyrics of a song. Other methods of finding new words include reading a dictionary and subscribing to a 'word a day' website.

Another way to organise word lists is to group new words according to subject. For example, you might develop lists headed 'Medical terms', 'Interesting animals' or 'Adjectives'.

Record new words

It is not always possible to interrupt a conversation, pause a film or put down a book you are reading each time you encounter a new word, in order to look it up in the dictionary. Instead, every time you come across an unfamiliar word, try to write it down in a notebook, in a computer file or on your mobile phone so you can look it up later, using a table or spreadsheet like the one below.

Word	Definition	Sample sentence	Related words
remunerate	to pay	She was well remunerated for her hard work on the project.	remuneration, remunerative

Create word banks of synonyms

Maintaining a database of synonyms for common words is an excellent way to expand your vocabulary. Knowing a wide range of words and their precise meanings will improve the clarity and variety of your writing and help you to express yourself in interesting ways.

1. Make a list of common words such as the ones in the table below.
2. Add any words you feel you overuse.
3. Using a thesaurus to help you, find as many synonyms for these common and overused words as you can.
4. The next time you are writing, go through your work and replace all the old and uninteresting words with new and more expressive ones from your word bank.

Common word	Synonyms				
nice	amiable	genial	kindly	well-disposed	winsome
weak	delicate	debilitated	enervated	fragile	frangible

Use your new vocabulary

Make every effort to use your expanding vocabulary. Again, setting yourself a goal can be helpful. Challenge yourself to use three new words a week in your written work, or find a creative way to incorporate an interesting new word when you contribute to classroom discussions. Explaining the meaning of a word to others will not only expand their vocabulary too, it will also help to consolidate the meaning in your own mind.

WRITING{SKILLS;WRITING{SKILLS?WRITING{SKILLS!WR

SECTION 02

Writing skills

This section presents advice and guidelines for writing informative, persuasive and imaginative texts. The key features, purpose and language conventions associated with a range of specific forms are also outlined.

The section also includes strategies for generating ideas and researching topics, as well as information about stylistic and referencing conventions and editing your work. Templates and step-by-step processes demonstrate how to plan and write both essays and short stories, while the section on editing provides advice for refining and polishing your work.

Writing well

CHAPTER
05

As with any skill, the key to writing well is to know the principles of good writing and to practise them as often as possible. If you can make writing a regular, ongoing habit, you will notice how your writing improves. The tips and strategies in this chapter will build your confidence and ability as a writer in three ways.

- 'Getting started' will help you to find the motivation to write regularly.
- 'Overcoming writer's block' will help you to solve the familiar problem of being unable to think of anything to write.
- 'Building writing skills' will help you to use language more effectively, structure your writing more clearly and avoid common writing faults and weaknesses.

Getting started

The tips opposite will help you to form the habit of writing regularly and to become more familiar with a range of writing styles.

Read widely and often

The more you read, the better your writing will be, for several reasons.

- You will gain ideas from other writers. Read critically, and you will learn to evaluate the ideas of different writers and the effectiveness with which these ideas are expressed. Reading critically means reading with the aim of recognising the choices a writer has made, and understanding why they made these choices. It means considering how a writer's ideas, and the presentation of these ideas, might be influenced by such factors as the writer's background, the context they are writing in and the purpose of their piece. A critical reader will form opinions on a text, and be able to support these with carefully selected evidence from the text.
- If you read a variety of texts, such as novels, biographies, magazines, newspapers, comics and websites, you will see how different writing styles and voices are used for particular forms and audiences.
- By reading critically, you will form opinions about what works well and what doesn't in different styles of writing.

Write for a limited time

Give yourself 15 minutes to write as much as you can on a particular idea. Do not worry about the quality of your writing – just see how much you can write in a limited time. Try to write continuously during this period. When your time is up, go back over what you have written and edit it. (See pages 141–3 for more about editing your work.)

Make writing a habit

Write every day, even if it is only a paragraph or two. If you cannot think of anything to write about, try simply recounting your day or describing the room you are sitting in. If you are still stuck, write about not being able to think of anything!

Be someone else

Imagine you are someone else – someone you know or a character from a book you are reading, perhaps – and write a paragraph from their point of view about something important to them.

Overcoming writer's block

Even the most accomplished writers occasionally suffer from writer's block. Here are some suggestions to stimulate your creativity when you are feeling defeated by the blank page.

- **Go for a walk.** Sometimes a change of scenery and a short break away from your desk can help you feel refreshed and inspired by new thoughts and ideas.
- **Do some fun and easy writing warm-ups** to flex your writing muscles. For example, you might use one of the techniques below.
  - Write a limerick.
  - For every letter in your first name, write down a word that describes you.
  - Write an alliterative sentence (i.e. one in which every word begins with the same letter).
  - Write a one-paragraph description of the room you are sitting in, the view outside your window or a person you know well.
  - Using the first sentence from a book you know well, write a new first paragraph.
- **Write something else.** If you are stuck on a particular piece, move on to something different. Writing a long text message to a friend, for example, is a good way to get your writing to flow without the pressure of having to produce an assessable piece of work.
- **Write something in a completely different style.** Trying something very different can be a great way to unlock your creativity.
- **Skip ahead to a later section of your written piece.** If you are stuck on the first sentence, leave it, and move on to a part of your piece you feel more able to write. You can go back and work on the beginning later, once your writing has begun to flow.

Building writing skills

What you say and how you say it are the essentials of good writing. Both take time to develop. Your writing skills are the means, or the vehicle, to express your considered views.

Think of it this way – if your vehicle has not been looked after, carefully maintained and polished, it will let you down and even break down at some point. So maintenance of, and constant attention to, your writing skills is vital.

The following tips apply to all forms of writing.

Develop a rich vocabulary

Using varied and precise language will help you to generate and clarify ideas, and to identify and create shades of meaning. Develop word banks for different subject areas. Keep lists of new words learned from any sources – your reading, class discussions, the media and your friends. Expand your vocabulary by looking for synonyms and antonyms of existing or new words, as well as noting different grammatical forms: noun, verb, adjective and adverb. Use a dictionary and thesaurus regularly. (See pages 84–5 for more suggestions for improving your vocabulary.)

Use strong verbs

Your writing will be more effective if you choose verbs that will have maximum impact. For example, the sentence 'Sam walked home' reveals nothing about Sam. However, we can replace 'walked' with a more interesting, powerful verb such as 'stumbled', 'meandered' or 'bolted', which tells us something about how Sam might be feeling, the situation he is in or what sort of person he is. Use a thesaurus to help you find more interesting verbs to replace weak ones.

Vary your sentence structure

Varying the sentence structure within a paragraph and throughout any written piece helps to create fluency and encourages your reader to remain interested and engaged. For example, compare these two short paragraphs, beginning with the same first sentence and expressing the same idea.

✗ Taking a deep breath, Noemi began her speech. Looking around the room, she could see that her classmates were listening intently. Feeling more confident, she continued speaking.

✓ Taking a deep breath, Noemi began her speech. She looked around the room. Her classmates were listening intently. She continued to speak, now more confidently.

The first paragraph sounds choppy and repetitive because it uses the same sentence structure throughout. Varying the sentence structure in the second paragraph makes it far more lively and engaging.

Use an organising principle

Structure refers to the way your writing is organised; a strong structure is fundamental to the coherence and fluency of any written or spoken piece. An organising principle will help you to create a strong structure. An organising principle may be:

- chronological (e.g. in a short story)
- moving from the general to the particular or from the particular to the general (e.g. in an expository or argumentative piece)
- a strong line of argument substantiating a point of view (in a persuasive piece)
- the gradual unfolding of a point of view (e.g. in a personal expository piece such as a reflective essay).

Strengthen your structure with linking words

Linking (or transitional) words are important to the flow of your writing because they direct the reader through the argument or train of thought you are presenting. They are especially important in a piece of expository or persuasive writing. They can signal the development of an idea – e.g. 'furthermore', 'additionally' – or modify the reader's mental position – e.g. 'on the other hand', 'despite these considerations', 'nevertheless'.

You can use the linking words in the table below to express different relationships between ideas.

To express a similar idea	To express an opposing idea	To expand on an idea	To show a logical progression
Similarly . . .	By contrast . . .	Furthermore . . .	Therefore . . .
Likewise . . .	On the other hand . . .	Moreover . . .	As a result . . .
In the same way . . .	However . . .	In addition . . .	Consequently . . .
Equally . . .	Yet . . .	For example . . .	Thus . . ..
So too . . .	While . . .	For instance . . .	For this reason . . .
Besides . . .	Despite this . . .	What's more . . .	In conclusion . . .
Another . . .	In comparison . . .	Additionally . . .	The effect of this is . . .
Also . . .	Nevertheless . . .	In this way . . .	This leads to . . .

Experiment with different text types

You can move from writing brief entries in a journal to trying different forms of writing in various ways. For assigned work you might have to write in some of the forms outlined in Chapter 7, but be experimental whenever you can. For example, try exploring one idea in several different forms of writing to see if you can express different viewpoints or angles on that idea. Or try using a form of writing in an unusual way, such as a short story that is mainly dialogue; a short screenplay based on an idea rather than an event; or an account of an incident as part of a fictional diary entry that you create for an imagined character.

Avoid common problems

Writing well also means avoiding poor choices and combinations of words. Some of the more common problems that can occur in writing are discussed in this section.

Overuse of the passive voice

The passive voice describes writing in which the person or thing *receiving* the action of the verb is the subject of the sentence. The person or thing performing the action may be included towards the end of the sentence.

> The film was reviewed favourably. (Passive: the subject of the sentence, 'the film', receives the action of the verb 'reviewed'; we don't know who did the reviewing.)
>
> The critic favourably reviewed the film. (Active: the subject of the sentence, 'the critic', performs the action.)

The passive voice is appropriate when you:

- need to emphasise the person or thing receiving the action
- do not know who or what is doing the action
- do not want to identify who or what is doing the action.

You should avoid overusing the passive voice, as it is generally less engaging and precise than writing in the active voice. Compare these two sentences.

> It has been suggested that people should increase their intake of fresh fruit and vegetables.
> (Passive: the person or group doing the suggesting is not identified.)
>
> The World Health Organization has suggested that people should increase their intake of fresh fruit and vegetables.
> (Active: the person or group doing the suggesting is identified.)

The second sentence is more direct and lively; it is also more engaging as the professional status of the organisation adds authority and precision to the suggestion.

Clichés

Expressions such as 'I realised that there really was no place like home' and 'Holden was so nervous he had butterflies in his stomach' are clichés: expressions that are so overused that they have lost any power as vivid descriptors. Replace clichés with more original and precise writing (e.g. 'I realised that home was the one place in the world I felt truly safe').

Redundant words and phrases

Redundancy refers to presenting more information, often in different words, than is necessary for the reader to be able to understand an idea. For example, the following sentences convey the same idea in three different ways.

> The information is confidential. It's top secret and not to be shared with anyone else.

The same information could be conveyed using just the first sentence. Look for redundancy in your own writing, and delete any words or phrases that repeat an idea you have already expressed.

Tautologies

A tautology is an unnecessary repetition of an idea, using two or more words or phrases that mean the same thing. For example, the phrase 'an old antique' is a tautology. The word 'antique' already conveys the age of the object so it is unnecessary and repetitive to include the adjective 'old'.

Oxymorons

An oxymoron is an expression consisting of contradictory terms. Avoid such expressions as 'extremely average' or 'exact estimate', in which the second term contradicts the first.

Verbosity

To be verbose is to be overly wordy or pompous. Remember that the ultimate goal of your writing is to communicate with your audience. Using a complicated style or unnecessarily long words will only make your writing more difficult to understand.

For example, the following sentences express the point just stated in a much more confusing and less helpful way.

> Exorbitantly extravagant writing will do little other than obfuscate, confound or conceal what may otherwise have proven a coherent, salient point and render your writing needlessly impenetrable.

The writing process

CHAPTER
06

This chapter breaks down the process of producing a complete piece of writing into manageable steps or stages to assist you in preparing, planning and writing. It explains the five key factors that shape a writer's choices in regard to any piece of writing, and offers strategies for developing ideas. It includes advice on producing compelling creative pieces as well as on how to research and assess the reliability of information sources for expository and persuasive pieces. It also shows you how to develop and write an essay and a short story.

Five key factors

The following five key factors influence the choices you make in a piece of writing.

F = the **form** you will write in

L = the **language** you will use

A = your intended **audience**

P = the **purpose** of your piece

C = the **context** for your writing

You need to have a clear understanding of each factor before you begin writing. The acronym **FLAP+C** will help you remember them.

These factors are *interdependent*: that is, your choices about one factor will influence your decisions about the others. For example, the purpose of your piece will determine your intended audience, or vice versa – an understanding of a publication's readership, for instance, will shape the message you deliver in your text. Your language choices will also be affected by the needs of your audience and how you want them to respond.

In the following sections we begin with the most fundamental of these factors – audience, purpose and context – before moving on to look at how they will affect your choices with regard to form and language.

Audience

'Know your audience' is the number one piece of advice given to public speakers, and it applies equally to writing. The characteristics of your intended readers will affect the language you use in your writing, the ideas, arguments or information that are likely to interest them, and the text form you choose for your piece.

Sometimes the audience for your written piece is clear. For example, if you are writing a piece for your school magazine your audience will be students and teachers at your school, as well as members of the wider school community. If you are writing a letter complaining about the poor service you received at a restaurant, your intended audience would be the manager and perhaps the owner of the restaurant.

You will often be required to create a piece of writing as part of your studies. In this case, you might think that the obvious audience for the piece is your teacher – since they will be reading, and probably assessing, the piece. But in fact you need to think more broadly than that. You need to think about not only the *actual* reader of your piece, but also the *implied* reader. For example, if your task is to write a newspaper editorial about gene technology, your implied audience would be the readers of the newspaper, despite the fact that your piece will not actually be appearing in a real newspaper.

If you are asked to write a piece for which there is no specified or implied audience, assume an educated adult audience, and make your choices regarding language and form accordingly.

Defining your audience will help you decide:

- how much background information or scene-setting you need to provide
- whether technical or contextual terms need to be defined or will already be familiar to your audience
- the sort of language the audience will understand and appreciate (e.g. formal or informal, highly technical or generally accessible, spare or lyrical)
- the extent to which your audience will be interested in your ideas, engaged in the topic or sympathetic to your point of view, and therefore the tone and approach you might use
- the ideas or arguments likely to appeal to that audience.

Purpose

As with audience, the purpose of your written piece may be implicit rather than explicit. If you are writing for a school or university subject, your obvious purpose is to achieve a good grade. But your *implied* purpose might be to persuade your audience that smoking should be made illegal, offer insight into family dynamics through a short story or to convince the audience of your interpretation of a text. It is your implied purpose that will determine the choices you will make regarding form and language.

You should be able to express your purpose in a single sentence.

Context

Context refers to the environment or situation in which you are writing, and in which your written piece would appear if it were published. It includes:

- the publishing environment – the type of publication your piece would appear in; whether or not the topic or themes of your piece have been discussed previously in the publication or are of particular interest to the wider community; and the range of viewpoints and attitudes your intended audience is likely to have about your ideas
- the historical, social and cultural factors that have shaped the idea, topic or issue on which you are writing
- the historical, social and cultural factors that influence the attitudes, beliefs and values of the audience for whom you are writing.

These factors will affect such choices as the language you will use, and the amount and type of background information you need to include.

Form

Your written piece may be in any one of numerous forms or text types, such as an essay, a newspaper article, a diary entry, a dialogue, a short story or a poem. Sometimes you may be able to select the form, while at other times the form will be specified for you.

While there are many different forms, they may be grouped into four broad styles: expository/informative, persuasive/argumentative, creative/imaginative and personal. The table on the following page outlines the main characteristics of each writing style and possible text types suitable for each style.

Writing styles	Possible text types/ forms	Typical language features	Purpose (intended effect)
Expository/ informative	• autobiography • biography • business letter • essay • feature article • news story • precis • report • résumé • review	• formal style • serious tone • a reasoned, considered discussion of the topic	• to explain or inform • to consider different points of view on a topic
Persuasive/ argumentative	• debate • editorial • essay • letter to the editor • opinion piece • speech	• persuasive language techniques • language for presenting and sustaining an argument	• to persuade (i.e. to convince the reader that the writer or speaker's point of view is correct)
Creative/ imaginative	• film script • novel • play script • poetry • short story	• poetic and descriptive, if appropriate • informal or colloquial language if appropriate to characters, narrative voice etc.	• to entertain • to make the reader think about ideas in a new way • to move the reader emotionally
Personal	• autobiography • diary entry • memoir • personal reflection • personal letter • recount • review • speech	• strong personal voice • written in first person • language may be literary and descriptive, or informal and colloquial, depending on the audience, purpose and form of the piece	• to entertain • to inform • to move the reader • to persuade

See Chapter 7 for more detailed information on these forms.

Language

Language choices range from the selection of individual words to decisions about tone and style.

Tone

Tone is the mood or feeling of a piece of writing. It reflects the writer's emotions or attitude towards the subject, and can shift as the writer considers different aspects or viewpoints. In imaginative writing, the tone of a character's dialogue reflects their mood, attitude towards the topic and relationship with the character/s to whom they are speaking.

A good way to identify the tone of a piece of writing is to think about how it would sound if it were read aloud. It can be positive (e.g. enthusiastic); negative (e.g. bitter); or neutral (e.g. calm).

Style and register

Style refers to the way in which words are selected and combined. For instance, the style can be poetic and descriptive, or plain and direct.

Register is an important aspect of style, and refers to the level or complexity of language. The three main registers are formal, informal and standard. A writer will use a particular register according to their context, purpose and audience. For example, formal language is appropriate in business communications, while a text to a friend may use informal language.

Formal language is characterised by:

- the absence of contractions (such as 'you'll' for 'you will', or 'it's' for 'it is')
- the absence of slang, very casual language and colloquialisms
- longer and more complex sentences
- more sophisticated and varied vocabulary
- the absence or minimal use of the first person ('I')
- increased use of the passive voice.

Informal language is characterised by:

- the use of contractions (see above)
- the use of slang, casual language and colloquialisms
- shorter, simpler sentences
- less complex vocabulary
- more frequent use of the first person
- greater use of the active voice.

The **standard register** lies between formal and informal registers. It is characterised by:

- the use of both official terms and more casual language
- the avoidance of colloquialisms likely to be understood by only a section of society
- a range of sentence structures, from short to long and from simple to complex; very complex sentences are avoided.

The appropriate register for your writing depends upon the purpose and audience of your piece. Most written pieces for school assessment will require you to write in the formal or the standard register; however, there are some situations in which informal language may be more appropriate.

Informal language may be preferable in:

- dialogue in fiction, plays and film scripts
- the narrative voice in certain kinds of fiction
- personal letters, diary entries and some types of essay.

The most important factor to consider when deciding what register is appropriate for your piece is the needs of your audience. As a general rule, the closer your relationship with your audience, the more informal your language can be.

Planning and writing an essay

An essay is usually a formal piece of writing with a clear structure and argument and a serious tone. If this initially can seem limiting, with practice and experience (including reading essays as well as writing them), you will find that the essay form is in fact extremely flexible. While it is generally written in the third person it can also use the first person; elements of humour and personal experience can be incorporated in some essay styles, such as reflective essays.

This section gives you general guidelines for preparing, planning and writing an essay. You can adapt the guidelines according to the specific requirements of your task and the particular essay style you are writing in.

Understanding the topic

Your first step in planning an essay is to develop a strong understanding of the topic you will write on. For some writing tasks you will be given a specific topic; for other tasks you might be given a general subject area but will be required to create your own topic or focus.

If you need to generate your own topic, follow these steps.

1. Carefully read the requirements of the task.
2. Jot down some aspects of the subject you might like to explore.
3. Generate a list of ideas or key words related to the subject.
4. Type these key words or phrases into a search engine and make notes on the results.
5. Find books relevant to the subject area and look up your key words in the contents page or index. Make notes on any interesting connections or avenues of inquiry.
6. Using these notes, decide which aspect of the subject especially interests you.
7. Write a specific question about the aspect of the subject you have chosen to write about. Depending on the requirements of your task, you may use this question as the basis for your written piece, or you may turn the question into a statement that you might argue for or against in your piece.

If you have been given a topic, follow these steps.

1. Write down the topic.
2. Circle the key words in the topic. Write down their meanings and some synonyms; look up the meanings of any words you are uncertain about.
3. Underline the direction word or phrase in the topic. The direction words tell you what you are required to do, e.g. 'discuss', 'explain', 'give a brief history of', 'support your answer with evidence from'. If your topic is in the form of a question, underline the entire question, as the requirement of the task is to answer the question in full.
4. Rewrite the topic in your own words.

Generating ideas

Once you have a good understanding of your topic, the next part of the planning process is to develop ideas for your writing. This section provides you with strategies for expanding on ideas you already have and generating new ideas.

Explore key words

A useful initial way of generating ideas is to brainstorm associations and questions related to the key words in the topic. Do this before you consult any other references initially, to begin clarifying your own ideas. Then try typing key words into an internet search engine or looking them up in a variety of reference texts (e.g. a dictionary, thesaurus and encyclopedia). Make notes on any useful information or new avenues of inquiry.

These brainstorming notes will help you to clarify your ideas on the topic and decide what evidence or information you will include when planning your written piece.

Challenge the topic to generate ideas

You can agree or disagree with the topic. Your position on the topic will give you a central point of view to express in your writing, giving it more coherence and unity.

To see how you might disagree with the topic, write a statement that expresses the *opposite* idea to that of the topic. See how many ideas you can come up with that support this new statement. This doesn't mean your final response has to disagree with the topic, but it will help you to examine a range of ideas and viewpoints, and lead you to a more nuanced examination of the issues and ideas related to the topic.

> Sample topic: *To Kill a Mockingbird* presents a pessimistic view of human nature.
>
> Contradiction: *To Kill a Mockingbird* presents an ultimately hopeful view of human nature.

To list and compare ideas, draw a two-column table and use each statement as the heading of a column. Under each column heading, write down any ideas and evidence you can think of to support the statement.

Define and classify

Another useful way of generating ideas is to break down one or more key words in the topic.

> Sample topic: Power comes with responsibilities as well as privileges. Discuss.

Step 1: Break down the key word.

'Power' is a broad term that could have a number of different meanings, such as:

- physical power
- financial power
- coercive power
- political power
- military power
- informational power

You can see that ideas can be generated simply by exploring possible kinds of power. You might then consider whether all, some, or even none of these forms of power entail both responsibilities and privileges.

Step 2: Explore types of power.

You can continue this process by exploring further each type of power you have identified, and identifying the responsibilities and privileges it involves. For example:

- *Physical power* may refer to a person's literal strength, which confers the privilege of being able to complete physical tasks more easily and provides a sense of physical safety, but also can be used to threaten or even harm others.
- *Political power* offers the privilege of being able to make important decisions that affect many lives, but entails a responsibility not to misuse this privilege for one's own benefit.

Step 3: Group or classify types of power.

You could then group these types of power into those that are associated with corporeal might, such as physical power and military power, and those associated with psychological influence, such as coercive power and political power.

Or you might choose a different way to classify them; for example, into those generally viewed favourably by society, such as political power, and those that are not, such as coercive power.

Consider a variety of sources

The wider the variety of sources from which you gather information and ideas, the better your written piece will be. Draw up a table like the one below to record information, ideas and opinions on your topic from a range of sources. Consider how the information or idea relates to your topic. For instance, does the information or idea support or undermine the topic statement?

Source	Information/idea	How it relates to the topic
Class notes		
Other people's opinions		
Real-life situations		
Your textbook		
Other texts		
Facts or statistics		
Your own experiences		

Consider different points of view

Another way of generating ideas is to consider the topic from the viewpoints of very different individuals and groups. If the topic is not already in the form of a question, rephrase it so that it is, and create different perspectives by imagining how this question would be answered by various people, both real and fictitious.

Sample topic: Animals should not be kept in zoos.

Rephrased as a question: Should animals be kept in zoos?

Now make notes on how the question might be answered by:

- your parents
- a friend
- the Prime Minister
- a zoo employee
- an animal rights activist
- a vet
- a naturalist
- a character from a book or film you know well
- any other individual you can think of.

Consider changes over time

Sometimes you might have an idea but find it difficult to know how to expand it into a full paragraph. A good way to develop an idea is to consider how any aspects have changed over time or, if you are writing about a literary work, over the course of the narrative.

For example, if you were writing an informative essay on paid paternity leave and wanted to develop the idea of fathers being involved in child rearing, you might consider the differences between the typical parenting duties performed by a father living 100 years ago, and the typical parenting duties performed by a father living today.

Researching the topic

If you are writing an argumentative or expository piece, you will need to do some research on your topic. Even imaginative or personal pieces may require research (for instance, to create an authentic historical background for a story, or to confirm your recollections of a particular event).

Research can be divided into two broad categories – primary research and secondary research.

Primary research refers to accessing unedited, firsthand written or oral testimony, images or objects created by a person or group *directly involved* in an event. This is information *before* it has been analysed, interpreted or commented on. Examples of texts you might look at as part of your primary research are letters, emails, interviews with participants, photographs, speeches, and government files or databases.

Secondary research refers to accessing commentaries, analyses or interpretations of events. While a disadvantage of secondary sources is that they are not usually created by people who were present at an event or during a particular historical period, they often have the advantage of being created by experts in a field, and of providing broader historical and critical perspectives.

Research tips

Before you begin researching your topic, ensure that you understand the requirements of your task and that you have identified all the key terms in your topic.

Next, make a list of all possible sources of information. These might include the internet, your school or university library, your local library, stakeholder individuals and organisations, newspapers, journals and public records.

Good research requires two important skills.

- **Critical thinking skills** involve the ability to consider carefully the validity of all the information and ideas that your research uncovers. You need to evaluate the relative importance and worth of different sides of an argument. This includes considering the source of the information, seeking out supporting evidence for different points of view, and using reason and logic to draw your own conclusions.
- **Analytical skills** involve the ability to identify relevant information, recognise patterns or commonalities, and organise logically all the information and ideas to support your argument.

Internet research

The internet provides almost instant access to vast amounts of information. As such it can be a very useful tool, but you will need to use your **critical thinking skills** to carefully evaluate any information you find. The following tips will help you to get the most out of your internet research.

- **Use a spreadsheet** to record information or ideas you find on particular websites, as well as website addresses (URLs) and the dates on which you access them. This information will help if you need to revisit a site and is also necessary for your reference list. (See pages 136–40 for more on referencing.)

»

»
- **Avoid copying and pasting** information from websites. Aim to restrict yourself to identifying two or three key pieces of information from each website and record this information *in your own words*. This will prevent you collecting more information than you can usefully organise, help you to identify the most relevant information, and ensure that you do not inadvertently plagiarise (copy without permission) the work of others.
- **Use Boolean search strategies** (which involve using 'or', 'and' or 'not' to narrow down your search) to obtain more relevant and specific information on your topic. There are several useful websites that explain how to use Boolean search techniques.
- **Remember that the internet allows anyone to place material online**, and that consequently not all the information you find will be reliable. To evaluate the reliability of a website, consider the following.
  - Who is the creator of the website? Look for an 'About us' or 'Contact' section. Consider whether the website's creator or creators have relevant experience and expertise in the subject you are researching. Also check to see whether they may have any reason for promoting a particular point of view, as this will influence the way in which information is selected and presented.
  - What is the website's domain name? This can tell you if the website has been created by a reputable organisation. Many government, education and non-profit websites provide reliable information and can usually be identified by their domain names. In Australia, the addresses of reliable websites may contain gov.au (government sites), edu.au (education sites) or org.au (public organisations, usually non-profit).
  - Is the website current and updated? Generally, reliable websites will be updated regularly and be fully functional.

The five-paragraph essay

A common essay structure consists of an introduction, three body paragraphs and a conclusion.

In your **introduction** you should do the following.

- State your main contention – this expresses your central argument or proposition.
- If you are responding to a topic, include key terms and/or synonyms for these terms in the introduction, and ensure your main contention provides a succinct response or answer to the topic.
- Outline the main points you will make in the essay.

Each **body paragraph** should focus on one key idea or point.

- Include a topic sentence. This is often the first sentence of a paragraph, and tells your readers what the main point of that paragraph will be. (With experience, you might find that making the topic sentence the second or third sentence in a paragraph can also work effectively.)
- Use evidence and logical reasoning to support and justify the key point.
- Use linking words and phrases to create smooth and logical transitions between sentences and between paragraphs.

In your **conclusion** do the following to create an effective ending for your essay.

- Reiterate your main contention and respond clearly to the topic (if there is one).
- Briefly summarise your main arguments.
- Indicate to your readers what you want them to do or think as a result of having read your piece. One way of doing this is to encourage readers to look to the future by outlining a consequence of your argument. If you are analysing a text, you might make an overall statement about the main message of the text in relation to the essay topic.

A seven-step process

Follow these seven steps to create a plan for the above essay structure.

1. From your brainstorming and research notes, decide on a focus for your written piece. Express this in a single sentence. This will form your main contention.
2. Next, from your notes, select three key points or arguments that support your main contention. (If you are writing a longer essay and wish to have more than three body paragraphs, select more key points.)
3. Express each key point as a single sentence. These will form the topic sentences of each of your body paragraphs.
4. Number the key points in the order you wish to present them (e.g. from most important to least important; see page 109 for structuring strategies).
5. From your notes, select information, ideas and evidence relevant to each key point.
6. Restate your main contention in different words. This will form the basis of your conclusion.
7. Decide what you want your reader to do, believe or think about as a result of your writing. Express this in a sentence.

Guidelines for writing

Although there are many ways to approach an essay – and a variety of essay styles, from personal and reflective to analytical and argumentative – the following guidelines are broadly applicable.

Language

See page 92 for linking words and phrases, and page 99 for an explanation of the formal language register.

Most essays are written in a formal style and in the third person. This is particularly true of an analytical essay on a text. Essays usually display a logical, reasoned approach to the subject matter, which means using effective linking words and phrases that identify cause-and-effect relationships and show relationships between evidence and ideas.

In a personal or reflective essay, the language style can be less formal (perhaps using the standard register) and the first-person 'I' can be used to express a personal response to an experience or issue.

The appropriate use of **metalanguage** or **specialised language** (jargon) in an essay will help to show a thorough understanding of your subject. For instance, if you are analysing a work of literature, use the terminology relevant to the type of text: for a novel, you would refer to the narrative voice, characters, plot and settings; for a poem, you would discuss the persona, the use of imagery, poetic form, stanzas and so on. If the essay is on a more general subject (e.g. the use of technology in education), you would use words and phrases relevant to that area of knowledge (e.g. devices, screen time, flipped classroom, differentiated learning).

Incorporating quotations

One way of including evidence is to quote what somebody else has written or said. It is important to put an exact quotation in quotation marks. Aim to include quotations in a way that smoothly integrates them into your discussion. For example, in writing about the theme of courage in the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* you might decide to use a quote from one of Harper Lee's main characters.

> Harper Lee explores different kinds of courage in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She does this especially through her character Atticus Finch, a lawyer who places himself and his family in danger when defending an innocent man in a trial. 'I wanted you to see what real courage is, instead of getting the idea that courage is a man with a gun in his hand.'

For information on punctuating quotations, see page 53.

Although the quote is relevant to the discussion of courage, it is poorly integrated into the discussion. It is not clear how the quote relates to the previous sentence or even who the speaker is. (Is it Atticus? The narrator? Another character?) It is better to break up the quotation and incorporate it into the discussion.

> Harper Lee explores different kinds of courage in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. She does this especially through her character Atticus Finch, a lawyer who wishes to show his children 'what real courage is'. Although by defending an innocent man in a trial he places himself and his family in danger, he explains that he wanted to demonstrate that courage is not just 'a man with a gun in his hand'.

When you include information or a quotation from another text, you must indicate where you obtained that material. If your essay is an analysis of a literary text, you usually would not need to include any more details than page numbers (and even these might not be required, for instance in an exam). However, if you were to include what other critics have said about the text, you would need to provide details about where you found these critics' statements. Note that when you write the title of a book-length work or a film, you should use italics or, if you are handwriting, underline the title. Titles of shorter works, such as articles, stories, poems and songs, should be placed in quotation marks (see page 54 for examples).

See pages 136–40 for detailed guidelines on how to reference sources in your essay, both within the essay and in a reference list at the end of the essay.

Structuring strategies

You can shape your essay according to the order in which you place your ideas and points of argument. This can help you to engage your reader from the beginning, create a strong sense of logical reasoning throughout, and end convincingly. Here are three possible structuring strategies.

- One common sequence is to arrange the points from strongest to weakest. This establishes your point of view from the outset, then consolidates it with additional points of argument and evidence.
- If you are given a topic or a statement to argue for or against, you could begin with the points that are in agreement with your given essay topic, but finish by acknowledging any examples that are in disagreement and then showing why your overall argument is nevertheless correct. Making a partial concession in this way can show you are being considered and balanced, and that you understand the complexity of the text or subject you are examining.
- Another possible sequence for a general essay is to move from the specific to the general. For instance, you could begin with an example or an anecdote, then move onto the general pattern and draw your conclusions.

Planning template for an essay

To create your plan, draw up an outline like the one below and fill in the lines with the information you have gathered using the seven-step process (page 107).

Introduction

- Main contention: _____

Body paragraph 1

- Topic sentence: _____
- Supporting information: _____

_____

_____

Body paragraph 2

- Topic sentence: _____
- Supporting information: _____

_____

_____

Body paragraph 3

- Topic sentence: _____
- Supporting information: _____

_____

_____

Conclusion

- Reworded main contention: _____

_____

- Summary of arguments: _____

_____

- Final direction to the audience: _____

_____

Planning and writing a short story

This section focuses on the planning and writing of a short story. However, much of the advice can also be applied to the creation of other types of imaginative text.

Creating setting

Before you write your first draft, you need to have a clear understanding of the world in which your story will take place. The time and place in which the story is set will provide the context for the situations you describe and how people behave within that world.

Make brief notes about such aspects of setting as:

- characters' clothing
- characters' homes
- normal modes of transport
- available forms of communication
- technological developments
- the natural landscape
- the urban, suburban or rural environment
- social customs
- predominant ideas and values.

You might not refer directly to all or even most of these things, but a thorough understanding of your setting will help you to write about it in a way that is vivid and convincing.

Remember, too, that accuracy and consistency in your representation of setting is an important part of world-building. For example, if your story is set in the early twentieth century, characters would not have access to more recent inventions such as mobile phones and the internet. If your story is set in an invented world, internal consistency should still be maintained. If this world includes predatory creatures with a highly developed sense of smell, for example, a scene in which a human protagonist is able to stay concealed in close proximity to these predators will not ring true to the reader.

Creating characters

One of the key aspects of a successful short story is a well-rounded, believable protagonist. Your readers should be interested in this character and invested in what happens to them. Like real people, your characters should have virtues, flaws, hopes and fears. This is the case even if your characters are unrealistic in particular ways, such as possessing magical abilities.

To create an effective protagonist and convincing minor characters, you will need to know more about them than you will state explicitly in your story. When brainstorming each character's traits, consider how each virtue, flaw or quality you identify might be revealed through the character's words and actions. This is far more effective and engaging than simply stating that a character possesses a certain trait. The popular saying 'show, don't tell' is a fundamental rule of characterisation. Compare the following examples.

✗ Eleni was impatient and energetic. She didn't particularly enjoy school. She had a close relationship with her father.

This description 'tells' rather than shows. While it provides information about Eleni, it does not bring her character vividly to life for the reader.

✓ Slamming the door behind her, Eleni dropped her schoolbag on the floor and lifted her still-knotted school tie over her head. 'Ugh, I feel like this thing is strangling me!' she said to herself. Then, in a louder voice, she called down the hallway, 'Dad! I'm home! Where are you? What's for dinner? I'm starving!'

This description 'shows' rather than tells. The way in which Eleni discards the trappings of the school day – her bag and tie – and her complaint about the tie 'strangling' her, suggest an unenthusiastic secondary school student. Her calling out to her father in a series of rapid exclamations and questions conveys her impatience as well as a sense of their close relationship.

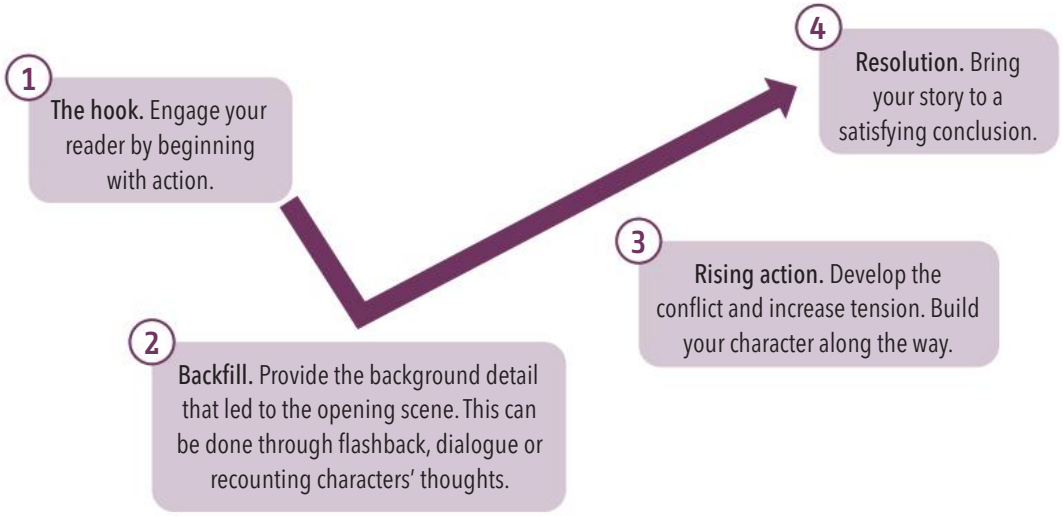
In addition to developing a sense of your character's core traits, you should also make notes about other important biographical details, including their:

- name, age, occupation (or education level for a student) and appearance
- most important relationships – family, friends or romantic liaisons
- backstory, such as significant past events in their lives.

Planning your plot

The most common narrative structure for a short story is a linear structure, in which events are related in chronological order. Other narrative structures include using flashbacks to create shifts in time, or using a circular structure in which the story begins and ends at the same point in time.

Because the aim of a short story is to produce a powerful effect within a limited number of words, the conflict should be introduced almost immediately. Tension should build progressively towards the climax, then relax as the conflict is resolved. A common and effective structure for a short story is the 'tick' approach, as shown in the diagram below.



One way to quickly introduce the conflict at the heart of a short story is to start in the middle of the action, also referred to as starting 'in medias res'. This immediately engages the reader by raising questions about the situation.

Before you start writing, you should have a clear outline of the main events in your story. Even if you plan to use a non-chronological structure, begin by listing the plot events in chronological order. This will help you keep track of important turning points and their consequences.

Writing descriptively

A key element of successful imaginative texts is engaging, fluent writing. The advice in Chapter 5 on writing well will help when it comes to writing a short story. Imaginative writing also requires the effective use of descriptive language. Strong descriptive writing involves using imagery to set a scene, reveal a significant event or convey important aspects of a character. Too much descriptive detail can bore readers; too little can leave them with an incomplete or flattened sense of the world and characters you are creating. Keep in mind the tips on the following page.

- Use sensory details. Don't simply describe what a character can see; consider also the sounds, smells and sensations that might help to convey a strong sense of place or information about the plot.
- Use interesting verbs and nouns to create impact and add precise detail, rather than relying solely on adjectives and adverbs.
- Use figurative language sparingly. Using too many literary devices, or relying too heavily on one particular device, such as simile or metaphor, can detract from the quality and effectiveness of your writing.
- Focus on small details. Provide enough general information to give readers the gist of an image or scene, then focus on a few specific, original details that will engage their interest.
- Carefully consider the connotations of the words you use, as these will convey relevant emotions and attitudes without you having to spell them out (allowing you to 'show' rather than 'tell').

Writing dialogue

An important feature of most imaginative texts is dialogue between characters. Dialogue is used to advance the plot, develop characterisation and contribute to atmosphere and scene-setting. Just as it is important to create convincing characters to maintain your readers' interest, so too should the dialogue between characters be believable and realistic. It should also fulfil one or more of the functions identified above – the limited space available in a short story and the imperative to keep the reader engaged means that conversations should always be purposeful. To create convincing dialogue, keep in mind the following.

- Ensure characters express themselves in ways that fit their personality, environment and situation. For example, if your protagonist has been established as a serious, thoughtful individual, they are unlikely to express themselves in excited exclamations. Similarly, if a character has just learned some terrible news, their tone should reflect their shock and sadness, e.g. through the use of sentence fragments.
- Avoid overusing synonyms for 'said' and frequent repetition of 'he said' or 'she said'. Often, conversational turn-taking makes it clear who is speaking without having to repeatedly specify this. Differentiating the style of speech used by your various characters will also help. Additionally, you can break up lines of dialogue with action that clearly shows who is speaking, as in the example below.

  'The Council will meet next week to decide your fate.' The High Commissioner closed the Book of Judgements with a clap.

- Avoid 'filler' dialogue. Small talk, such as conversations about the weather or general inquiries about the other person's health, takes up valuable space in a short story and does not help the dialogue to fulfil any of its primary functions. It is also uninteresting for the reader. Keep exchanges of speech concise and meaningful.
- Include features of real-life speech – but not too many! In everyday speech, people will hesitate, use filler words such as 'um' and 'ah', use the wrong word occasionally, speak in incomplete or meandering sentences, and so on. Occasional inclusion of some of these tendencies can help make your dialogue seem authentic and contribute to characterisation; for example, a nervous character might frequently use filler words and pauses in their speech. But, as with small talk, including too many of these features will slow down your dialogue scenes and cause the reader to lose interest in the conversation or find it difficult to follow.
- 'Show, don't tell.' This fundamental piece of writing advice applies to dialogue too. Rather than having characters explain their reactions or emotions, show this through their behaviours during conversations. Compare the following examples.

✗ 'That makes me so angry! I can't believe you would say something like that to me!' exclaimed Lolo.

This dialogue not only seems stilted and unnatural, it also baldly states the character's feelings, providing nothing to fuel readers' imagination, so they will be less likely to engage with the scene.

✓ His words opened up a silence between them. The muscles in Lolo's cheeks tightened and her gaze narrowed. 'What did you just say?' she asked finally, slowly.

This example requires the reader to 'read between the lines' to work out what Lolo's physical reaction suggests about her emotions and to understand the implications of her question. This makes the reader more involved and invested in the scene.

A good way to 'test' if your dialogue is convincing is to read it aloud.

Planning template for a short story

Use a template like the one below to outline the main elements of your short story.

Identify the main idea or theme that you want to communicate to readers.	
Identify the main setting for your story and give three words or phrases to describe it.	
Decide on a narrator, and whether they will narrate the story in the first, second or third person.	
Briefly describe your protagonist.	
Describe the event that starts the action of the story.	
Identify the main conflict in the story or the main challenge facing the protagonist.	
Identify the crisis point, or how the conflict comes to a head.	
Describe the resolution: how the conflict is resolved and how the main character has changed from the beginning of the story.	

Text types

CHAPTER
07

This chapter contains definitions and explanations of the purposes, features and language of different forms of writing. Knowing the conventions of various text types is essential when you create your own written pieces; it will also help you to identify the ways in which a writer has crafted a text you are studying.

Autobiography

Definition: An account of the writer's life.

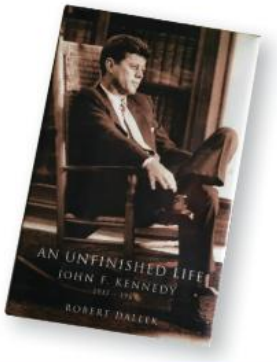
Purpose: To entertain; to inform.

Features	Language
• usually an account of the writer's entire life, from birth to the time of writing • contains personal reflection on events, people and places in the writer's life	• written in the first person, using 'I' and 'we' • may use some informal language • personal and intimate

Biography

Definition: An account of the experiences, events, opinions and people in the life of a (usually well-known) person.

Purpose: To entertain; to keep a record; to inform.



Features	Language
• assumed to be essentially truthful • usually covers the subject's entire life • supported by research and evidence including interviews, articles, personal letters and photographs	• written in the third person • generally uses formal language

Diary

Definition: An account of events, opinions, experiences and people in the personal life of the author.

Purpose: To keep a record.

Features	Language
• gives the date before each entry • usually written with the expectation that it will not be read by others • assumed to be a truthful account of events • subjective and personal (i.e. it offers one individual's view of, and personal responses to, the circumstances, events and people described)	• written in the first person, using 'I' and 'we' • usually informal and casual, sometimes lyrical and sophisticated, depending on the personality of the writer

Editorial

Definition: A piece written by a newspaper's senior editor or group of senior editors to express the newspaper's collective point of view on an issue.

Purpose: To persuade the reader to agree with the newspaper's view on the issue.

Features	Language
• has a clear contention • uses facts and evidence to support the argument • often works towards the contention, rather than stating it clearly at the beginning • has a headline and sometimes a subheading • includes background to the debate • presents the key arguments for both sides	• uses persuasive language techniques • has an objective and authoritative tone • may use personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'us' to refer to the collective views of the newspaper, but never uses 'I' • generally uses formal, sophisticated language but can also use standard English

Essay (argumentative/persuasive)

Definition: A formal piece of writing in which the writer presents their point of view on a topic or issue, supported by evidence and logical argument.

Purpose: To persuade the reader to accept the writer's point of view.

Features	Language
• has a clear contention, established in the introduction • uses evidence (e.g. examples, statistics) and reasoning to support the argument • may also use anecdotes and emotive language to convey a point	• uses formal language and persuasive techniques • generally uses a sophisticated vocabulary • may use personal pronouns such as 'you', 'I' and 'we'

Essay (expository/informative)

Definition: A formal piece of writing in which the writer explores or explains an idea or subject.

Purpose: To inform or explain.

Features	Language
• has a clear focus on a specific idea • uses facts and evidence to support points • may take a 'side' on the topic but only to express a personal view – not with the aim of persuading the reader to agree	• uses unemotional, reasoned language • generally avoids personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we'

Feature article

Definition: An in-depth examination of a particular issue or current event, published in a newspaper or magazine.

Purpose: To inform; sometimes to entertain.

Features	Language
• longer than a news article • has a headline and possibly a subheading • may have subheadings throughout the article to break up blocks of text and excite the readers' interest • has a by-line giving the name of the reporter • has a clear focus on a specific topic • uses facts and evidence to present the issue • may take a 'side' on the issue but acknowledges more than one perspective	• may use persuasive language techniques • may use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we' • language is more expressive and varied than in a news report • uses interviews and quotations • uses specialised or technical terms where necessary to convey detailed knowledge of the issue

Letter

Definition: A piece of written communication aimed at one other person or a small group of people.

Purpose: To inform and/or to entertain; sometimes to persuade; to convey emotions to the recipient.

Features	Language
• has the sender's address in the top right-hand corner of the page • has the recipient's address in the top left-hand corner of the page • has the date beneath the recipient's address on the top left-hand corner of the page if a business letter • has the date beneath the sender's address on the top right-hand corner of the page of a personal letter • begins with 'Dear (recipient's name)' • ends with a sign-off such as 'Love from' if addressed to a friend or family member or 'Yours sincerely' if a business or formal letter	• may use casual language if addressed to family or friends • uses more formal language if a business letter • uses personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we'

Letter to the editor / Online comment

Definition: A piece of written communication expressing an opinion on an issue, and intended for publication in a print or online newspaper or magazine.

Purpose: To persuade; sometimes to inform; to contribute to public debate on an issue.

Features	Language
• brief – typically fewer than 200 words • may be written in response to material that has previously appeared in the publication, or in response to an ongoing debate in the publication or in the wider community • has no greeting or sign-off, in contrast to a personal or business letter • usually followed or preceded by the writer's name or a pseudonym, and (for letters to the editor) the name of the town or suburb they live in	• often uses highly persuasive language • uses personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we' • may use formal or informal language, depending on the publication the letter/comment appears in, the subject of the letter/comment and the writer's personal style

Memoir

Definition: A record of experiences, events, opinions and people in the life of the writer.

Purpose: To entertain; to keep a record.

Features	Language
• assumed to be essentially truthful • written with the aim of being read (unlike a diary) • usually more structured than a diary • usually covers just a period in someone's life, rather than their whole life	• written in the first person, using 'I' and 'we' • creative and intimate • uses language that reflects the time and place being depicted

News article

Definition: A report on an important current event, published in a newspaper.

Purpose: To inform.

Features	Language
• has a headline that indicates the subject of the article • may have a subheading that gives more information about the article's content • has a by-line giving the name of the reporter • has a clear focus on a specific subject • uses facts and evidence • does not overtly take a 'side' on the subject • may be accompanied by a photograph, cartoon or other visual	• uses unemotional language • is succinct and to the point • uses short sentences and paragraphs • avoids personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we'

Novel

Definition: An extended piece of imaginative writing, usually more than 200 pages.

Purpose: To entertain; to present a point of view on a theme or issue.

Features	Language
• divided into chapters • usually features one main character and a number of minor characters • generally has one or more main themes • has a plot that often follows the pattern of orientation, complication, resolution	• may be written in the first or third person (or, rarely, second person) • usually uses the formal or standard register, except for dialogue • contains dialogue, which may be informal to reflect everyday speech

Opinion piece

Definition: A persuasive newspaper piece that presents an opinion on a topical issue.

Purpose: To persuade; to inform.

Features	Language
• has a headline indicating the subject and approach of the article • may have a subheading that gives more information about the article's content • has a by-line giving the name of the writer • has a clear focus on a specific subject • uses facts, evidence and argument to present the subject • advances a considered opinion on the subject • may be accompanied by a photograph, cartoon or other visual	• may use emotional language • uses persuasive language • uses reason and logic to present a point of view • may use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we'

Personal reflection

Definition: An account of an incident, a place, a person or a time in the writer's life.

Purpose: To entertain.

Features	Language
• assumed to be essentially truthful • often contains insights arrived at after considered reflection	• written in the first person, using 'I' and 'we' • creative and intimate

Play script

Definition: A literary text written to be performed on the stage.

Purpose: To entertain; sometimes to present a perspective on a particular theme or issue.

Features	Language
• written mostly in dialogue • includes stage directions • divided into acts and scenes • has a plot that often follows the pattern of exposition, complication, resolution	• dialogue reflects the social and historical setting of the play, as well as the characters' personal qualities • often contains colloquial language to reflect everyday speech • may contain ungrammatical word combinations and incomplete sentences to reflect characteristics of everyday speech

Poem

Definition: A literary text that imaginatively expresses an aspect of experience in a condensed and often lyrical manner.

Purpose: To entertain; to present a perspective on an idea or issue.

Features	Language
• usually organised into lines and stanzas/verses • may have a regular rhythmic pattern • often uses an established poetic form (e.g. sonnet, limerick, haiku) • focuses on qualities of language as well as the subject matter	• often lyrical • may use formal or informal language • may be written in the first or third person • may use sentence fragments and unconventional sentence structures • may use poetic techniques such as rhyme, repetition, alliteration, imagery, symbolism

Precis

Definition: A concise summary of a text such as a book, article, speech or other longer form of writing.

Purpose: To summarise; to inform.

Features	Language
• sometimes also known as a summary, a synopsis or an abstract • summarises the contents of a text without advancing an opinion • identifies the key points or arguments in the original text and organises them in a logical and concise manner	• written in the third person • uses formal language • precise and succinct

Recount

Definition: A factual narrative or account of an event or situation.

Purpose: To inform; to entertain.

Features	Language
• assumed to be factual • generally follows a chronological structure	• may be written in the first or third person • may use formal or informal language depending on the audience and purpose of the piece

Report

Definition: A document outlining the results of an inquiry, experiment or investigation.

Purpose: To inform.

Features	Language
• based on research and evidence • may be divided into sections such as summary, recommendations and findings • usually contains subheadings • may present some information in the form of charts, graphs or tables	• written in the third person • uses formal language • may use technical terms appropriate to the subject matter

Résumé

Definition: A brief summary of the writer's employment and educational history, and their professional skills, written for an audience of potential employers.

Purpose: To highlight the writer's suitability for employment; to persuade employers that the writer should be offered employment.

Features	Language
• contains contact details including the writer's name, postal address, phone number and email address • may include a career objective or summary statement at the beginning of the résumé • usually accompanied by a cover letter that outlines the writer's interest in and fitness for the particular position being applied for • includes sections on the writer's educational and employment history, with brief explanations of the writer's previous job responsibilities and skills	• formal language • persuasive language • may use personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'we' • written in bullet points or lists that are usually not complete sentences

Review

Definition: A critical report on a book, play, film or other cultural form.

Purpose: To entertain; to inform; to persuade.

Features	Language
• offers an informed opinion on the subject • may be informed by specialist knowledge of the genre and/or other work by the creator • presents a viewpoint on the value or quality of the subject	• usually written in the third person but can use the first-person pronoun 'I' • often uses formal language but may use some informal language depending on the audience • uses persuasive language

Screenplay

Definition: The script for a film or television program.

Purpose: To entertain; to present a perspective on a theme or issue.

Features	Language
• written in dialogue • includes stage directions • can include directions for cinematography and editing, e.g. 'close up of ...', 'cut to ...' • divided into scenes	• dialogue reflects the social and historical setting of the film or television program, as well as the characters' personal qualities • often contains colloquial language to reflect everyday speech • may contain ungrammatical word combinations and incomplete sentences to reflect characteristics of everyday speech

Short story

Definition: A creative work of narrative fiction usually under 10 000 words in length.

Purpose: To entertain; to explore an idea or situation.

Features	Language
• told from a particular point of view, usually that of one character • uses the conventions of narrative fiction, such as plot, character and theme • usually focuses on one main character, with minor characters only described briefly • usually depicts a single event or situation	• may use lyrical, sophisticated, casual or formal language, depending on the qualities of the main character and the style of the piece • contains precise descriptions and vivid verbs • may be written in the first or third person (or, rarely, second person) • may contain dialogue

Speech

Definition: A talk presented to an audience, often written out in full for formal occasions.

Purpose: To inform; to persuade; to entertain.

Features	Language
• has a clear focus on a specific topic • the speaker can use their voice (tone, pitch, pace, volume) and gestures to support what they are saying and convey a viewpoint or attitude • the speaker may also use visual material such as images, charts or graphs to support the content of their speech • may begin with an anecdote or joke to engage the audience's attention	• often written in the first person • may be highly persuasive • may use emotive language • compared to a written piece, language will be simpler and sentences somewhat shorter to cater to a listening audience • often uses repetition and signposts such as 'firstly' and 'finally' to help listeners follow the speaker's train of thought

Style conventions, referencing and editing

CHAPTER
08

This chapter contains advice for polishing your written piece so that it creates the best possible impression on the reader. Style conventions are the generally accepted rules or guidelines for presenting certain kinds of information, such as dates and lists. Following these guidelines enables you to convey information to the reader as clearly and unambiguously as possible. Referencing is an important element of academic writing, ensuring that appropriate credit is given to the sources of information you draw on in your work. Finally, editing is a vital part of the polishing process, as it ensures that you are using style and referencing conventions consistently, and that your work is correct, clear, fluent and engaging.

Style conventions

This section explains a number of accepted conventions or 'rules' for presenting information in a written piece, such as how to punctuate dates and lists, how to use appropriately inclusive language and how to compile a reference list. There are many variations on these conventions, and you should check with your teacher as to which ones you should use, especially for referencing. The most important thing is to be consistent.

"See Chapter 2 for more on punctuation rules and conventions."

Numbers

It is conventional to spell out numbers up to and including ten. Numerals are commonly used for numbers from 11 onwards.

They served three types of cheese.

At least 50 people attended the event.

Avoid beginning a sentence with a numeral. If you put a number greater than ten at the start of a sentence, you should either spell out the number or rephrase the sentence so that the numeral appears in a different place.

✗ 279 people voted against the proposition.
Incorrect: Beginning a sentence with a numeral is poor style.

✓ There were 279 votes against the proposition.
Correct: The sentence does not begin with a numeral.

Dates

The clearest way to write out dates in running text is to use numerals for the date and the year, but spell out the name of the month in full.

They arrived on 15 June 2021.

You do not need to use any punctuation with this structure. However, another very common structure has the month placed before the date, which is then followed by a comma.

They left on June 20, 2021.

If a sentence begins with a date, it is preferable to recast the sentence so that the date is no longer at the beginning.

✗ 1 January 1901 was the date of Federation in Australia.
Incorrect: Beginning a sentence with a numeral is poor style.

✓ Australia became a nation on 1 January 1901.
Correct: The sentence begins with a word rather than with a numeral.

Generally, it is better to avoid giving dates entirely in numerals (e.g. 25/12/2021) unless space is short or there is another good reason to do so. Entirely numerical dates can cause confusion, partly because North American numerical dates are written in the order of month/day/year, while in the United Kingdom and Australia the conventional order is day/month/year.

Centuries and decades

Decades are written as follows.

1590s 1970s 2000s

These are plural nouns and do not require an apostrophe before the *s*. You can also use words; for example, 'thirties' and 'nineties'.

To refer to a specific century, you can use the same style as for decades.

1500s 1900s

However, this can be confusing as it is unclear whether the entire century is meant or just the first decade. A less ambiguous way to refer to a century is to use either of the following formats.

the sixteenth century OR the 16th century

Years one to 100 were the first century (hundred years) AD, so years 101 to 199 were in the second century, the 1500s were the 16th century, and so on.

1500s = sixteenth century 1900s = 20th century

Times

In running text it is preferable to write out times in full.

She left at six-thirty.

However, when referring to exact times (for example, in relation to transport schedules or event times), it is better to use numerals as they convey a greater sense of specificity.

The train leaves at 4:15 pm.

The concert will begin at 8 pm.

Lists

Lists may occur within running text or be separated out from surrounding text as dot points or numbered items.

Regardless of the type of list, the following rules apply.

1 A list consists of at least two items.

Prehistoric cultures created historical artefacts such as the Egyptian pyramids and Stonehenge.

2 All items within a list must be presented with parallel (the same) structure.

The International Year of Astronomy was declared in 2009 with the aim of:

- celebrating astronomy
- bringing broader recognition to its contributions to society
- attracting young people to the study of astronomy.

3 Each item in the list should follow on logically and grammatically from the introductory phrase or clause.

The study of astronomy incorporates principles from several scientific disciplines, including:

- physics
- chemistry
- meteorology.

Lists within running text

In running text, lists may be introduced by a colon if the items are in apposition to the introductory phrase or clause (that is, they define or expand on it), or if the list is preceded by the words 'as follows' or 'the following'.

The word 'astronomy' refers to the study of celestial bodies: stars, galaxies, comets, planets, nebulae, and so on. (The list items are in apposition.)

OR

The word 'astronomy' refers to the study of celestial bodies, such as the following: stars, galaxies, comets, planets and nebulae. (The list items are preceded by 'the following'.)

Bulleted and numbered lists

The punctuation and capitalisation of bulleted and numbered lists should be consistent throughout a piece of writing. The following guidelines apply.

1 A list should contain no more than two levels of indentation.

The word 'eclipse' can refer to:

- a solar eclipse
- a lunar eclipse
- the novel by Stephenie Meyer, part of the series of novels that includes
  - *Twilight*
  - *New Moon*
  - *Eclipse*
  - *Breaking Dawn.*

» 2 If each item in the list is a full sentence, the initial letter should be capitalised and the sentence ends with a full stop or other final punctuation.

There are four types of solar eclipse:

- A *total eclipse* occurs when the dark silhouette of the moon obscures the sun.
- An *annular eclipse* occurs when the sun and moon are in line, but the moon appears smaller than the sun.
- A *hybrid eclipse* can be seen as a total or annular eclipse, depending on where the viewer is located on the earth's surface. From some places it appears as a total eclipse, whereas at others it appears as annular.
- A *partial eclipse* occurs when the sun and moon are not exactly in line and the moon only partially obscures the sun.

3 If each item is a single word or a sentence fragment, or the list is introduced with a sentence fragment, do not capitalise the initial letter of each item.

A lunar eclipse requires the alignment of:

- the sun
- the moon
- the earth.

4 Each item in the list should follow on logically and grammatically from the introductory phrase or clause.

The longest predicted solar eclipse will:

- occur on 16 July 2186
- last seven minutes and 29 seconds.

While practice varies for punctuating sentences within bulleted lists, the following guidelines are recommended to ensure consistency and clarity.

- A bulleted list should generally be introduced by a colon. Alternatively, a full stop can be used before a list if both the introduction to the list and all items in the list are full sentences.
- Colons should be avoided *within* the list items if the list is introduced by a colon; otherwise a sentence with two (or more) colons will be created.
- If the list items are not complete sentences, use a full stop only at the end of the final item.
- As noted above, if a list consists of items that are complete sentences, use a capital letter at the start of each sentence and a full stop or other concluding punctuation at the end of each sentence.

Inclusive language

It is not acceptable to use language that demeans or marginalises any group on the basis of their race, gender, sexuality, national or ethnic origins, disability, age or religion. The following guidelines will help ensure you do not inadvertently use language that might offend or discriminate against some people.

Do not identify a person by their race, ethnicity or other personal traits (such as sexual orientation, age or health status) unless it is directly relevant to the topic.

✗ The local shop was vandalised by a mentally ill person.
Incorrect: The mental health status of the person is irrelevant to the crime.

✓ A local shop was vandalised.
Correct: Information about the offender's mental health status is omitted as irrelevant.

Avoid stereotyping groups of people. Stereotypes assume that all or most members of a particular group share certain characteristics. For example, a common stereotype based on age is that older people are less adept with technology. Even stereotypes that may appear complimentary are still discriminatory because they deny a person's individuality.

✗ Like most Italian people, Giorgio was an excellent cook.
Incorrect: Giorgio's nationality is irrelevant to his cooking ability.

✓ Giorgio was an excellent cook.
Correct: No link is made between Giorgio's nationality and his cooking ability.

Do not marginalise particular groups by ignoring their existence. For example, the notion that Australia was first settled in 1788 ignores the fact that First Nations Australians have a much longer history. Similarly, assuming that a family consists of a mother, a father and their biological children ignores the many different varieties of family that exist.

✗ It's time for the men who run this country to listen to the voice of the people.
Incorrect: The reference to 'men' ignores the fact that many women help to run the country.

✓ It's time for those who run this country to listen to the voice of the people.
Correct: The word 'those' encompasses all leaders, regardless of their gender.

When referring to people with disabilities, appropriate language depends on the preferences of the individual or group being referred to. Where possible, try to find out a person or group's preferred descriptors. If this isn't possible, or if you are referring to a group that might contain individuals with different preferences, putting the person rather than the disability first is generally the most appropriate approach.

However, be aware that some individuals consider characteristics such as deafness or autism to be integral and positive aspects of their personality, and so prefer not to separate their condition from their identities. Whatever terms you use, avoid patronising language that suggests people with disabilities are victims.

✗ Accommodations should be made for blind people.
Incorrect: The phrase 'blind people' defines certain individuals by their disability.

✓ Accommodations should be made for people with vision impairments.
Correct: The individuals concerned are identified as people who happen to have a particular condition.

Avoid gender-specific terms for occupations, such as chairman or actress. Instead, use gender-neutral terms such as chairperson and actor. Avoid using the word 'man' or 'mankind' to refer to people in general. Do not assume that certain qualities, activities or roles are gender-based.

✗ Mothers should ensure their children eat a balanced diet.
Incorrect: Making a reference to 'mothers' assumes that only women are responsible for looking after children.

✓ Parents should ensure their children eat a balanced diet.
Correct: Referring to 'parents' takes into account the fact that either gender may be responsible for looking after children.

Remember that an individual's preference should always take precedence over general guidelines. For example, if someone would prefer to be called Mrs John Smith, this preference should be respected even though it is no longer usual or generally acceptable to refer to a woman in this way. Similarly, always respect and use an individual's preferred pronouns, if these are known. If in doubt, use the singular 'they' rather than the gender-specific 'he' or 'she'.

For more advice on avoiding gendered language see page 15 and pages 42–3.

Referencing

Whenever you use information drawn from a source such as a book, a film, a television or radio program, or a website, you should include an appropriate reference so your reader knows who made the comment and when it was published or broadcast.

The word 'reference' has two meanings.

- The place in the text that indicates information or a quotation has been drawn from a particular source. This is also known as a **citation**.
- A statement of the author, title and publication details for a source. An alphabetical **list of references** (or **bibliography**) is usually given at the end of a written piece such as an essay or research paper.

There are a number of different referencing systems, so check with your teacher for their preferred approach. The same rule applies if you are writing for a publisher, a journal or an institution: each will have a house style that includes a set of referencing conventions. Whichever referencing system you use, ensure that your style is consistent and all relevant information is included for each reference.

The two main referencing systems are the **author–date system** and the **documentary–note system**. Of these, the former is probably the most commonly used in general publications. The conventions outlined on the following pages correspond to those recommended by the Australian Government *Style Manual*.

Author–date system

The author–date system is a form of **Harvard referencing** (**parenthetical referencing**). It incorporates **references within running text** according to the guidelines below.

- References are identified in parentheses at the end of the sentence containing the reference. The parentheses contain the author or authors' surname/s and the year in which the work was published, released or broadcast.

  Countries with higher rates of digital literacy are best placed for economic success in the 21st century (Gerald and Capi 2020).

- If the work was written by three or more authors, use the first listed author's name followed by 'et al.' (a Latin term that means 'and others').
- If no date of publication can be determined, write 'n.d.' (standing for 'no date') in place of the publication year.
- If the reference relates only to a section of a sentence, it should appear at the end of the relevant clause or phrase.

  Countries with higher rates of digital literacy are set to succeed in the 21st century (Gerald and Capi 2020), but many nations appear to be falling behind.

- If the reference is a direct quotation, the page number on which the quotation appears should also be included using this format: (Gerald and Capi 2020:99). If information is drawn from several pages, the page span is indicated by ': XX–XX'.

The reference list at the end of the work should follow the rules below.

- The list is in alphabetical order according to the author's surname. For a text with multiple authors, list each author and alphabetise according to the surname of the author listed first.
- The author's initials follow their surname. Initials are not separated from each other by full stops or spaces.
- The year of publication is placed in round brackets and immediately follows the author's initials.
- Titles of books, films and periodicals (newspapers, journals and magazines) are italicised (or underlined if handwritten).
- Titles have maximal capitalisation: the first word and each main word (i.e. words that are not articles, prepositions or conjunctions) in the title begins with a capital letter.
- Titles of articles and book chapters are enclosed within single quotation marks.
- In an electronic document or web page, use hyperlinks for content that can be accessed online. Link the title of the work; only include the URL in a document that will be printed. If referencing a PDF, do not link directly to the document but to the page on which it can be accessed. In the case of websites for which there is no individual author, provide the name of the organisation or body to which the website belongs in place of the author name. You should also include the date you accessed any online material – as online material is subject to frequent change, this helps readers to know which version of the information you have used.

  School for Innovation in Literacy (n.d.) *Towards a Virtual Future,* Literacy and learning website, accessed 31 July 2021, www.literacyandlearning.com.au.

- Commas separate all elements in the reference (except before and after the year of publication).

  Gerald B and Capi B (2020) *Digital Literacy in the 21st Century*, Wolfhouse Publishing, Melbourne.

  Figg D and Bunn A (2019) 'Digital Media in the Year 9 Classroom', *Digital Literacy Case Studies*, Upstairs Books, Melbourne.

Minimal capitalisation refers to the capitalisation of only the first letter of the first word, as well as the first letters of any proper nouns, in any title or heading. There is a trend nowadays towards minimal capitalisation in headings.

Documentary–note system

The documentary–note system uses footnotes or endnotes to give information about sources. **References within running text** follow the guidelines below.

- A small (superscript) numeral is placed beside in-text references, usually immediately after the full stop at the end of a sentence. References are numbered according to the order in which they appear in the work.

  Grey and Black's previous work demonstrates a strong correlation between technology use and better performances from students.[1] Similarly, Nguyen finds that schools that integrate technology into the classroom environment have historically proven to be more successful.[2]

- The numbers refer the reader to a list at the bottom of the page (footnotes) or end of the chapter or work (endnotes), where the source details are given.

The footnotes or endnotes should follow the rules below.

- The list is in numerical order according to the order of references within the work. (If the same source is referred to repeatedly, it is still numbered sequentially according to where it is cited; however, subsequent footnotes need only include abbreviated reference details.)
- If a work has multiple authors, these are listed in the order in which they are credited in their original work.
- The author's initials precede their surname. Author initials are not separated by full stops or spaces.
- If the reference is a direct quotation, the number of the page on which the quotation appears should be included at the end.
- The date of publication is placed at the end, or followed only by a page number or page span, or the date online material was accessed. If no date of publication can be determined, use 'n.d.' (no date).
- Titles of books, films and periodicals (newspapers, journals and magazines) are italicised (or underlined if handwritten).
- Titles have maximal capitalisation: the first word and each main word in the title begins with a capital letter.
- Titles of articles and book chapters are enclosed within single quotation marks.

»

- In electronic documents or web pages, use hyperlinks for online content. Link the title of the work; only include the URL in a document that will be printed. If referencing a PDF, do not link directly to the document but to the page on which it can be accessed. In the case of websites for which there is no individual author, provide the name of the organisation or body to which the website belongs in place of the author name. You should also include the date you accessed any online material.

  International Organisation for the Promotion of Animal Welfare, iopaw.edu, accessed 16 March 2021.

- Commas separate the elements in the reference.

  1. B Grey and C Black, 'The Generation Gap: Differences Between Teachers' and Students' Use of Technology', *Education Monthly*, 2019, 212(4):67–92.

  2. A Nguyen, 'Digital Media: Classroom Applications', *Digital Learning Australia*, 2015, 15(3):42–56, p 48.

Footnotes and endnotes can also be used to give additional comments that clarify or explain an aspect of the main discussion. Since all publication details are included in the footnotes or endnotes, sometimes a reference list is not required at the end of the work. If there is a list of references, the format is the same as in the footnotes or endnotes, except for the following.

- The list will be alphabetical by authors' surnames (i.e. not in numerical order).
- The author surname is placed first, followed by their initials.
- A page span should be given for a chapter or article, but specific page references (as in reference 2 above) are not included.

If you are citing a document that can be downloaded from a website, treat it as though it were a published document.

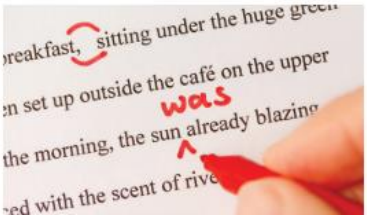
- For in-text references, cite the name of the author/s and the date of the document's creation or most recent revision.
- The reference list entry should include the name of the author/s, the title of the work, details of the creator of the website on which it was accessed, the date you viewed the document and (for a printed document) the URL of the website it came from.

  International Organisation for the Promotion of Animal Welfare, *A Guide to Caring for Your Pets*, iopaw.edu, 2021, accessed 16 March 2021.

Editing guidelines and strategies

Editing is the process of refining a written piece to maximise its accuracy and clarity. It also shapes the writing so that it achieves the purpose of its author, matches the interests and needs of its audience and, if published, meets the requirements of its publisher.

It is vital to know how to edit your own work to produce a polished piece of writing. It will also help you to improve your writing skills, as you will learn to identify and correct flaws as you write. This section contains tips and strategies for building your editing skills, and a checklist to follow when editing your writing.



Editing can be done on hard copy, or electronically.

Building your editing skills

The following preliminary points provide strategies for developing your editing skills.

- **Print out your work to edit it.** You will often pick up errors on hard copy that you miss on screen.
- **Read your piece aloud** to help identify any incomplete sentences or poor wording.
- **Don't try to check every element of your piece in a single reading.** Look at organisation and content first, then style, grammar, punctuation etc.
- **Swap pieces with a friend and edit each other's work.** Check for:
  - spelling mistakes
  - grammatical errors
  - overuse of the passive voice
  - weak verbs that could be replaced with stronger verbs
  - clichés
  - a lack of ideas
  - a confusing or poor structure.
- **Try to identify the five key elements in relation to each other's work: form, language, audience, purpose and context.** If any of these are unclear, think about how the work might be improved.
- **Come up with at least three suggestions for improving your partner's work.** Rewrite according to the suggestions from your partner. Then, see if you can use any of the suggestions you made to your partner for your own piece.

Adhering to word limits

Writing a complete piece to a set number of words (or, for a speech, to be delivered in a given amount of time) is an acquired skill. In English courses, you will usually be asked to write a certain number of words, or within a range such as 800–1000 words.

It is important not to write too few words, as this will probably mean you have not covered a topic in enough detail. If you write too many words you might leave yourself short of time in an examination, or the piece might be too long for the form and purpose.

If your piece is too short, consider the following questions.

- Have I fully responded to the topic, considering various angles and sources of ideas?
- Do I need to include more ideas, or develop some ideas more extensively?
- Have I provided enough evidence, examples and other information to support my ideas and arguments?

If your piece is too long, consider the following questions.

- Have I included only ideas relevant to the topic?
- Are there too many examples that simply repeat the same idea and do not enrich or add complexity to the discussion?
- Is there any unnecessary repetition?
- Is the written expression as clear and concise as it could be, or is it too wordy?

Editing checklist

Use the following checklist to identify ways to improve your writing in five key areas.

Organisation and content

- ☐ I have defined important terms and concepts.
- ☐ The written piece advances in logical stages.
- ☐ The major ideas all relate to the topic.
- ☐ The major ideas are connected and the relationships between them are clearly expressed.
- ☐ All examples, evidence and quotations are relevant to and supportive of my ideas.
- ☐ Each paragraph develops just one idea.

Style

- ☐ Each sentence is clear and complete.
- ☐ I have broken down any overly long, awkward sentences into shorter ones.
- ☐ There are no 'comma splices' – two separate sentences with a comma between them instead of a full stop.
- ☐ I have used appropriate linking words to make transitions between sentences and from one paragraph to the next.
- ☐ I have used a variety of linking words to add interest to my writing.
- ☐ I have kept my audience in mind by choosing a suitable form for my writing and using appropriate language.
- ☐ My sentences begin in different ways and have varied structures.
- ☐ I have used my thesaurus to replace at least one overused word or phrase.

Grammar

- ☐ Each verb agrees with its subject.
- ☐ All verb forms are correct and consistent.

Spelling

- ☐ I have checked my spelling using a computer spellchecker and a dictionary.
- ☐ I have corrected any American spellings, e.g. the verb 'practise' is spelled with an *s* not with a *c* ('practice' is a noun in English usage); 'colour', not 'color'.

Punctuation

- ☐ Every sentence has concluding punctuation (full stop, question mark or exclamation mark).
- ☐ Capital letters are used at the start of every sentence and for all proper nouns.
- ☐ 'It's' is used as an abbreviation for 'it is', e.g. 'it's a windy day', and 'its' is used to show ownership, e.g. 'the house was falling down and its paint was faded'.
- ☐ Quotation marks are used to show where speech or a quotation begins and ends.
- ☐ Titles of books and films are in italics (or underlined if handwritten); titles of articles, book chapters, songs, poems and short stories are in single quotation marks.

MEDIA L
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SECTION 03

Media literacy

Media texts are intended for a public audience and may be found in newspapers or magazines, on television, on the radio and on the internet. They may be written, oral, visual or a combination of any or all of these. Most media texts are nonfiction texts: they convey information and/or opinion on a subject, event or issue.

'Media literacy' refers to the ability to understand, analyse and evaluate media texts, recognising how they are shaped by their audience and purpose, and by the context in which they appear. Analysing media texts involves critical thinking skills, while developing your own media texts requires creative as well as critical thinking skills.

This section covers a wide range of media texts, from still images to multimodal texts such as websites. It explains the key features of each text type and the elements to consider when evaluating and analysing a media text. This knowledge can also be applied when you are creating media texts.

The following table defines and gives examples of the media text types discussed in the next four chapters of this book.

Media text type	Definition	Example
Advertisement	the public promotion of a product or service	Metro Trains' 'Dumb Ways to Die' advertisement
Cartoon	a humorous drawing that may be accompanied by a caption or contain speech bubbles	Gary Larson's cartoon depicting dinosaurs smoking cigarettes and captioned 'The real reason dinosaurs became extinct'
Newspaper	a print or online text published daily or weekly containing current news, editorials, feature articles, and usually advertising	*The Age*
News broadcast	a television or radio show covering current events as well as sport, entertainment and weather	*ABC News*
Photograph	a still image taken by a camera (which can be a stand-alone device or incorporated in a smartphone, tablet or computer)	Dorothea Lange's portrait of a Depression-era American family, entitled 'Migrant Mother'
Podcast	an episodic audio program in digital format that enables on-demand listening	*Serial*
Radio show	an audio text broadcast by a radio station	Radio National's *PM*
Social networking website	a website that allows users to interact with one another by sending messages, including emojis and other images	Facebook
Speech	a public talk given by an individual	'I Have a Dream' by Martin Luther King, Jr.
Website	a set of connected web pages for public consumption, accessed via the internet	www.youtube.com

Images and advertisements

CHAPTER
09

We encounter thousands of images each day: on the television, in newspapers and magazines, on advertising billboards, in galleries and on the internet. They may have an explicit persuasive purpose, as in advertising; they can help to tell a story, as in a newspaper; or they can present a new perspective on an issue or theme, as in an artistic work in a gallery. Advertisements are almost always based on still or moving images, reflecting the power of images to attract our interest and evoke an emotional response.

This chapter explains how to analyse and evaluate various types of images and advertisements, using appropriate metalanguage to discuss the ways in which they achieve particular effects on the viewer.

Images

An image is a visual representation of an object, person, place or idea. It can be still, as in a photograph or drawing; or moving, as in a video or film. Images may stand alone or be accompanied by written text as, for example, in an advertisement, cartoon or newspaper article. While our response to an image can be spontaneous, the creation and composition of an image is quite deliberate, using a variety of visual features and techniques to convey information, ideas and viewpoints.

Denotation and connotation

Denotation and connotation are two important concepts to understand when analysing images or any other media text.

Denotation refers to the literal meaning of a word or image.

> home = the dwelling in which someone lives (denotation)

Connotation is a broader term that refers to the associated words, images, ideas and emotions that are connected to a particular word or image. A word or image may have different connotations for different people.

> home → feelings of safety and comfort; a site of conflict; monetary value (connotations)

When analysing media texts, always pay attention to the connotations of images and words; these will help you gain a deeper understanding of the response the text's creator intends to evoke in the audience.

Symbols

A symbol is an object that carries a broader and more abstract meaning beyond its literal one. For instance, a dove is literally a bird but it is often used symbolically to represent peace. Like writers, visual artists often use symbolism in their work because symbols have powerful associations.

An image that includes an object with a symbolic meaning can be understood on more than one level. For example, a painting of a tree can be both a literal representation of the tree and a statement about the need to protect the environment. In this way, artists can use symbols to enrich the meaning of an image and explore wider ideas.

Photographs

While a photograph may appear to be the simple capturing of a moment in time, in fact photographers select, compose and edit their shots very carefully in order to convey a particular message or impression. If the photograph is published in a newspaper or magazine, then an editor or publisher can request further alteration of the image to suit the purpose and audience, as well as the context in which it will be placed.

Features of photographs that affect the viewer's interpretation include:

- the content of the image
- the composition of the shot
- technical features such as light, colour and focus.


The content of photographs includes the setting and background, which convey a feeling or mood as well as a sense of time and place.

These features are described in more detail in the pages that follow. When analysing a photograph, think about each of these features by asking yourself the following.

- *Why* has the photographer decided to use this feature in this way?
- *How* might this feature affect the viewer's response to the image?

Content

Photographers make decisions not only about the subject of an image, but also about the setting in which the subject appears and what will be included in the background. When analysing a photograph, consider also whether the shot has been staged or whether it captures a real event or situation. Use the questions in the table below to develop your understanding of how each feature of a photograph contributes to its overall impact and meaning.

Feature	Questions to consider
Background	• What background details has the photographer chosen to include? • What do these details suggest about the subject? For example, a photograph of a politician in their home may include pictures of their children on the mantelpiece to indicate that they are committed to family.
Caption or title	• Is there a caption, title or other text? • If so, how does this orient the audience to view the main subject or underlying theme of the photograph?
Colour	• What are the dominant colours in the photograph? • Are these colours associated with particular qualities or ideas? For instance, the colour green may evoke associations with nature and growth, while red might be associated with anger or passion, depending on the context in which it is used.

»

Feature	Questions to consider
Setting	• Has the photograph been taken in a studio or a natural setting? • Why do you think the photographer chose this particular setting? For instance, a photograph of a rock band may be taken in a studio in order to make use of elaborate and theatrical backgrounds and costuming.
Subject	• Is the subject literal – for example, a picture of a celebrity accompanying an article about that person? • Does the subject carry a deeper symbolic meaning – for example, an image of a crushed flower used to represent destroyed innocence?

Composition

Composition refers to the arrangement or structure of the elements that make up an image.

Notice the use of line and repetition in the first shot, and the use of angle and focus in the second.

The questions in the following table will help you develop your understanding of how composition contributes to the impact and meaning of a photograph.

Feature	Questions to consider
Angle	• Is the photograph taken from an unusual angle? • If so, what are the effects? Does it cause viewers to look at the subject in a new way?
Central focus	• Which aspect of the subject does the photographer focus the viewer's attention on? • Why? For instance, a close-up shot of a refugee staring directly into the camera may encourage the viewer to make eye contact with the subject and thus acknowledge them as both an equal and someone who has suffered. By contrast, a photograph of a house burned by a bushfire might focus on a charred toy lying on the lawn in order to evoke a more sentimental response.

Contrast	• Are there strong contrasts between light and dark spaces, or between different textures? • What is the effect of these contrasts on the viewer? For instance, a face half in darkness and half in light may suggest duplicity or a divided nature.
Framing	• How has the shot been framed? What has been included in the shot? • What has been left out? Why did the photographer choose to create the boundaries of the image in this way?
Line	• Does the photograph contain objects or gaps that create lines? Are these lines thick or thin, straight or curved? • How do these lines direct the viewer's eye? Do they create a sense of movement?
Repetition	• Are any patterns created by the repetition of lines, shapes, colours or objects? • Why has the photographer included these patterns? To emphasise the connection between different objects or ideas? To create a feeling of movement or activity? To draw the viewer's eye to a particular part of the photograph?
Shape	• Are there any predominant shapes in the photograph? Repeated shapes can create a feeling of calm, while including many different shapes can convey busyness or chaos. • Are the shapes primarily geometric or organic? For instance, a city street shot might emphasise the rectangular shape and hard edges of the buildings to create an atmosphere of alienation and even threat. Or a photograph of a young couple might have their heads touching to form a circular shape at the centre of the picture, suggesting their absorption in each other to the exclusion of the rest of the world.
Space	• Does the photograph contain negative spaces (i.e. spaces in which no object appears) as well as positive spaces? • What is the effect of these negative spaces? Does the image convey an impression of depth, despite being two-dimensional? How is this effect created?
Vantage point	• From what vantage point is the photo taken? Common vantage points include high, low, bird's eye and worm's eye. • Does the distance from which the photograph was taken imply a distance between the subject and the photographer, or between the subject and the viewer of the photograph? Or is the vantage point of the photographer intended to create a sense of intimacy and closeness?

Technical features

In addition to choices about subject matter and the way in which a shot is constructed, photographers also make technical decisions that affect how their final image appears. These decisions are made both at the point of taking the picture (for example, regarding focus and lighting) and after the photograph has been taken, when the photographer decides how and to what degree they wish to manipulate the image (for example, using software such as Adobe Photoshop). The image can also be altered by an editorial team prior to publication, perhaps creating a different view of the subject from the one the photographer had in mind.

Use the questions in the table below to determine how the technical features of a photograph contribute to its overall impact and meaning.

Feature	Questions to consider
Colour	• Has the photographer manipulated the image to intensify or subdue certain colours? • What associations do these colours carry, and what specific emotions is the photographer trying to evoke?
Focus	• Which areas of the photograph are sharpest or clearest? • Which areas are not in focus? • What does the photographer's choice of focus encourage viewers to concentrate on?
Light	• How has the subject been lit? Is the light harsh or soft? Is it direct light or reflected light? Was the photograph taken in natural or artificial light? Why? • Which areas of the photograph are most clearly lit? • Does the photograph contain shadows or areas of darkness? • What atmosphere is created by the lighting?
Manipulation	• Do you think the image has been colour-enhanced, airbrushed or in any way digitally manipulated? If so, why might this have been done? What difference do you think these changes make to the viewer's interpretation of the photograph? • Does an awareness of the way in which the photograph has been altered affect how you interpret it?

The digital manipulation of images can alter colour, focus and light: compare the original photograph on the left with the manipulated image on the right.

Drawings and paintings

Many of the key features of photographs are shared by other still images such as drawings and paintings.

These features include:

- background
- choice of subject
- colour
- contrast
- framing
- light
- line
- repetition
- setting
- shape
- symbols.

Note the bold use of colour by contemporary Australian artist Saren Dobkins.

See the questions associated with these elements in the tables on pages 149–52 and consider how you would answer them in terms of the painting or drawing you are analysing.

Some of the elements unique to paintings, drawings and similar visual texts are outlined in the table on the following page, with further questions to consider when you are analysing such a visual text.

Feature	Questions to consider
Materials	• What materials has the artist used to create their piece? • How does the artist's use of materials contribute to the effect of their work? For instance, does the use of thick oil paints create a textured feel and an awareness of the artist's brushstrokes in a painting?
Medium	• Has the artist chosen to create a painting? A pen-and-ink drawing? A pencil sketch? A collage? A mural? • Why did they make this choice and what effects does it have on their work? For instance, an artist who paints a graffiti image on a railway bridge does so knowing it may soon be scrubbed off.
Processes	• What technical processes can you identify, either during the creation of the work or afterwards? • How do the artist's processes affect the message or meaning of their work? For example, an artist might complete a painting over several months, which could allow them to infuse a deeper understanding of a person, place or event into it, so that the painting presents a subtle, nuanced point of view.

Cartoons

Cartoons use a combination of images and words to present a message. Many cartoons, especially those published in newspapers, are satirical. That is, they present a critical but humorous perspective on a topical issue.

The table opposite identifies some of the key features of a cartoon and questions to ask yourself in order to build an analysis of a cartoon.

Feature	Questions to consider
Background	• What details can you observe in the background of the cartoon? • Why has the cartoonist included each of these details? What do they suggest about the cartoonist's message? • Has anything significant been left out of the cartoon? Is any perspective not shown? For instance, a cartoon about long day care for small children might depict crying babies in a childcare centre, with frazzled carers attending to them, but not show the perspective of the parents who are trying to juggle work and parenting.
Caption	• Does the cartoon have a caption that acts as a punchline to the visual joke? • What does the caption suggest about the cartoonist's point of view on the issue or subject addressed by the cartoon?
Caricature	• Caricature refers to the exaggeration of a person or object's physical features to present them in a humorous way and to highlight certain characteristics. Does the cartoon you are analysing depict individuals as caricatures? What is the intended effect? For example, is the cartoonist aiming to make them appear intelligent, foolish, attractive, unattractive, successful or ridiculous?
Colour	• How is colour used in the cartoon? Look for a symbolic use of colour – red to suggest danger, passion or anger; white to suggest purity etc. • If the cartoon is in black and white, consider how tone (shades of white, grey and black) is used.
Context	• Where is the cartoon published? On a website? In a magazine? A newspaper? • Does the cartoon accompany a written text (e.g. news story, opinion piece)? If so, does it present a similar or different point of view? • What does the type of publication suggest about the cartoonist's intended audience? • Does the cartoon comment on a topical issue? Is the audience assumed to be familiar with the people, events or situations represented in the cartoon?
Speech balloons	• What are the characters saying, if anything? How would you describe their tone? • What do their words suggest about their personality or attitude towards the issue addressed by the cartoon?
Symbols	• Does the cartoon make use of any common symbols, such as a kangaroo to represent Australia or a rose to symbolise love? • What are the connotations of these symbols, and what emotions are they likely to arouse in the viewer?

Advertisements

The primary purpose of advertisements is to persuade the target audience to buy a product or service. The techniques used to achieve this purpose depend on the characteristics of the intended audience and the context in which the advertisement appears.

Print advertisements, appearing in a newspaper, magazine or public space such as a billboard, usually consist of an image or images with minimal, usually highly persuasive, text. Television and internet advertisements also use moving images and sound.

Every visual element in an advertisement is a result of a deliberate decision by the advertisement's creators. Pay close attention to the mise en scène – everything that appears within the frame of the advertisement. (For more on mise en scène, see pages 230–1.) If the mise en scène is simple and minimalist, it gives strong emphasis to a few specific elements. Actors or individuals who appear in advertisements are also carefully selected to resonate with the target audience by appearing admirable, relatable or desirable.

Audience appeals

Advertisers use a variety of appeals to the audience to persuade them to buy a product or service. Some of the most commonly used appeals include the following.

- **An appeal to the desire to belong** suggests that viewers will be left out if they don't purchase the product or service because everyone else is doing so.
- **An appeal to financial self-interest** plays on the audience's desire to save money and to avoid being taken advantage of.
- **An appeal to the desire to achieve** works by associating the product or service with success, e.g. by using a famous sportsperson to promote running shoes.
- **An appeal to the desire for high social status**, such as in advertisements for luxury cars and expensive jewellery, often appeal to the viewer's desire to be respected and admired by others. The audience is encouraged to believe that the product will improve the social status of those who buy it.
- **An appeal to the need for attention** rests on the viewer's desire to be noticed and to stand out from the crowd. Cosmetics advertisements, for example, often suggest that buying the advertised product will make the viewer more attractive and desirable.
- **An appeal to the wish to be safe** plays on people's fears: for example, of leaving their family impoverished if they die without life insurance, or of causing their child to be injured if they don't purchase a particular safety product.

Many advertisements combine two or more of these appeals, and there are many other lines of appeal an advertiser may use to persuade their audience. Try to identify the main line of appeal in any advertisement you analyse, and then see if you can identify any secondary lines of appeal.

AIDA

Advertisers commonly rely on the principles of AIDA when creating ads. AIDA is an acronym that stands for the following four stages.

Attention – Advertisements may use bright colours, direct address (e.g. 'Would you like to save money on your car insurance?'), attractive models, humour and so on to attract the attention of the audience.

Interest – Having attracted the audience's attention, the advertisement then needs to engage and maintain the audience's interest in the product or service.

Desire – The audience's interest must then be converted into a desire to purchase or use the product or service.

How many AIDA principles can you see in this ad?

Action – Finally, the audience must be persuaded to act on this desire so that they actually purchase the product or service. Encouragements such as 'Buy now and save!' or 'For a limited time only' may be used to prompt the audience to act.

Consider how each of these stages is achieved in any advertisement you analyse.

Analysing an advertisement

The table on the following page shows key features you should consider when analysing an advertisement, as well as questions to build your understanding and analysis of each feature.

Feature	Questions to consider
Audience and context	• Who is the intended audience for the product? What are their likely characteristics and preferences? • In what context is the advertisement published? Is it a print advertisement in a magazine? A television advertisement airing during the evening news? An internet advertisement on a government website?
Colour	• What are the primary colours used in the advertisement? • What are some common associations of these colours? For example, green may be used for its associations with nature and the environment, while white is associated with purity and cleanliness.
Language	• How is language used to persuade the viewer to purchase the product or service? • Which persuasive language techniques can you identify? Inclusive language? Rhetorical questions? Exaggeration? Lines of appeal? • What emotional response does the language evoke in the viewer?
Mood	• What mood or feeling is the advertisement attempting to create? Is it upbeat? Serious? Cautionary? Nostalgic? • Which features contribute to this mood? Consider colour, lighting, facial expressions (if shown), music (if used) and language.
Characters	• If people are featured, consider why the particular actors have been chosen. What sort of image do they project? Are they attractive and successful? Or ordinary and easy to relate to? • What are the visual and aural clues that indicate this? Consider the actors' clothing, age and voices, as well as the setting in which they are placed. • How do they help to promote and sell the product?
Mise en scène	• What kinds of props, setting, acting styles and lighting have been used to set the scene? • What effects are these elements intended to have on the audience?

Remember to consider the overall, or cumulative, effect of all of the above features in creating a particular impression on the viewer. While it is useful to identify each feature and its effects separately, you should also explain how they interact to create a coherent, persuasive advertisement.

Viral advertising

Viral advertising refers to a marketing trend that involves brand or product awareness being spread, like a virus, from person to person via word-of-mouth or on the internet. For this natural spreading of a message to occur, it must be unusual, compelling or humorous enough for viewers to wish to pass it on to their friends and associates. Social media sites such as Twitter, Instagram and TikTok are common avenues for sharing viral content.

In 2021, UK cereal brand Weetabix's Twitter advertisement suggesting that the cereal be served with baked beans went viral. It generated a strong public reaction, with many Twitter users, including representatives from other well-known brands such as Amazon and YouTube, humorously objecting to the suggestion. Other examples of successful viral advertisements include those for Old Spice aftershave and Spotify's 'Wrapped' feature.

Social justice and community-based movements can also 'go viral'. Popular examples include the ALS Ice Bucket Challenge and the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements.

When analysing a viral advertisement, consider the following questions.

- Why do you think the advertisement has gone viral? What is the key to its appeal? Is it especially humorous? Subversive? Dramatic? Which elements of the advertisement contribute to this effect?
- Who is the target audience for the product or service? Is the advertisement reaching just this group, or does it have wider appeal? Why?
- Is the reception of the advertisement generally positive or negative? If audience reaction is largely critical or cynical, the viral advertisement can backfire on advertisers and damage the brand's reputation.

Radio, podcasts, television and speeches

CHAPTER
10

Radio and television, podcasts and speeches all make use of the spoken word, among other elements, to make meaning and convey information to a potentially large number of people at once. This chapter outlines the key features of these media forms, and provides useful questions to consider when analysing them.

Radio shows

Radio remains a popular source of information about news stories and current affairs. Some radio presenters are openly opinionated and use highly persuasive language to encourage the audience to agree with their point of view. Other shows aim for a more neutral and informative approach. However, all radio content is carefully selected and (if material is pre-recorded) edited to create shows that appeal to a particular target audience. In addition to those focused on news and current affairs, many radio shows focus on particular issues, such as technology, the arts and sport.

The key features to consider when you are analysing a radio broadcast or transcript (the printed text of a show) are outlined in the table opposite.

Feature	Questions to consider
Presenters • set the style of the show through their approach to interviewees, their interactions with callers and their viewpoints on issues • can be very important to the radio station's image and profile	• What impression does the presenter convey through their language and tone of voice? Are they authoritative? Friendly? Condescending? Aggressive? • What aspects of their voice or language create this impression? • Does the presenter convey or openly express a point of view on an issue or story? How? What effect does this have on the listener? • Is the presenter open to hearing alternative points of view (e.g. on a talkback show)?
Guests • may present a personal perspective on an issue • may provide expert commentary	• Is a selection of differing perspectives and viewpoints presented? • Are interviews with experts, witnesses or others with a particular interest in the topic included? Why?
Music and sound effects • music supports the style of presentation and the tone of the show • sound effects and audio clips can support the accuracy of the reporting and enhance a story's immediacy	• Is music used to create a particular mood? Does it suggest a particular attitude towards the show's content (e.g. by conveying lightheartedness or urgency)? • Does music create a context for an event, person, time or place? • What is the purpose and impact of any sound effects used?
Language • can range from being direct and informative to emotive and expressive • is used to suit the speaker's purpose, e.g. to convey information calmly and clearly, or to ignite a debate	• What persuasive language techniques are used in the presentation of a story or issue? For example, is the story discussed in emotive language? In a sarcastic tone? In a reasoned and logical manner? • Is the style of language formal or informal? How does it reflect the show's content and target audience?
Viewpoint • the attitude or opinion held by a person or group • usually relates to the particular topic or issue being considered	• Whose viewpoint is being presented? • Is a range of views presented? • Are any significant voices missing from the story? For example, a discussion of raising the legal drinking age might feature interviews with police, parents and politicians, but none with teenagers directly affected by the law.

Podcasts

Podcasts are digital audio texts, usually presented as a series of episodes, that can be listened to on a computer or mobile device. Podcasts might focus on a single topic, such as a particular criminal case or historical event; these are often structured as short series of six to ten episodes. Others have a broader focus, such as current affairs or books, and can run for years. Some podcasts belong to the fiction or drama genre.

Podcasts often present information and opinions on news and current events. Presenters may craft stories to convey a particular perspective or point of view on an issue, and they might use subtly or highly persuasive language to position an audience to agree.

The key features to consider when you are analysing a podcast are outlined below.

Feature	Questions to consider
Presenter/s	• Does the presenter have journalistic training or particular credentials related to the subject of the podcast? • Do they have a personal connection to or vested interest in the topic? • Does the presenter express a clear opinion on the topic? How is their attitude conveyed by their language and tone?
Research	• How thoroughly has the presenter researched the subject? • Which sources of information or opinion does the presenter draw on? How reliable are these sources?
Guests/interviewees	• Does the podcast include quotes, interviews or opinions from people other than the main presenter? • Which perspectives are omitted from the podcast? Why might this be?
Sound effects/music	• Does the podcast include music or sound effects? If so, how do they contribute to its mood and style? • Are music or sound effects used to establish context, provide more information or support the presenter's point of view? How?
Language	• Is the podcast scripted or unscripted? • Does the presenter use mostly neutral or persuasive language? • How does the presenter's language cater to the needs and preferences of the target audience?

Television shows

Television shows use a wide variety of elements to convey meaning, including spoken and written words, images and sound.

While these text types have their origins in television broadcasts, they are now commonly viewed through streaming services on computers, tablets and other devices, as well as on television. Additionally, many streaming services create their own content that is only available through their app or service.

News and current affairs

Television news and current affairs depend upon compelling live and recorded footage to attract viewers. This footage can make it seem as though the viewer is witnessing events as they really happened. In fact, both footage and stories are carefully selected and edited.

Here are some of the questions that might determine whether or not a television news or current affairs item is included in the show.

- Is the information new and current?
- Is the footage compelling?
- Is the topic of the story memorable and/or visually appealing?
- Does the story appeal to a wide audience?
- Would the story evoke strong emotion in the audience? Would it make them cry, laugh or feel outraged?

Analysing news and current affairs shows

Important features and questions to consider when analysing television news and current affairs shows are outlined below.

Feature	Questions to consider
Backdrops • placed behind the newsreader or presenter to provide a visual context	• What colours or images are used? Why have these been selected? • What mood does the backdrop create?
Set • includes desks, chairs, television screens and equipment such as a laptop computer • often not visually prominent but important in creating the show's style and tone	• How is the set arranged? Is the presenter seated at a desk? What does this arrangement suggest about the role of the newsreader or presenter? • What other elements are included on the set? What atmosphere does the set create?
Light and sound • create a mood • as part of a story, can give a sense of being on location • includes the show's theme music and the background music for individual stories	• Is the lighting dim or bright and what mood does this create? • Is music used to accompany a story? Why do you think that particular piece of music was chosen? • How does the theme music establish the show's style and authority?
Newsreaders or presenters • establish the tone and style of the show • signal the tone of a story (e.g. serious or light-hearted) through facial expression and tone of voice • often extremely important to the show's profile and following	• What image does the newsreader or presenter convey to the audience? Consider their clothes, make-up, age, voice and body language. • What is their manner and what does this convey to the viewer about their attitude towards the subject?
'Talking heads' (experts on a topic) and eyewitness accounts • present or support a viewpoint • help to create the impression that the show is presenting a true and accurate version of events or a situation	• Whose viewpoints are sought and how much time is given to alternative perspectives? • Is an expert opinion included? Why? • What effect do eyewitness accounts have on the viewer's understanding of an event?

Other television text types

The table below outlines the key features of a variety of other television text types.

Text type and example	Definition	Features
Documentary e.g. *Planet Earth*	presents information about a person, place, situation or issue in a factual manner	• may include interviews, a narrative voice-over and archival footage • may include music and other sound effects • can either be intended to be watched in a single viewing or divided into episodes designed to be screened separately • may be released as a feature film before being broadcast by a television network or on a streaming service
Drama e.g. *The Wire*	serious, scripted fiction	• features dramatic and emotionally charged storylines • can be a series with recurring central characters, or a one-off program • may use music to accompany key dramatic moments
Mockumentary e.g. *The Office*	a combination of the terms 'mock' and 'documentary'; comedy presented as though it were a documentary but portraying fictitious events and characters	• often satirical or parodic • mimics the features of documentaries and may include interviews, archival footage, music and a voice-over
Reality television program e.g. *MasterChef*	unscripted show featuring non-actors in real-life situations; often a competition	• concept is created by producers • 'characters' are not actors but ordinary people being themselves • cast members are placed in situations engineered by producers • carefully edited to impose a narrative structure on real-life events, and to present people in certain ways

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Text type and example	Definition	Features
Sitcom e.g. *Friends*	short for situation comedy; humorous episodic fiction with a storyline and a cast of recurring characters	• may feature a 'laugh track' – recorded audience laughter played after every joke • usually structured around 30-minute self-contained episodes
Soapie e.g. *Neighbours*	short for soap opera; an ongoing episodic serial drama	• features highly dramatic and emotional storylines • can have highly complex plots, which evolve over months or years • centred on a few regular main characters

Analysing other television text types

Analysis of any of the above television text types requires considering key features that are common to the news and current affairs shows previously considered. These include:

- setting
- background
- sound
- lighting
- language
- actors, hosts or participants.

In addition, many television text types are also examples of **narrative fiction**. For example, soapies, dramas and sitcoms all include such features as plot, character and themes. Even documentaries and reality television can use these elements to impose a recognisable structure on material drawn from real life. For example, footage for a reality television show might be carefully selected and edited in order to depict one participant as the 'good guy' and another as the 'bad guy', increasing the perceived dramatic tension and heightening viewer interest. (For more information on analysing the features of narrative fiction, see Section 4: Literary analysis.)

Speeches

A speech is an oral text delivered to a public audience. Speeches may be informative or persuasive; they can be about public issues or personal experiences. Important speeches by a monarch, president or prime minister can be televised or broadcast to the nation, for example, at a time of national significance or when an important political decision is taken (such as to enter a war).

Speakers can use a range of techniques to engage or persuade an audience. In addition to considering content, a speech analysis should take into account the following features.

Feature	Questions to consider
Appearance	• How does the speaker's appearance and clothing relate to their audience and purpose? For example, they might wear a suit for an audience of businesspeople, to convey seriousness and authority. By contrast, a speaker at a rally to protest against the cruelty of the meat industry could communicate their sincerity by wearing natural fibres and avoiding leather. • What do other decisions about their appearance convey? Consider make-up, hairstyle, grooming, accessories, and so on.
Body language and gestures	• What messages are conveyed by the speaker's body language? For example, does the speaker thump a hand on the lectern to show conviction, or raise two hands in the air to communicate a sense of victory? Or do they keep their hands in their pockets and their head bowed, suggesting untrustworthiness? • How do the speaker's facial expressions convey their attitude towards the topic? Do they smile frequently to engage the audience, or do they maintain a serious expression to convey authority?
Language	• Which language register does the speaker use? Do they use formal language to create an air of authority? Or do they employ more informal language to encourage the audience to relate to them as an equal? • Which language devices does the speaker use to position the audience to respond in specific ways? Popular techniques include humour, anecdote, inclusive language, repetition and rhetorical questions.
Voice	• How does the speaker modulate their voice to convey feeling? For instance, do they talk loudly and emphatically to convey passion? Or do they speak in a calm tone to suggest that they are arguing logically and rationally? • Does the speaker's tone or pitch change at any point in their speech? What effect are they aiming to create with this change?

Internet texts

CHAPTER
11

An internet text is any spoken, written or visual text that appears on the internet. Most internet texts combine elements of all three of these modes by featuring sound, still and/or moving images and the written word.

A key feature of internet texts is their interactive nature. For instance, online newspapers allow readers to post comments about news stories and even to contribute their own photographs and other material to the site. Similarly, followers of a blog can leave comments for the writer, who can reply in the same way, while many websites feature forums or chat rooms where users can talk to each other.

This chapter defines the main internet text types and outlines their key features. It also provides questions to consider when analysing internet texts.

Internet text types

Many internet texts are informative, while others have the primary purpose of persuading the reader or viewer to agree with a particular opinion. Common internet text types include the following.

- **Blogs** are online journals in which the writers can share details of their lives and their personal opinions. Many blogs also allow readers to contribute comments, generating a wider discussion. News and commercial websites often include a blog section in which various staff or freelance writers can present their opinions on current issues. A video blog is known as a vlog.
- **Forums and messageboards** enable people to post messages and exchange views and ideas. There are forums for both general and subject-specific discussions. Posts on a particular issue are sometimes highly opinionated.

- **Social networking services**, as the name suggests, have the primary purpose of facilitating social interaction. They are discussed in more detail on pages 170–1.
- **Wikis** allow any internet user to contribute content to a web page. They enable information and opinions to be shared but their content may not be scrutinised for accuracy or balance.

Analysing internet texts

Features to consider when analysing internet texts are summarised in the following table.

Feature	Questions to consider
Audio, speech or music	• Does the site feature sound? What is the purpose of the sound? • What atmosphere is created by the choice of music or other aural effects?
Design elements	• What are the main colours used on the site? What are some of the main associations of these colours? • How would you describe the overall appearance of the site? Is it minimalist, with few images, little text and clean lines? Or is it 'busy', with many competing colours, images and design elements such as borders and pullout text? • How does the site's appearance complement its content? • How effectively do the design elements and layout of the home page lead you to explore or use the rest of the website?
Images	• Does the site include diagrams, drawings, cartoons or photographs? • Why have these been included? Is their primary purpose to provide information or to contribute to the design aesthetic? • What effects are these images intended to have on the audience? What do they encourage viewers to think or feel? • What is the relationship between these visual features and the written text on the site? Are they closely related? Do the images support an argument or point of view expressed in the text? Do they provide extra information?
Video	• Does the site contain video content? What is the subject of the video? • How does the video content relate to the topic or purpose of the site?
Sources	• Where has content on the site been drawn from? Is it clear which content has been created by the owner of the website and which has been taken or adapted from other sources? • Does the creator of the website identify the sources of facts, statistics or other information? How accurate and up to date are these?

Social networking services

A social networking service enables users to communicate online by posting messages, sharing photographs or videos, or chatting in 'real' time. Some social networking services are based on a shared interest, while others are open to a broad audience. Popular social networking services include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. Many social media services are accessible via dedicated apps as well as through a web browser.

In addition to facilitating informal social communication, social networking services also play an important role in terms of 'serious' news. The contributions of social networking services to news can be divided into three broad areas.

- Many platforms allow users to form groups based on shared interests. Political groups and other organisations can share information and recruit members through social networking services, which provide a forum for these groups to discuss issues and develop a support base.
- Social networking services are a means of distributing information. For instance, Twitter enables users to post and read each others' short messages or 'tweets'. Although not designed as a source of information about current affairs, Twitter has played a significant role in transmitting information during such major events as the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the reasons that social networking services are so influential during such events is that users can send and receive information instantly, and individuals caught up in major events can describe their experiences to millions of people all over the world.
- As relatively new forms of media and because of their huge popularity, social networking services are often the subject of news stories in other media, such as newspapers and magazines. Issues such as the need for greater moderation or control over user-created content, the effect of these services on the way we communicate and concerns about the privacy of posted information have all been discussed in the broader media.

The relationship between social networking services and traditional media such as newspapers is highly reciprocal: news stories and issues arising in one form will inevitably be taken up and discussed in the others. Immediacy is an extremely important factor in the news, and accounts and images of events are often uploaded to social networking platforms even as they are happening. Conventional news agencies can then incorporate these reports and images in breaking stories, giving them wider coverage and significance, and sometimes contradicting the 'official' version of events.

The key features to consider when you are analysing social media services are outlined below.

Feature	Questions to consider
Design elements	• What does the social media service look like? Is it clean and easy to use, or busy and difficult to navigate? What are the main colours used, and what are these colours associated with? • How does the platform's appearance complement its content? • Which design elements can users control?
Interactivity	• How can users interact with the content on the service? • How many people will a post reach? How might this shape decisions about a post's contents? Can users or moderators limit or expand the reach of certain content?
Content	• Does the platform place any constraints on the content users can post? How might this affect the content? • What forms of content can be posted – text/video/images? Why might someone choose one or more of these mediums?
Community	• Does the social media service give users the ability to customise the content they see? • Can people stratify into smaller communities? How might that affect content?
Language	• Is the register of the language used generally formal or informal? • How does the language vary, depending on both the writer and the target audience? • What non-standard language features are used (e.g. emojis)?

Newspaper texts

CHAPTER 12

Newspapers are still the primary source of information about current events for many people. Whether published in print or online, newspaper texts are subject to careful processes of selection, editing and presentation. This chapter examines these processes and their impact on how the news is created, distributed and received. It also provides questions to consider when analysing newspaper texts.

Producing the news

Whether producing print or online newspapers, or both, the business of news organisations is selling. Companies and organisations will choose to place their advertisements in newspapers with wider circulation or more online visitors, and this in turn brings revenue and profits to the newspaper owners.

Newspapers are produced by organisations. Usually one or two main players dominate in any given market, and continually work to maintain and strengthen their position. For example, in Australia two corporations own the majority of news outlets: News Corp, which owns around 64 per cent of news publications, including *The Australian* and the *Herald Sun*; and Nine Entertainment, which owns around 26 per cent market share, including *The Age* newspaper and the website 9News.com.au. Other newspapers (including independent or foreign-language ones) have smaller, niche readerships and are much more vulnerable to shifts in the ways that people read and access the news.

Because newspapers have an economic imperative to generate profits, there is enormous pressure to produce a certain amount of daily content regardless of what is happening in the world. Newspaper news and issues are thus subject to selection and 'packaging' – a process often referred to as 'manufacturing the news'. The editor decides what is newsworthy and what will sell print copies of the paper or attract digital subscribers. Stories accompanied by a compelling photograph are more likely to appear on the front page or earlier in a printed newspaper, or nearer the top of the home page of an online newspaper, than stories without associated visual material.

Bias in the news

While journalists are supposed to be careful to get the facts right, they still have to present the news in a way that will engage readers' attention and generate sufficient daily content. Here are some major factors that mean the news cannot really be free of bias.

- **News stories and reports** cater to the characteristics and preferences of the newspaper's readership – their education level, interests, prejudices and concerns.
- **Editors** set the agenda by deciding which news stories will be used each day and their order of importance. These decisions are affected by:
  - the news editor's viewpoints on issues
  - their professional judgement and experience
  - what the competitors are doing
  - pressure from newspaper owners for business or personal reasons
  - the political bias of the newspaper.
- **News sources** can be limited and selective. Journalists rely principally on their regular 'official' or 'expert' sources. This means the news often reflects the views and concerns of the most powerful people or organisations in society. The views of ordinary people, or of minority or alternative groups, are less frequently presented. If they are included it is sometimes in a negative light, with those individuals being depicted, for instance, as radical protesters, criminals, or negligent and irresponsible in some other way.
- **Complex information or events** are often reduced to easily understood 'news bites'. This means issues can be presented in an overly simplistic manner, with individuals or groups stereotyped to fit into a formulaic story of good/bad, right/wrong, hero/villain etc. This is particularly evident in the coverage of complex issues such as climate change or refugees.
- **The journalist's own viewpoint** on the issue or story may influence how they present it as news.
- **Journalists and editors may avoid offending** or undermining businesses that advertise in the paper. For example, a newspaper might avoid giving prominence to negative stories about companies that are vital to its advertising revenue.
- **Journalists might omit or downgrade** the importance of a news story because of pressure from the government or other powerful players who want to ensure that the issue doesn't become part of a prominant public debate. »

- **Newspapers** often use the device of presenting opposing viewpoints on an issue to appear balanced. For example, a statement from the opposition leader may be used to balance one from the prime minister. However, other viewpoints and information on the issue might still be omitted.
- While the paper's **opinion pages** can publish alternative views and counter bias with the opinions of specialists – for example, in online comments and letters to the editor – they are not as powerful as news stories, particularly those on the front page, which shape the dominant public view. These contributions are also subject to vetting, meaning that more extreme or controversial opinions or ideas might still be excluded.

Constructing newspaper articles

Journalists are trained to use a number of conventions for constructing newspaper articles. These engage readers and enable the quick preparation of news stories. They include:

- **a narrator** (journalist) who controls the flow of narrative for the reader
- **an emotional hook** designed to capture the reader's attention, arouse curiosity and evoke particular emotions – especially evident in headlines and the first sentence of the article
- **a problem or enigma** (puzzle) that the story will solve for the reader
- **placing the most important information or point first** – in the introduction or lead paragraph – often in larger font and bold; sometimes journalists also sum up the story in the first paragraph, then use following paragraphs to elaborate on the main points
- **other points ordered** from most to least important
- **short, one-sentence paragraphs** that make it easy to take in information
- **quotations** from witnesses and interviewees that add authenticity and human interest
- **picture/s** to attract the reader's attention; a good photo can mean a news story is selected ahead of others.

Types of newspapers

While newspapers were traditionally a print medium, now almost all newspapers also, or exclusively, publish content online. Often, the full range of online content is accessible only to paying subscribers.

There are several important differences between online news and the news in print, summarised in the table below.

Print newspapers	Online newspapers
Content is fixed after it is printed.	Content changes throughout the day.
Attention-grabbing images and photographs are often included.	In addition to still images, video news stories and slideshows may be used.
Supplementary sections that vary according to the day of the week might include television guides, lifestyle magazines or cooking lift-outs.	Alternative extra content can include blogs from regular writers, forums for readers to discuss issues and a search function for finding articles on a specific topic.
Front pages usually contain headlines and brief extracts of articles, with page references for the full articles. They also often include prominent, striking images. On the inside pages, articles usually appear in full directly under their headlines, although some stories are concluded on a later page of the paper.	Headlines and brief extracts of articles appear on the home page; the full article is accessed by clicking on these. Online articles are sometimes shortened versions of their print equivalents.
Readers can respond to stories by sending in letters to the editor.	Many online newspaper sites allow readers to respond to stories immediately by posting comments and engaging in discussion with other readers and, occasionally, with writers.

Newspaper text types

A newspaper contains many different sorts of articles or text types, some of which are outlined below.

News reports

News reports are informative articles on important or interesting recent events. They may inform the reader about political, economic or social developments; selected activities of public figures; issues of public concern; or noteworthy crimes or incidents.

Purpose	Features	Language
• to introduce new information of social and political interest to readers • to present relevant information in an accurate and balanced manner	• do not express an explicit opinion • have a headline and sometimes a subheading • may be accompanied by visual material such as a photograph or table • may include eyewitness testimony and expert evidence to support the factual account	• have an objective and unemotional tone • do not use personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'we' • generally use formal, sophisticated language

Feature articles

Feature articles are longer than news reports and examine a particular subject or issue in greater depth. They usually present multiple points of view on a topic but may promote a particular 'side'.

Purpose	Features	Language
• to examine a topic or issue of social interest in depth • to present a point of view on an issue	• longer than a news report • focus on a specific topic and use facts, evidence and expert opinion to present the topic • have a headline and may have one or more subheadings • usually present multiple sides to an issue • may express a personal opinion on the issue • use interviews and quotations • may be accompanied by visual material such as photographs or graphs	• more expressive and varied than in a news report • may use persuasive language techniques • may use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we'

Editorials

Editorials are written by a newspaper's senior editor or group of senior editors to express the newspaper's collective point of view on an issue. They are often designed to sway public opinion as well as the opinions of decision-makers in society.

Purpose	Features	Language
• to state clearly the paper's official position on an issue • to sum up viewpoints on complex matters • to give a moral position on complex matters • to persuade the reader to agree with the newspaper's position on the issue	• have a clear contention • use facts and evidence to support the argument • have a headline and sometimes a subheading • include background to the debate • usually give an overview of the key arguments for both sides • often suggest what the public 'should' think about the issue • often give a moral position for the public to consider or adopt	• have an objective and authoritative tone • may use personal pronouns such as 'we' and 'us' to refer to the collective views of the newspaper, but never use 'I' • generally use formal, sophisticated language but may use more informal language, depending on the newspaper's readership

Opinion pieces

An opinion or comment piece gives one person's point of view on a current issue. It is often written by an expert in a particular area, or by someone with standing in the community (e.g. a politician).

Purpose	Features	Language
• to present an opinion or viewpoint on an issue • to persuade the reader to agree with the writer's opinion	• vary in length and the extent to which the issue is explored in depth • can cover a wide range of subject matter, including current events and recurring general interest issues	• openly persuasive • usually formal and serious, but can be more relaxed and personal • usually sophisticated vocabulary • may use personal pronouns such as 'you', 'I' and 'we'

Letters to the editor / Online comments

Letters to the editor and online comments enable members of the general public to express their own responses to and opinions on news events and issues.

Purpose	Features	Language
• to provide a forum for people to express their views on recent issues or events • to enable discussion between members of the public • to generate discussion for and against an issue over several days	• deliberately persuasive • usually give one clear viewpoint on a current issue • usually short and to the point	• letters more likely to use formal language; comments more likely to use informal language • use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'we' • may use highly emotive language

Cartoons

Cartoons use images with a few words (or no words) to take a humorous approach to a serious issue. They offer an opinion on an issue in the news. A cartoon can appear straightforward, but is often very complex.

When analysing cartoons, consider:

- words in captions
- words in speech balloons
- the use of colour

For more information on analysing cartoons, see pages 154–5.

- symbols
- the use of tone in white, grey and black
- facial expressions of characters
- the way in which a well-known figure is drawn, e.g. using exaggerated physical features.

Purpose	Features	Language
• to comment on issues with humour and wit • to present a point of view • to persuade the reader to accept the cartoonist's viewpoint	• exaggeration • humour • can include a caption and/or speech bubbles	• highly persuasive visual language • humorous • text and image work together to make a point

Photographs

Photographs have immediate impact. They draw attention to the article they are linked to and can also tell a story by themselves.

The impact of a photograph can be maximised by:

- the use of a particular camera angle in taking the photograph
- the use of colour and light
- cropping (excluding parts of) an image
- digitally manipulating an image
- placing the photograph in a certain position on the page
- using a caption or accompanying article to direct the reader's attention to an issue.

For more information on analysing photographs, see pages 148–53.

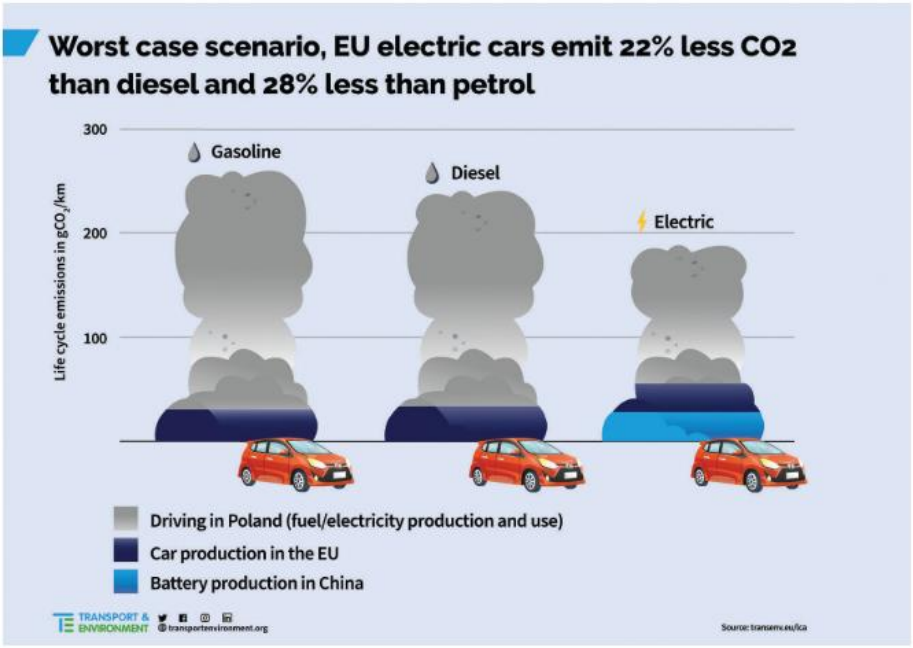
This image tells a story. What is your interpretation?

The table below describes some purposes, features and language used in photographs.

Purpose	Features	Language
• to attract the reader with a striking visual depiction of a story • to subtly present a point of view by showing the subject in a certain way	• a caption describing the content of the photograph • deliberate use of techniques such as camera angles, lighting, focus, digital manipulation	• often emotive and/or persuasive visual language • text and image work together to make a point

Graphs, charts and tables

Graphs, charts and tables often accompany newspaper articles. They provide a clear visual presentation of information, but they may also have a subtle persuasive purpose.



A graph is a visual representation of data but can also be used to show relationships. This graph compares the CO_2 emissions of electric, diesel and petrol cars.

Questions to consider when analysing graphs, charts or tables include the following.

- What is the source of the information or statistics presented? Is this source likely to be unbiased, or does it have a particular point of view to promote?
- What information has been omitted?
- Has the information been presented in a way that is likely to persuade the viewer to accept a particular point of view? For instance, a graph or chart showing the road toll might make dramatic use of red and black colours to suggest that reducing the toll is an urgent matter.

Purpose	Features	Language
• to provide evidence • to present information in a clear visual way	• may use colour to present information • may include images • may include a title, caption or other text	• often use persuasive visual language • rely on statistics and other numerical information • appear to be factual, therefore true • work with an article to present a viewpoint on an issue

Analysing newspaper texts

Analysing a newspaper text means more than identifying the information, ideas or opinion being presented, although that is always an important starting point. It also means understanding *how* the writer uses language (visuals as well as words) to present a viewpoint that the reader will see as interesting, credible and persuasive. The table below outlines the main features and key questions to consider when analysing newspaper texts.

Feature	Questions to consider
Headline	• What does the headline suggest about the subject of the article? Does it convey a point of view on this subject? • Is the headline dramatic, humorous, serious or emotive? How does it engage the reader's attention?
Main subject	• What is the main subject of the article? • How do you know this?
Text type	• What text type is the piece? Editorial? News report? Opinion piece? • What is the primary purpose of this text type? To inform? To persuade? To analyse?

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Feature	Questions to consider
Any pullout text or quotations	• What does this highlighted text suggest is the most important aspect of the article? • What perspective or idea is emphasised by highlighted text?
Any accompanying visual material	• Is the article accompanied by a photograph, cartoon, graph, chart, table or other visual material? • How does this material contribute to the ideas or opinions expressed in the written text? • What is the intended effect of the visual material on the reader? Is it intended to evoke sympathy? Reassure the reader that the writer's opinion is based on facts or statistics? Cause the reader to consider an issue from a different perspective?
Line of story/ argument	• What are the main points made in the article? • What examples, arguments and evidence does the writer use to support each main point? • Does the story or argument flow logically from one point to the next? Does it lead to a strong conclusion or take-away message?
Tone	• What is the main tone of the piece? For example, is it serious, thoughtful, reasonable, calm, outraged, aggressive, mocking? • Which particular words or phrases help to convey this tone? • Does the tone change at any point? What is the intended effect of this shift in tone?
Point of view	• What is the writer's point of view on the subject? Is this clearly expressed or is it conveyed subtly? Which particular words or phrases indicate the writer's point of view? • Does the writer have a particular interest or background in the topic they are writing on? If so, what effect might this have on their research, evidence or argument?
Language	• How would you describe the language used in the piece? Think especially about the language register: formal, standard or informal. • What sort of language techniques can you identify? Does the writer employ, for example, humour, analogies or emotional appeals to make their point?

Evaluating media texts

CHAPTER
13

To 'evaluate' means to assess the worth of something. In order to evaluate a media text, you need to consider both the content of the text and the way in which the content is presented. An evaluation will consider the effectiveness of all elements with regard to how well they enable the text to achieve its intended purpose.

In this chapter the process of evaluating a media text is divided into two parts: evaluating the way in which the content is presented, and evaluating the arguments used to present and support a point of view. Remember, however, that these elements always work together to convey ideas and to position the reader to respond in particular ways.

Evaluating presentation

Use the following questions to begin evaluating how effectively a media text conveys its message to its target audience.

- **What was the creator's purpose?** To draw attention to an issue? To present a sympathetic portrait of an individual? To evoke a particular emotional response in the audience? To persuade the audience to agree with a point of view?
- **What features or techniques work to achieve the creator's aims?** For example, does the writer use logic and reason to create a convincing argument? What persuasive techniques are used to position the reader to agree with the writer's point of view? Does a cartoon or photograph employ the symbolic use of colour to evoke associated ideas and emotions?

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- **Are there any features or techniques that work *against* the creator's aim?** For instance, is a television documentary that is intended to convey the horror of war undermined by inappropriately upbeat music? Or is a photograph that is intended to be an intimate portrait of an elderly woman made less effective because it is a high-angle shot, creating the impression that we are looking down on her?
- **How well does the text address its intended audience?** For instance, does an opinion piece on a political issue assume an appropriate level of political knowledge on the part of the reader? Or is its message so obscure and its language so sophisticated that readers might find it difficult to understand? Alternatively, is its tone patronising, explaining things to the audience that they could be assumed to know?

Evaluating arguments

In addition to evaluating the delivery and presentation of media texts, you may also be required to evaluate the arguments put forward in persuasive or argumentative texts. Use the following three-step process to identify and critique a writer or speaker's line of argument.

Step 1: Identify the main contention

The main contention is usually stated in the first paragraph of a persuasive text. Alternatively, it may appear in the final paragraph as a conclusion reached after consideration of various arguments for and against a particular point of view. You should be able to summarise the main contention in a single sentence. For instance, 'Seatbelts should be compulsory in buses' or 'The rate of climate change is accelerating'.

Decide what *type* of claim the writer's contention is. Is it an opinion? Or a question of fact? An opinion is a contention that cannot be proved or disproved. For instance, a writer arguing in favour of longer school days can't be judged 'right' or 'wrong'. However, the evidence and argument on which their opinion is based can certainly be assessed for reliability and logic. On the other hand, if a writer's claim concerns a question of fact – for example, that drivers over the age of 75 are involved in more fatal car accidents than drivers under 25 – you need to carefully consider the scope and reliability of the writer's sources of information.

Step 2: Identify the supporting arguments

What arguments or reasoning does the writer put forward in support of their contention? Rephrase these in your own words, from most important to least important.

Step 3: Test the supporting arguments

Test the validity of the supporting arguments by considering the following questions.

- Do the writer's arguments lead logically to the conclusion they have put forward? Are any of the supporting arguments irrelevant? Do any of the supporting arguments appear to support a different conclusion from the one the writer has reached?
- What assumptions or premises underlie each supporting argument? For example, if a writer's main supporting argument for their contention that seatbelts should be compulsory on buses is that this would reduce the road toll, have they provided any evidence or is it just an assumption they are making?
- Is factual evidence provided for any arguments that require it? For instance, if a writer makes a claim about a measurable quantity (e.g. the number of accidents involving buses), is numerical evidence included? If statistics are used, is a reliable source cited?
- Has the writer considered arguments against their contention? Have these counter-arguments been successfully rebutted?
- Are there missing perspectives or information that might affect the validity of the writer's conclusion?
- Does the writer reveal any biases or allegiances that might make the argument less objective? Are they likely to have an interest in promoting a particular perspective on their subject?
- Is the writer's argument undermined by logical errors such as straw man arguments (misrepresentations of opposing points of view), generalisations (drawing a broad conclusion from limited evidence), false analogies (suggesting that because two things are alike in one way, they must be alike in other important ways), or begging the question (presenting a premise in support of an argument that presupposes the argument is true)?

LITERARY{ANALYSIS?LITERARY{ANALYSIS!

SECTION 04

Literary analysis

Literary analysis is the process of closely examining a text and explaining how it presents ideas and viewpoints to a reader. Literary texts are complex and often ambiguous; they convey information and concepts by suggestion and implication, as well as by direct description. The emotional associations of a word, a place or an object can say as much about a character or event as the literal description; a symbol can add a layer of meaning to an otherwise straightforward account.

Texts affect readers on many levels – emotional, ethical, intellectual, sensual, spiritual. Consequently, two readers can respond very differently to the same text. Responses vary due to the diversity of individual tastes and preferences, variations in experience and cultural backgrounds, and the wide range of times and places in which readers live.

There can be many equally valid interpretations of what a text really means. Although interpretations of a text may vary, they must always be based on a thorough and reasoned literary analysis in order to be plausible and convincing to other readers.

This section of the *English Handbook 2nd edition* explains the key features of literary texts and the essential tools for literary analysis.

Reading, context and interpretation

CHAPTER
14

Reading a text in order to write an analysis or to develop an interpretation is a very different process from reading for pleasure. It requires a detailed knowledge, not just of the text, but also of the features and conventions used in creating that text, such as its characters, narrative voice, settings and language. When we read a text for analysis, we look beyond our personal responses and 'dig deeper' into the text's layers of meaning and the ways in which it has been constructed by the author. ('Author' here refers generally to a text's creator, which may be a novelist, playwright, poet, biographer, film director and so on.) We also look for the broader ideas presented by a text – the themes, viewpoints and values it explores.

What is analysis?

Although a perceptive reader will grasp that there are underlying concerns and unifying patterns in a text, the task of literary analysis is to go further than this and explain *how* these patterns and concerns are constructed and conveyed to a reader or audience.

A close analysis is:

- focused on the text – it does not give a detailed account of the writer's life or extensive notes on the historical context depicted in the text
- an explanation of how content (*what* is being said) is linked to form (*how* it is being said).

When analysing a literary work, do not simply provide a summary of a novel's plot or a paraphrase of a poem. A literary analysis should be written with the assumption that the reader is familiar with the text. (An exception is a review, which requires some plot description.)

Always keep in mind the distinction between description and analysis.

- **Description** is equivalent to saying *what* happens.
- **Analysis** is equivalent to saying *how* and *why* things happen.

Genres and conventions

Texts are grouped into **forms and genres**.

- **Forms** of texts include novels, short stories, poems, plays, films, biographies and autobiographies.
- Each form can be subdivided into a number of **genres**. For example, the novel has subgroups of literary classics, science fiction, historical novels and so on.
- Each form and genre has its own set of conventions that determine how a text conveys information and ideas, and how it is understood by its readers or audiences.

Note that sometimes the term 'genre' is used to refer to the different forms of texts (e.g. novels, plays, films), and 'sub-genre' to mean the different types of novels, plays and films (e.g. science fiction, tragedy, romantic comedy). Also, when discussing poetry it is usual to refer to 'forms', such as sonnets, odes and limericks, rather than 'genres'.

Summary of conventions and features

The following tables summarise the features, conventions and key terms of the main forms of texts, and give examples of genres for each form.

Form: **Novel** – a long work of fiction (usually at least 200 pages)
Writer: **Novelist**

Main conventions	Key features	Genres	Key terms
• The narrative is divided into chapters, and usually has a clear beginning, middle and end. • The main characters are well developed and interact in complex and changing ways. • The narrative includes some depiction of the characters' social, cultural and material context.	• Characters typically include a protagonist, major characters and minor characters. • The narrative voice is usually third person or first person. • The narrative development leads to a climax (or sometimes an anticlimax).	• literary fiction • historical fiction • crime fiction • romance • science fiction • dystopian fiction • fantasy • Gothic • horror • blockbuster	• character • narrative voice • narrator • narrative structure • dialogue • plot • chapters • setting • climax • denouement • resolution

Form: **Short story** – a short work of fiction (generally up to 50 pages) usually published in a literary magazine or a book-length collection of short stories
Writer: **Short-story writer**

Main conventions	Key features	Genres	Key terms
• A short story typically focuses on a specific situation and short period of time. • It can explore one aspect of a character. • A short story can end with a swift resolution of tension, or with a feeling of uncertainty.	• Usually only one or two characters are created in detail. • There is generally a single main setting. • Language choices are highly significant due to the short story's condensed, concentrated form.	• Collections can consist of works by a single author or by multiple authors. • Collections can be based on genre (e.g. mystery stories), or on a central theme.	• character • narrative voice • narrator • setting • climax • resolution

Form: **Drama** or **play** – a story enacted on a stage for an audience; usually a work of the imagination but can be based on fact

Writer: **Dramatist** or **playwright**

Main conventions	Key features	Genres	Key terms
• The terms 'print text' (or 'play script') and 'performance text' are often used to distinguish between the written and enacted forms of a play. • A play is composed of acts and scenes; shorter plays may only have scenes. • In 20th- and 21st-century drama, characters usually talk in a realistic fashion (appropriate to their social and historical context). • In Shakespearean drama, most lines are written as poetry (in blank verse). • The play's ending usually resolves dramatic tension.	• The play script contains the characters' dialogue and the stage directions. • Characters are performed by actors. • Settings are created through the use of props, sets, lighting and sound, including background music. • Actors use gestures, facial expressions and movement to create their characters and advance the plot.	• tragedy • comedy • variations of the above (e.g. 'revenge tragedy', 'comedy of manners')	• print text • performance text • script • acts and scenes • stage • set • stage directions • characters • cast • director • lighting • props • costumes • sound effects • audience • aside • monologue • soliloquy

In a play's performance, the actors' facial expressions, body language and costumes all help to bring the story to life.

Form: **Poem** – a stylised work, focusing on language and imagery; usually short, though epic poems are as long as novels

Writer: **Poet**

Main conventions	Key features	Genres/Forms	Key terms
• A poem's 'narrator' is usually referred to as the speaker or persona. • Poems have less character and narrative development than novels. • Poetry has a strong focus on language patterns, connotations and figurative language (e.g. similes, metaphors, symbols).	• Line lengths are determined by the poet rather than by the width of the page. • Rhyme and rhythm schemes (or lack thereof) are very important to the poem's meaning. • The sound of words is often important to their sense. • A poem can focus on a single moment, image or feeling.	• epic • dramatic monologue • lyric • sonnet • ode • haiku • tanka • elegy • free verse • blank verse	• stanza • couplet • quatrain • rhyme • rhythm • metre • imagery • metaphor • simile • symbol • assonance • alliteration • personification

Form: **Biography, autobiography, memoir** – the story of part or all of a real person's life

Writer: **Biographer** for biography; otherwise **writer** or **author**

Main conventions	Key features	Genres	Key terms
• Real people and places are described; information is primarily factual rather than invented. • The narrative is mainly chronological, although flashbacks can be used.	• One person's life is at the centre of the narrative. • The narrative voice is first person for an autobiography or memoir, and third person for a biography.	• biography • autobiography • memoir	• narrative voice • narrator • setting • subject (the person whose life is being described)

Form: **Film** – a story told through moving images on a screen accompanied by a soundtrack
Creators of films: **Filmmakers**, including the director, roughly the 'author equivalent'; cinematographer; editor; and screenwriter

Main conventions	Key features	Genres	Key terms
• The mise en scène is used to create a believable 'world' for the characters. • The music soundtrack helps to create mood, suspense etc. • Feature films typically run for around two hours, and often have a strong narrative drive, especially in Hollywood cinema.	• The characters are performed by actors. • The narrative is constructed by a combination of visuals and sound (including dialogue and the music soundtrack). • Shots are edited together to tell a story. • Camera angles, distances and movements are varied to portray the characters and their settings.	• western • science fiction • horror • thriller • courtroom drama • romance • film noir • romantic comedy • documentary • mockumentary • biopic	• mise en scène • cinematography • shot • scene • edit, editing • framing • screenplay • soundtrack • director • producer • filmmakers • actors • voice-over

How conventions shape reading

When we read a novel, we know to begin at the start of the narrative and we expect to be drawn into an imaginary world of characters, objects, places and incidents that will be sustained until the end of the book. A collection of poems, stories or essays, on the other hand, has no such continuity; in this sense, a novel is more like a feature film than a collection of shorter works.

When we read a play, we realise that the words on the page are meant for performance. We know that acting techniques (gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice) as well as props, costumes, sets, sounds and lighting are all needed for a full theatrical experience of the script. Some of these features are indicated by the stage directions of the play script, but many are not.

When you are analysing a text, always keep its particular form in mind and give attention to features and conventions that are special to that form.

Historical, social and cultural contexts

Context means all aspects of an environment or setting, including human as well as physical elements. Three main kinds of contexts to consider in literary analysis are:

- social
- historical
- cultural.

These are discussed in more detail on the following pages.

It is important to be precise about what is being placed in a context. That is, there are contexts for:

- the characters and events being depicted in a text
- the author's life and work and the text's production (e.g. first publication for a novel or first performances for a play)
- the reader, and their interpretation of the text.

Contexts represented in a text

Just as we are products of the societies into which we are born and in which we live, characters in novels, plays, films and biographies are represented as products of their societies. This does not mean that a character always adopts or agrees with the conventions and dominant attitudes of their society. However, we understand that their viewpoints, attitudes and behaviour are strongly influenced by these conventions and attitudes.

The author's context

Texts are not simply products of an author's imagination and creativity. Texts (and their authors) are produced by a set of ideas, social circumstances and material conditions that are current at a particular place and time.

- The context in which an author lives and works, and in which a text is written and first published, needs to be taken into account.
- The author's context might be very close to the social and cultural milieu represented in the text; or it might – as in historical fiction or science fiction – be completely different.

The reader's context

Readers have their own contexts that significantly influence how they read, understand and are affected by a text. The reader's context can be very different from the context in which a text was initially written and received.

- If a period of several hundred years has elapsed between a text's initial publication and a contemporary reading, historical change means that the reader will have different values and attitudes from those present in a text or held by the author.
- Readers occupy different social and cultural contexts as a result of living in different parts of the world or belonging to different cultural, racial or social groups. These differences in context can lead to strongly contrasting views of a text; questions of which characters are sympathetic or unsympathetic, or whether the tone is humorous or serious, might be answered quite differently by readers whose contexts vary significantly.
- Contrasting political and social contexts can mean that a text that is embraced by one society may be censored or even banned by another.

Although it is impossible to remove ourselves from our own context when we read or view a text, we should always try to be aware of how our context influences our interpretation of a text.

Historical contexts

Every society changes with time; its underlying conventions and everyday practices are historically specific. Historical contexts come to the fore when significant changes have occurred between the writing of a text and its contemporary reading. In these cases, it is important to understand the historical context in which the work was produced, in order for it not to be assessed solely in terms of our own attitudes and beliefs.

Historical contexts also need to be considered when a text is set in an earlier period. Historical fiction views the past through the lens of the present; when an author imaginatively re-creates the past, their work is inevitably influenced by their present-day context as well as the historical context of the story.

Social contexts

The social context of an individual or group refers to the features of society that impact on their behaviour, attitudes and values. The society in which an author lives provides the social context for the creation of a text; that text, in turn, represents a social context for its characters.

Features of a society that contribute towards social context include:

- class structure and how strictly class boundaries are enforced
- how minority groups are identified and treated within the society
- how gender roles are defined and the degree of gender equality
- how children and the elderly are treated in the society
- the nature of work and opportunities to work
- the division of wealth in the society and the opportunities that exist (or do not exist) for increasing wealth
- attitudes towards different racial identities, sexualities, politics and religious faiths and practices.

Cultural contexts

'Culture' is a difficult term to define, partly because its meaning has changed significantly in the last 200 years, and partly because it has more than one common meaning. Three current, popular meanings define culture as:

- literature and the fine arts
- a particular state or stage of civilisation (e.g. ancient Greek culture)
- ways of living built up by a society or group.

Often, culture refers to the arts, including music, literature, painting, sculpture and drama. In this sense, culture has an elitist connotation: it includes 'high art' (e.g. literary classics) but excludes 'popular culture' (e.g. comic strips).

The term 'culture' is also used in a broader and more inclusive way, including television programs, computer games and the internet as part of the culture of Western society.

Culture can also refer to a way of life, which includes the social conventions, religious beliefs and cultural practices that are widely shared in a social group. The following can also be regarded as aspects of culture:

- how people identify themselves, e.g. in terms of their race, ethnicity and nationality
- the kinds of food people eat (or don't eat)
- the sports people play and follow
- times and days on which religious worship takes place
- dress codes regarded as appropriate or inappropriate
- ways of speaking to others that are regarded as proper or improper.

This broad conception of culture is now widely used in analysing literary texts.

Reading for meaning

The meaning of a text is what you are left with after you have read the text and absorbed its language and feeling; its characters and plot; its dramatic tension and resolution.

Of course, literary texts can have many meanings, and different readers will not necessarily agree about what these meanings are. Moreover, what the text means to its author may not be what its readers or audiences understand it to mean.

Nevertheless, almost all texts have strong, readily identifiable preoccupations and concerns that run through them from beginning to end. The author presents characters and settings, and arranges the sequence and type of events, in a way that reflects these broader ideas.

Literal and inferred meaning

The **literal** meaning of any text is the surface meaning: what happens, where and when it happens, and to whom. The literal meaning comes from what the text states explicitly and from the literal or dictionary meaning of words.

Inferred meanings are those understood or deduced by the reader on the basis of what the text suggests or implies. They are not as clear-cut or absolute as literal meanings, but often they are much more significant. Inferred meanings contribute to the emotional impact of a text and they create different levels or layers of meaning.

Layers of meaning

A literary text is not like a newspaper report, which aims to deliver facts and figures to the reader. In contrast, the words and images in a literary text are deliberately chosen by the author to raise additional ideas and emotions in the mind of the reader. It is in these ideas and emotions that the text's deeper meanings and significance are found. However, because these meanings are suggested or implied, readers will interpret them in different ways.

The following are four of the most important techniques used to produce layers of meaning in a text.

- **Connotations** are the associations of words. For example, the literal meaning of red is the colour, but its connotations include speed, passion and anger. Which connotation is evoked depends on the context: in 'the red sports car roared down the street', red suggests speed; but in 'the red roses glowed in the soft light', red suggests romantic passion.

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- **Symbols** are objects with a greater meaning. In F Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, a giant billboard is a symbol of a shallow, materialistic society, which can be seen as the real subject of Fitzgerald's novel.
- **Intertextuality** occurs when a text refers to other texts. This reference can be explicit (by naming another text) or implicit (e.g. by borrowing a situation, setting, character name or phrase). Intertextuality enables a text to draw meaning from other texts. For instance, a text that uses the phrase 'star-crossed lovers' makes an intertextual reference to Shakespeare's play *Romeo and Juliet*, and indicates that forbidden or thwarted love is likely to be a central concern.
- **Allegory** is the use of a relatively simple story to tell a parallel story with a wider meaning. Characters in an allegory are often representative 'types', and their experiences reflect broader human challenges and struggles. The **fable** is a similar form, often featuring animal characters (as in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*) and conveying a moral lesson.

Themes and values

A key part of literary analysis is to develop an understanding of a text's themes and values and to explain how they are presented to the reader or audience.

A **theme** is a major issue or concern that the author explores throughout a text. Examples include identity, prejudice, growing up and survival. Themes are usually presented implicitly through the narrative's events, settings and characters rather than through the author's explicit statements about an issue.

Themes are explored through different perspectives and situations, which allow the author to present a viewpoint on the theme. For example, the author may expose the harmful effects of prejudice through the behaviour of characters and the consequences of their actions.

Two main ways of stating a text's theme are:

- in a single word or short phrase, such as 'war' or 'family relationships'
- as a statement or contention, such as 'war can never be justified' or 'strong family relationships are vital to our sense of identity'.

A **value** is a quality or idea that is considered right or desirable in a society or culture. Values are widely accepted in a society and underpin the conventions and laws that bind society together.

Characters embody values through their thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and actions. We respond to characters largely by responding to the values they hold – or to the fact that they appear to have no values.

Some common values you may find in texts are:

- honesty
- personal responsibility
- equality
- freedom of expression
- compassion
- tolerance
- justice
- loyalty
- integrity
- trust.

Authors often reveal their own values through the characters or narrative viewpoint. Each character holds certain values dear; characters presented in a positive light usually share the author's values. Characters presented in a negative light often hold values that are rejected by the author.

Interpretations

An interpretation of a text gives an explanation of what that text means. It:

- draws together the various elements of a text to give a sense of the work as a whole
- presents a clear, coherent viewpoint on the text
- is supported by close analysis and detailed textual references.

An interpretation offers a 'big picture' view of a text, based on the 'small picture' detail of close analysis.

An interpretation is not simply your opinion about whether you enjoyed reading a text, or whether it is 'good' or 'bad'. While there is no single correct reading or interpretation of a text, it is important to understand that an interpretation is more than a personal opinion – it is a justification of a point of view on the text.

Different interpretations

There are many different possible interpretations of a text, and people have argued over the meaning and significance of literature since the first literary works were performed and published. Over time, there will be a wide range of responses to a text, which can be published in newspapers, journals and books. Different views of a text are also expressed and debated in book groups, on websites and in classroom discussions.

One reason that readers have contrasting responses to a text is that they can come from different social or cultural groups and live in very different places and times. Even readers from within the same social group will have different tastes, expectations, educational backgrounds and life experiences. All these factors influence how a reader responds to a text, and the meanings it has for them.

Readers also develop different interpretations by reading a text in more than one way. Literary theories enable readers to view a text from a range of perspectives, which can lead to complementary or conflicting interpretations. Although it can be helpful to have a general understanding of these theories, especially in advanced literary studies, it is possible to develop different interpretations simply by placing a different emphasis on various characters, incidents, words and images. It is always useful to identify your own or others' underlying assumptions, since varying these can help to create or understand new perspectives on a text.

Underlying assumptions

All interpretations are based on assumptions about how a text creates meaning and conveys ideas to a reader or audience. Think about the following types of assumptions when you are developing an interpretation or looking at other people's readings of a text.

- **Assumptions about genre:** for example, an interpretation might make an assumption about which genre the text belongs to, and make judgements about whether the text conforms to or subverts the conventions of that genre. Does the interpretation assume the text's meaning is largely determined by its genre?
- **Assumptions about language and technique:** for example, an interpretation might focus on the use of imagery; the narrative voice; or the tone and style of the language. What importance does the interpretation place on style? Does the interpretation assume that the reader will agree or sympathise with the narrative point of view?
- **Assumptions about values:** for example, a critic might interpret the values of characters or the author's implied values in a particular way, and make assumptions about how these correspond to the reader's values. Does the interpretation suggest that the depiction of certain characters is, for instance, racist or sexist?
- **Assumptions about the writer's identity or reputation:** for example, an interpretation might be affected by knowledge of the writer's previous critical or commercial success, or their work in other genres or other professional fields. Does, or should, the status of the writer influence the interpretation of a text?

Literary theories

Literary theories, sometimes called critical theories, provide the reader with a range of frameworks for reading and interpreting a text. Some theories allow the reader to identify extra layers of meaning, highlighting the rich and complex nature of the text. Other theories allow the reader to critique (argue against) or endorse the way it represents members of some social groups, such as women, working-class people, members of minority ethnic groups or First Nations peoples.

Some common readings that draw on specific literary theories are summarised below.

- **Feminist** readings look at how gender identity and gender roles are portrayed. They look critically at suggestions that women are inherently less important or capable than men. They also challenge assumptions about the qualities and behaviours assumed to be inherently masculine or feminine.
- **Marxist** readings look at how characters from different social classes are represented. They also examine the text's viewpoint on inequalities of wealth and power in society.
- **Psychoanalytic** readings look closely at psychological elements, such as anxiety, repression, dreams and desire. They also look for repetitions, gaps and silences, which reflect the workings of the unconscious. These elements can be evident in the behaviour of characters, or in the structure of the text as a whole.
- **Postcolonial** readings look at how people in colonised or formerly colonised nations are represented. They consider traditional texts and critique those that suggest colonised peoples were weaker or simpler; they value the perspectives of, and texts produced by, members of colonised cultures.
- **Postmodern** readings consider how a text can be ambiguous (uncertain in meaning) or have multiple meanings, and often question the meaning of a text that is regarded by many readers as 'true' or 'correct'.
- **New Historicist** readings examine the connections between a text and the society in which it was created. They look at ways in which the text is a product of the society and might also have contributed to the attitudes and ideas circulating in that society.
- **Queer** readings look for non-normative depictions of gender and sexuality, and place pressure on conventional ideas of gender and identity.
- **Ecocritical** readings examine how texts represent aspects of the environment (both natural and human-made), looking critically at forces that have a negative impact on the natural world.

Developing your own interpretation

Many literary texts have been read and analysed numerous times, so it can be difficult to find something original to say about them. Use these tips to help you develop your own interpretation.

- **Bring your own responses to the text.** These will reflect your own unique combination of life experiences and your cultural and social contexts.
- **Use the strategies and techniques of close analysis to develop your own unique reading.** Focus on the particular words, phrases, images and scenes that strike you as most interesting or surprising, and work outwards to the wider meaning of the text.
- **Read the text several times.** When you re-read, you will notice things that initially escaped your attention. These are the less obvious features of the text that an interpretation can draw into the foreground, enhancing the originality of your writing.
- **Read other people's viewpoints about a text.** This will give you a sense of the main ideas readers have discussed and their attitudes towards the text. Do you agree with what has been said? Can you think of other points to make?
- **Talk to others who have read the text.** Class discussions in particular can be extremely useful in clarifying your ideas – they provide a live exchange of views and show up points of difference between your own responses and those of others.

Novels, short stories and nonfiction

CHAPTER
15

Novels and short stories are works of prose fiction. A *novel* is a long work – usually more than 200 pages. A *short story* is generally about 20 pages long, though it can vary from just two or three pages up to 50 or 60. Longer works of around 100–200 pages are known as *novellas*. These forms represent the thoughts, feelings, hopes, memories and experiences of imaginary characters. They can explore the concerns of societies in the present day, the past or even (in speculative fiction) the future. They invite readers to see the world from new and diverse perspectives, sometimes closely reflecting the real world, and sometimes imagining new realities.

Biographies, autobiographies and *memoirs* are nonfiction narratives. They use many of the same techniques and features as novels and short stories, but they represent the experiences of real people.

Structure and plot

The **structure** of a novel or short story refers to the way in which the whole narrative is built out of smaller units or sections. **Chapters** are the most common units of narrative content within a novel. They are sometimes grouped together in 'books' or 'parts' to indicate larger subsections of the narrative. Breaks between chapters usually indicate a significant change or shift, such as a break in time, a new phase in the protagonist's life or a switch to another narrative thread.

The **plot** arranges the story events into an order that generates interest, surprise, suspense and relief. Novels can also have a subplot, which is a less important plot that involves minor characters and intersects with the main plot at key points.

Linear and nonlinear narratives

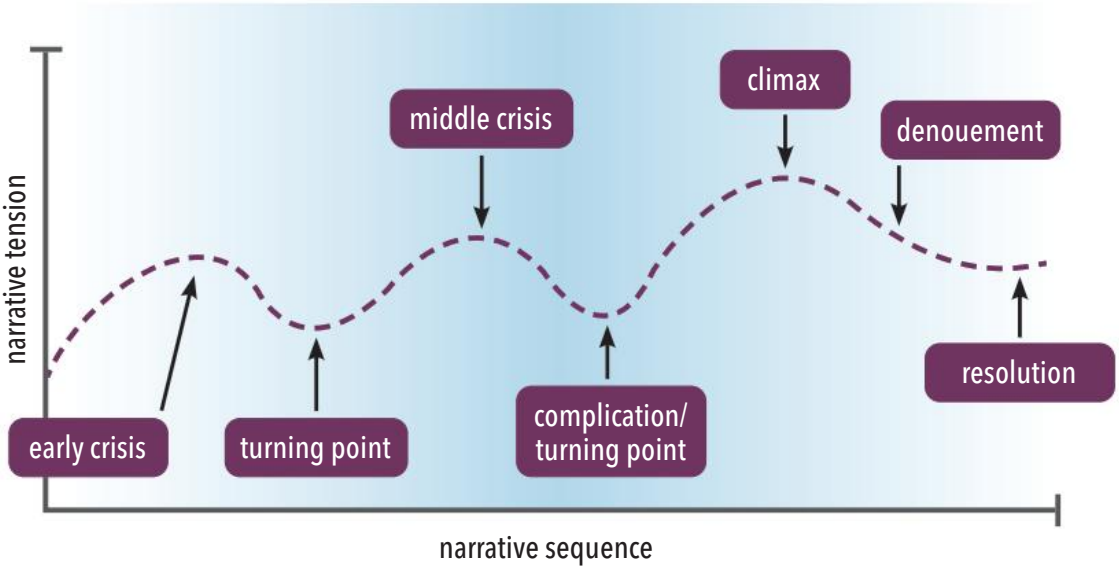
A **linear narrative** proceeds in a chronological fashion, building in tension and developing towards a climax. In linear or chronological narration, the order in which events are related to the reader is the same as the order in which they occur in the world of the characters.

In contrast, a **nonlinear narrative** tells the story events out of order. For example, it might begin in the middle or even near the end of the story, and then shift back in time and move forwards chronologically.

Key points for narrative structure

The following are four key points in narrative structure.

- **A turning point** is a major change in direction, carrying the narrative towards its climax, or a point after which there is a subtle but significant shift in the options available to characters.
- **The climax** is the point of greatest tension – a moment of crisis, usually towards the end of the narrative.
- **The denouement** (a French word meaning 'unknotting') is the series of events immediately following the climax; it untangles narrative threads and allows conflicts and uncertainties to be resolved.
- **The resolution** follows the denouement; it relaxes narrative tension and produces a sense of closure.



Settings

The setting of a text refers to the time and place in which the events of a story occur.

- Novels can be set in many locations and over a long time frame, possibly many decades.
- Short stories tend to be more compact, focusing on one or two settings and a shorter time frame (perhaps only a day).

The description of a setting can create a physical sense of place; it can also convey information about the psychological states of characters.

Physical settings

The place or places represented in a text are more than a backdrop to the action. Many of a text's main ideas, images and values are developed in relation to the setting. Settings are often contrasted in order to develop a central tension or difference.

Typical contrasts include:

- city and country
- inland and coast
- north and south.

Psychological and symbolic aspects

Settings can function as:

- psychological projections of a character's mental state
- symbolic representations of a character's situation or the state of a society.

For example, a severe storm often reflects emotional turmoil or social instability; a heavy mist or fog can suggest the truth is being obscured; heavy walls and gates could indicate a fear of invasion or outsiders; a very tidy and clean house can signal conformity to social conventions and expectations.

Narrative voice

The narrator is the person or voice who tells the story. In most novels and short stories, the narrative voice is one of the following:

- third person omniscient
- third person limited
- first person.

Some novels have more than one narrator, which enables the novelist to present contrasting perspectives. Remember that the narrator or narrative voice in a novel or short story is just as much a construct as the characters – it is simply a device used by the author to tell a story and convey a particular view of the world.

Third-person omniscient narration

An omniscient narrator knows everything about the characters and everything that happens in the world of the text: omniscient means 'all knowing'. Such a narrator is able to take the reader into the consciousness – the private thoughts and feelings – of any of the characters.

Note that there is a crucial distinction between *knowing* everything and *telling* everything. Even omniscient narrators withhold information and, by doing so, they can generate effects such as suspense, concern, anticipation, pathos and humour.

Third-person limited narration

A third-person limited narrative presents characters and circumstances as they are experienced and perceived by a particular character. This means the reader's knowledge of events and of the other characters is limited to what the narrator sees and knows.

The author can use third-person limited narration to shift the narrative perspective from one character to another; this enables contrasting or even conflicting viewpoints to be presented. However, there is no external, objective perspective to indicate which view is more 'correct'.

First-person narration

A first-person narrative presents the world of the text exclusively from one character's perspective. The narrator/character uses the first-person pronoun 'I' to refer to themselves. The author is able to create an extremely intimate and complex portrait of this character, but can only present information about the world of the text (including about other characters) that the narrator/character could feasibly possess.

An **unreliable first-person narrator** presents a view that might not be absolutely correct. This could result from various factors, including:

- the narrator repressing knowledge or memories of traumatic events
- the narrator's biases and prejudices
- the narrator not having access to all the facts.

Characters

Characters are fictional representations of people. They think and act in ways recognisable to us from our own experiences, although their situations and contexts can be very different. Their desires, decisions and actions drive the narrative forward; and they can change and develop as a result of their experiences and interactions with other characters.

Major characters are developed in detail: they have weaknesses as well as strengths, flaws as well as virtues. Their ideas, feelings and attitudes often evolve over the course of a novel (or of other long narratives, such as plays and films).

The **protagonist** is the central character in the narrative; the events of a novel or short story are presented mainly from the protagonist's perspective.

Minor characters are not developed in as much detail as the major characters, but they still play important roles in the narrative. They can:

- embody certain attitudes and beliefs that the author wishes to explore
- present contrasting perspectives
- be catalysts for change in the major characters.

Characters as constructs

Remember that characters in novels and short stories are *constructs*, not real people, no matter how realistically they are depicted. An author creates (or constructs) a character through:

- direct description of the character's thoughts, feelings and appearance
- the character's speech and actions
- what other characters say about the character
- how the character interacts with others
- specific imagery associated with the character (perhaps something they own)
- the character's name, which can suggest aspects of their personality, attitudes, social status and values.

Character viewpoints and attitudes

Characters can represent viewpoints on social or philosophical issues through their statements about those issues, or through the ways in which their actions reflect their beliefs and values. Their views can shift as a narrative unfolds and their values and beliefs are tested by situations and events.

Not all characters are meant to be likable or sympathetic; they can have attitudes that are not endorsed by the author. This means that the author can explore values and ideas through the interactions of characters with contrasting viewpoints.

Language and imagery

The author of a novel or short story crafts language carefully, in ways that powerfully affect readers' responses. When analysing language, there are two main aspects to examine:

- the tone and style of the language, including the language register (formal or informal) and the use of irony
- the imagery used to convey ideas and emotions.

Tone and style

Tone is the mood or 'sound' of the writing and conveys an attitude towards the characters, scene or events being described. The tone can be serious or comic, sarcastic or sincere, angry or affectionate, among many other possibilities.

Style is the way in which words are used and combined. It is a very broad term and can have three separate, but related, meanings:

- the level or register of language use – e.g. formal, informal or colloquial
- the complexity or simplicity of the phrases and sentences – e.g. ornate and descriptive (with many adjectives and adverbs), or minimalist (with very few descriptive words)
- the literary movement the text belongs to (e.g. romantic, realist, modernist).

Formal and informal language styles

Traditionally, authors of literary fiction have written in a formal language style or register. **Formal language** means the use of correct, complex sentences, a generally serious tone, and a wide-ranging, sophisticated vocabulary. In other words, compared to the language in which most people speak or think, the style is more complex and the tone more serious.

Informal language means the use of words, phrases and punctuation appropriate in everyday contexts and situations. It is more relaxed than formal language and closer to how people usually speak.

Colloquial expressions are used in conversational speech; they change with time, social class and nationality. Colloquialisms are key elements of the **vernacular**, which is the everyday language used in a particular place and time.

Informal language styles were used increasingly by 20th-century novelists and short-story writers, who sought to give voice to a greater variety of human experience. Writers use colloquialisms and the vernacular in prose fiction, especially in dialogue, to create a strong sense of time, place and social context.

Irony and satire

There are two main kinds of irony.

- **Verbal irony** occurs when the real meaning of the words is opposite to their literal meaning. It can be used by the narrator or in characters' dialogue.
- **Situational or dramatic irony** occurs when the reader knows something that some or all of the characters do not. This creates suspense and dramatic tension, as the reader anticipates the moment at which all is revealed. Dramatic irony, as its name suggests, is often used in plays, but also features in novels and short stories.

Irony is an extremely important aspect of tone in literary fiction. It usually encourages the reader to see a character or situation in a critical light, but its effects range from gentle humour and amusement to serious condemnation or attack.

Satire is a form of writing that ridicules an aspect of human behaviour. It is often comic, but can be serious when a scathing or sarcastic tone is used. Irony is a feature of the language used in any satire.

Parody is a technique often used in satire. It involves an exaggerated imitation of the person or thing being satirised, in a way that is usually comic (unless you are the person being parodied, in which case it appears scathing).

Imagery

An **image** is a 'mental picture'– usually visual, but it can appeal to the other senses. It can be created simply through the description of an object, or through the use of figurative language such as simile and metaphor. Some images take on a special importance because the object represents a larger or abstract entity; for example, an image of a cross can represent the Christian church; a dove can represent peace. In this case the image is a **symbol**.

See pages 228–9 for detailed explanations of simile, metaphor and symbol.

Special features of nonfiction

A nonfiction text describes things that are real, or 'true', so the author has much less creative freedom than a novelist or short-story writer. Facts (such as times, dates, names of people and places) must be carefully researched and verified; the author must know the subject thoroughly so that all the relevant information is included.

Nevertheless, literary nonfiction does not have the same objectivity as an encyclopedia or other reference book. The author selects and arranges information and incidents in order to present a particular view of individuals and events, to shape the narrative and to influence the reader to respond in certain ways. They might also wish to present particular individuals in a positive or negative light because of their personal views or experiences. Therefore, not every description in a work of nonfiction can be regarded as objectively true – and another writer might describe the same person, place or event in a very different manner.

Biography

A biography is a nonfiction text that tells the story of a person's life. Usually that person is well known to the general public and has made notable achievements in a particular field.

A biography:

- includes detailed information about the subject's context and background (e.g. family and society) and the significance of their achievements
- will be thoroughly researched by the biographer, who generally aims to present a comprehensive and balanced view of the subject
- is usually written in a neutral tone and formal style.

Autobiography and memoir

An **autobiography** is written in first person and tells the story of the narrator's life, usually from childhood through to middle age or the end of a significant part of their adult life (e.g. the end of a sporting career).

An autobiography:

- though true, does not necessarily aim to be objective or neutral
- presents people and events from the narrator's point of view and includes their opinions and beliefs, so it is highly personal
- can be written in a more informal style than a biography.

A **memoir** is a record of memories. It is a form of autobiography, but focuses on one period of the author's life. This could be their childhood years, or a traumatic or significant episode that is of interest to a wide audience.

Other types of nonfiction

The following are some other important and popular types of nonfiction.

- **True crime** – the writer describes the events surrounding a well-known crime or series of crimes; often centres on a court case.
- **Journalism** – journalists can publish collections of their newspaper or magazine columns, or write an account of their travels and investigations.
- **Diaries** and **letters** – these personal forms of writing can be published to reveal how a person has faced extreme circumstances, e.g. Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl*, or if the author has become well known, e.g. *George Orwell: A Life in Letters*.

Drama

CHAPTER
16

Like prose fiction, a play tells a story about characters and events that can be entirely imagined or based on real people and circumstances. The narrative usually develops to a major point of crisis followed by a denouement and resolution of conflicts and tensions. Drama has many of the features of novels and short stories discussed in the previous chapter, including elements of structure and characterisation.

A play, however, is written to be performed rather than read. This means there are special features of drama to consider whenever you analyse a play.

Structure and form

Plays are almost always broken down into **acts**, which consist of several **scenes**. The action in a scene takes place in a single setting. Typically, a scene has a beginning, a middle and an end – similar to a short story. An act is a group of scenes that share a physical setting or are close together in their temporal settings; that is, events within acts happen roughly within the same time period. A play may have from one to five acts, and each of these may vary in duration.

- Shakespeare's plays (such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Hamlet*) have five acts, each with several scenes.
- Anton Chekhov's major dramatic works (such as *Uncle Vanya* and *The Cherry Orchard*) have four acts but no internal divisions into scenes.
- In the 20th and 21st centuries, continued experimentation with form has led to a loosening of conventional structures, and one-act and two-act plays have become relatively common. However, longer plays of three or four acts are still often written.

How to refer to acts and scenes

When referring to a play comprising acts and scenes, it is usual to give the number of the act first, then the number of the scene within that act. The examples below show the modern conventions as well as older conventions.

Modern convention: both the number of the act and the number of the scene are written in Arabic numerals.

> In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Lear is abandoned in the storm in Act 3, Scene 2, which can be abbreviated as 3.2.

Older conventions: Roman numerals are used for acts, or for both acts and scenes.

> In Shakespeare's *King Lear*, Lear is abandoned in the storm in Act III, Scene 2 (III.2) or Act III, Scene ii (III.ii).

Two key forms: tragedy and comedy

The two main forms used in drama are tragedy and comedy. These forms shape the overall structure of the narrative, as shown in the table below. They were established by the ancient Greek playwrights (such as Sophocles and Euripides), and continue to exert a very strong influence on the writing and performing of plays, although there have been many variations on their basic shapes and elements.

Tragedy	Comedy
The tragic hero is at first successful and acclaimed.	A problem is presented within an otherwise harmonious atmosphere.
The hero errs due to a flaw in his or her character; the action rises to a point of crisis (the climax).	Misunderstandings or conflicts lead to separation and anxiety.
The hero falls from grace and ultimately dies, along with those to whom they have been close. This results in a sense of catharsis or resolution.	Finally the confusion is ended and relationships are restored – usually in the form of a marriage or double marriage.

In a comedy, the overall pattern is essentially the reverse of that for a tragedy: a comedy can be seen as a fall, then a rise; whereas a tragedy comprises a rise, then a fall.

Types of dialogue

Dialogue is used in novels and short stories, but takes on much more importance in drama, in which there is no narrative voice to provide explanations and descriptions.

A **monologue** is a speech delivered by a character alone onstage. This can occur when other characters are offstage, or in a play written for only one actor.

A **soliloquy** is a speech in which a character directly informs the audience of their innermost thoughts and feelings. Usually the character is alone onstage, and it is understood that no other character hears what is said.

A soliloquy is a significant speech: Hamlet's famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy is 34 lines in length, for example. Such speeches temporarily hold up the action to focus the audience's attention on the character's state of mind and internal dilemmas. A playwright can use a soliloquy to bring the audience into a closer relationship with a character, often providing insights into a character's emotions and motivations that the other characters do not have.

In an **aside**, the character speaks directly and briefly to the audience – in a few lines at most – without the other characters leaving the stage. The theatrical conventions are that:

- other characters do not hear what is said
- asides are indicated in a stage direction [*aside*] so that the actor knows to address the audience
- the action continues to move forwards.

Asides and soliloquies often help to create **dramatic irony** (see page 209) through the gap or difference between what a character confesses to the audience and what they say to other characters.

Actors rehearse their dialogue thoroughly, guided closely by the director, to maximise the impact of their words.

Play as text

In a sense, the print text of a play is only a partial text. The print text has to be performed in order to be fully realised. **Stage directions** are written by the playwright to guide the director and actors in their production and performance of the play. They are thus critical to understanding a play when reading the print text.

Stage directions are conventionally italicised in the print text and include information of three main kinds:

- details of the layout and appearance of the stage, e.g. props, sets and lighting
- descriptions of music or sound effects
- directions to guide the presentation and performances of the characters, e.g. costumes, physical appearance, movements on and off the stage, and the actors' gestures and tone of voice at key moments.

The staging of a play has a significant effect on how meaning is communicated to the audience. In many pre–20th-century plays there are relatively few stage directions, so many features of the text that directly affect its meaning are ultimately in the hands of the director.

Play as performance

Aspects of a play performance that are crucial elements of the narrative include:

- props and sets
- lighting
- sound
- character positions and movements (including gestures and facial expressions)
- the manner in which lines are delivered (including tone, pace, pitch and pauses)
- costumes and make-up.

The following sections consider how a playwright or director can use these performance aspects to convey information and ideas, and how they can affect an audience's responses to a performance.

Props and sets

Props and sets establish the play's setting or settings. They include all the objects present on the stage, pictures hanging on walls and backdrops (which can incorporate doors and windows).

Personal props are objects carried onto the stage by characters. The type of personal prop (e.g. walking stick, umbrella, fan), and the way in which it is handled by the character, contribute to characterisation as well as the themes explored by the play.

Sets can be rich and detailed, perhaps reflecting an affluent household or a vibrant, dynamic society; or they can be minimal, inviting the audience to see whatever items are present as symbolic. They often create a social and historical context for the play's concerns, ensuring that the audience see the characters as part of a broader society.

Lighting

Lighting has several important functions in the theatre, including:

- drawing the audience's attention to a character or group of characters (e.g. through the use of a spotlight)
- creating a mood or ambience (e.g. soft and intimate, or harsh and alienating)
- signalling a shift in location and/or time at a scene change, through lights going down then coming back up.

Lighting can also have a symbolic function, especially when the light source is one of the props (for example, a candle or a lamp).

Sound

Apart from the characters' dialogue, the two main types of sound used in drama are sound effects and music.

Sound effects can heighten the sense of realism at dramatic moments (e.g. gunshots or explosions at a crisis point). They also add to the play's construction of the illusion that the characters inhabit not merely the stage, but a larger world.

Music can be part of a play's action – such as when a character sings, plays a piano or listens to the radio – or it can be background or 'incidental' music. In either case, it can:

- create a mood
- help establish the historical period
- reinforce aspects of the characters' class or cultural context
- enhance characterisation by showing an aspect of the character not expressed in their dialogue.

The precise type or piece of music is rarely indicated in stage directions; this allows the director considerable freedom in creating the mood and feeling of a scene.

Character positions and movements

In the theatre, the position of the audience is fixed throughout the play. This is a significant difference from a novel or film. A novelist can change the reader's perspective on the action by shifting the narrative point of view; a filmmaker does this by changing camera positions and angles. The playwright, however, depends on manipulating the characters' positions and movements to achieve similar effects. This can be done by:

- shifting characters between the front (downstage) and rear of the stage (upstage) to focus on certain characters at different times
- grouping characters together in different ways
- using entries and exits on and off the stage in order to represent various relationships or to 'forward action offstage'.

Character movements and positions are usually only given in the stage directions at key points in the narrative; such directions ensure that the characters' interactions and relationships are clearly conveyed to the audience. Other directions will be given to actors by the director during rehearsals.

In Greek and Shakespearean drama there are few stage directions describing movement; those present indicate little more than the characters' entrances and exits, their most basic actions (e.g. '*kneeling*', '*fights*', '*dies*') and to whom they speak. However, plays written in the 19th and 20th centuries use more frequent and specific stage directions, including detailed information about how the lines should be spoken, and the characters' gestures and facial expressions.

Poetry

CHAPTER 17

Poetry condenses meaning into the most compact, rich and suggestive form possible. It has a close focus on language: the patterns and sounds of words can be as important as their literal meanings. Although narratives, characters and settings can be found in poems, they are not essential; in many poems, time and place are not strongly defined, and characters are not developed in detail. Instead, poets seek to convey a mood or image to the audience in a way that is powerful and memorable.

Key elements of poetry

Poetry has its own distinct elements and conventions, including the following.

- **Line lengths** are determined by the poet, rather than by the width of the page.
- Lines are grouped together to form **stanzas**. Some poetic forms have stanzas with fixed lengths, or the poet can choose how many lines each stanza will have.
- The **speaker** or **persona** is the narrator of a poem.
- **Rhyme** and **rhythm** are key tools of the poet, and there is a special vocabulary for describing their standard patterns.
- **Poetic techniques** such as assonance, alliteration, caesura and enjambment, which enable the poet to control the sound and rhythm of poetry, are widely used.
- Established **poetic forms** are used and often manipulated by poets to achieve particular effects.
- **Imagery**, including **similes, metaphors** and **symbols**, contributes to the wider meaning of the poem.

Line lengths

Because the line length is determined by the poet, the way in which a line ends is always significant.

- Regular line lengths result from a fixed number of syllables per line; the number of stressed syllables is usually constant, too, in order to produce a regular rhythm.
- Irregular line lengths result from the number of syllables in each line varying according to the poet's creative choices.

Indicating line breaks in a quotation

To indicate a line break in a quotation from a poem, use a forward slash – also known as a solidus – with no space before or after. (Alternatively, sometimes a space is used either side of the solidus.)

For example, if you were discussing Wordsworth's poem 'Daffodils', you would write:

> Wordsworth describes a vision of a field of 'golden daffodils/Beside the lake, beneath the trees' that has left a lasting impression.

Stanzas

A stanza is a group of lines that share an idea or set of images; stanzas are separated by an empty line. Stanzas in poetry are roughly equivalent to paragraphs in prose.

In traditional poetic forms, each stanza has the same number of lines; the number of lines determines how the stanza is named. The most common stanza lengths are:

- **couplet** – a two-line stanza
- **tercet** – a three-line stanza
- **quatrain** – a four-line stanza.

It is unusual for a poem to consist entirely of couplets, but rhyming couplets can be joined together to form longer stanzas. Similarly, tercets can be joined to form a six-line stanza (a sestet); quatrains can be joined to form an eight-line stanza (an octave), and so on.

Speaker/persona

The speaker or persona is the individual who seems to be addressing you as you read a poem. The speaker might be created as a character with a distinct personality and emotions, or as a detached observer of a scene. Do not automatically assume that the speaker and the poet are one and the same; the poet constructs the speaker's voice, just as a novelist constructs a narrative voice.

The **tone** of a poem is the emotion conveyed by the speaker (e.g. happy, sad, angry, reflective, mocking, passionate). The tone can shift dramatically over the course of a poem, showing fluctuating emotions or different perspectives.

Rhyme

Rhyme is produced when the last syllables of two words have matching sounds (e.g. splash/dash). Lines that rhyme have matching syllables at the ends of the lines. Rhyming lines are usually successive or separated by one or two other lines.

- **Internal rhyme** occurs when the rhyming words are in a single line.
- **Half-rhyme** occurs when the sounds are similar but not exactly matched – either the consonant sounds match, or the vowel sounds match, but not both.

  escaped/scooped

  enough/love

How to notate rhyme schemes

Patterns of rhyme are notated by using lower-case letters. The first line is *a* and subsequent lines use successive letters of the alphabet. Lines that rhyme have the same letter.

The rhyme scheme of a limerick is *aabba:*

There was an old man with a beard,	*a*
Who said, 'It is just as I feared! –,	*a*
Two Owls and a Hen,	*b*
Four Larks and a Wren,	*b*
Have all built their nests in my beard!'	*a*

(Edward Lear)

Rhythm

Rhythm is an extremely important feature of poetry. The detailed attention poets give to rhythmic patterns means poetry has a very close relationship to music. This is particularly evident when poetry is read aloud.

- The rhythm of a poem is produced by its pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.
- For example, in the line 'Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall', the syllables 'Hump', 'Dump', 'sat' and 'wall' are stressed or accentuated; they receive more emphasis than the other syllables, which are unstressed.

Regular rhythmic patterns: metre and foot

A **metre** is a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in each line of a poem. Each line with a regular rhythm can be broken down into a number of identical rhythmic units. Each unit usually consists of two or three syllables and is known as a **foot**.

Metrical feet are named according to the number and order of stressed and unstressed syllables. The most common of these are defined in the table below.

How the metre is described	Name of the basic unit (the 'foot')	Definition	Example
iambic	iamb (pronounced 'i-am')	unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable	con**tent** (as in: 'I am feeling content with life')
trochaic	trochee (pronounced 'trokay')	stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable	**con**tent (as in: 'the content of this book includes poetry analysis')
anapaestic or **anapestic**	anapaest or anapest	two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable	Tennes**see**; with a **leap** and a **bound**
dactylic	dactyl	stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables	**Ad**elaide; **Jo**sephine

Naming poetic metres

The metre is named according to the *kind* of feet (using terms in the left-hand column of the table on the previous page) and the *number* of feet in each line. The number is indicated by a Greek prefix (e.g. 'di-', 'tri-') in front of the word 'meter'.

Name of metre	Example	Example of poetry in this metre
dimeter two feet per line	iambic dimeter (four syllables per line)	This like a dream Keeps other time (WH Auden, 'This lunar beauty')
trimeter three feet per line	iambic trimeter (six syllables per line)	The heart asks Pleasure – first – And then – Excuse from Pain – (Emily Dickinson, 'The heart asks pleasure first')
tetrameter four feet per line	anapaestic tetrameter (12 syllables per line, two unstressed followed by one stressed)	For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed; And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill, And their hearts but once heaved, and forever grew still! (Lord Byron, 'The Destruction of Sennacherib')
pentameter five feet per line	iambic pentameter (ten syllables per line)	I love thee to the depth and breadth and height My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Sonnets from the Portuguese,* No. 43)

Poetic techniques

The following techniques enable poets to closely control the sound, pace and flow of a poem. The effect of these techniques is clearest when the poem is read aloud, so if you are analysing a poem it is always worth either hearing someone read it, or reading it aloud yourself.

Assonance and alliteration

Assonance and alliteration are repeated sounds that occur close together within a line of a poem.

Assonance is the repetition of sounds (especially vowel sounds) within words – this can produce a calm, soothing effect if the vowel sounds are long.

> 'Our echoes roll from soul to soul' (Alfred, Lord Tennyson)

Alliteration is the repetition of sounds at the beginning of words that are close together – this can produce a striking, arousing effect for consonants like *t* and *b*.

> 'Tyger! Tyger! burning bright' (William Blake)

Caesura

A caesura is a pause or break in a line of poetry. It is often indicated by a comma, semicolon or colon, although it can also result from the natural rhythm of the words. A caesura can signal a hesitation or rest, perhaps reflecting the meaning of the phrase, or simply regulating the pace and flow of the poem.

Enjambment

Enjambment is the running-on of lines. This disrupts the conventional expectation of a pause at the end of each line or at the end of a couplet. Twentieth-century poets used enjambment extensively, sometimes running the last line of one stanza onto the first line of the next stanza.

Wilfred Owen uses both caesura and enjambment in the opening lines of his poem 'Smile, Smile, Smile', in which he criticises the biased newspaper reporting of World War I:

> Head to limp head, the sunk-eyed wounded scanned
> Yesterday's *Mail*; the casualties (typed small)
> And (large) Vast Booty from our Latest Haul.

Poetic forms

There are several ways to define the form of a poem, including:

- a fixed pattern of rhyme, rhythm and number of lines (e.g. a sonnet has 14 lines and a rhyme scheme)
- the nature of the content and mood of a poem (e.g. ode, elegy)
- the way in which a story is told (e.g. dramatic monologue, epic).

Blank verse

Blank verse is poetry written in unrhymed (i.e. 'blank') iambic pentameter. It is widely used in English poetry, as the rhythm of blank verse is very close to that of normal speech in English.

Most Shakespearean drama (e.g. *Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet*) is in blank verse.

Free verse

Poetry written in free verse has no regular line length, rhyme or rhythm. Note that free verse can include occasional, irregular use of rhyme.

Famous poems written in free verse include *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman and *The Waste Land* by TS Eliot.

Ballad

The ballad was originally an oral form set to music. Written in short stanzas, a ballad tells a story, often with a strong dramatic element and drawing on the local folk culture.

Two well-known ballads in the literary tradition are 'Lucy Gray' (William Wordsworth) and 'Maude Clare' (Christina Rossetti).

Lyric

The lyric is the most common poetic form. It was originally accompanied by music, and the term retains this meaning (as in 'song lyric'). A lyric poem:

- is relatively short
- is in the voice of a single 'character', known as the speaker or persona
- uses a personal tone that conveys the speaker's private thoughts and feelings to the reader/listener
- often focuses on a moment, mood or image.

A common form for a lyric is a series of quatrains. In Renaissance Italy and Elizabethan England the sonnet became the dominant form of the lyric.

'Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?' (William Shakespeare) is a famous Elizabethan lyric in sonnet form.

Sonnet

A sonnet is a 14-line poem usually written in iambic pentameter and following an established rhyme scheme. Traditionally the sonnet focuses on the subject of romantic love, though it can range across subjects as diverse as philosophy, religion and everyday experiences. The main rhyme schemes used in sonnets are described in the table below.

Type of sonnet	Rhyme scheme	Structure
Petrarchan named after Petrarch, an Italian Renaissance poet	*abbaabba cdecde* or *abbaabba cdcdcd*	• The first eight lines are the octave; the last six lines are the sestet. • The octave develops the main idea or problem; the sestet provides a response or resolution.
Shakespearean (sometimes known as 'English') named after Shakespeare, who used this form throughout his 154 sonnets	*abab cdcd efef gg*	• The three quatrains develop different aspects of the main idea. • The final rhyming couplet resolves the argument.
Spenserian named after the Elizabethan poet Edmund Spenser	*abab bcbc cdcd ee*	• The three linked quatrains develop the main idea. • The final rhyming couplet generates a sense of closure and resolution.

One of the best-known examples of the sonnet is the Prologue to Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* ('Two households, both alike in dignity'). Here are three other examples.

Petrarchan sonnet: 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways' (Elizabeth Barrett Browning)

Shakespearean sonnet: 'Bright Star' (John Keats)

Spenserian sonnet: the series of sonnets titled *Amoretti* (Edmund Spenser)

Ode

The ode is another type of lyric poem, often in the form of an address. It can be for a public occasion or for private reflection. Typically, an ode has:

- a ceremonial, stately quality
- a formal rather than informal tone
- a complex stanza form.

Two very well-known odes are John Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and 'Ode on Melancholy'.

Elegy

An elegy is a mournful or melancholic poem that laments the death of a person or a tragic event. It has a feeling of sadness and loss, but the ending can express hope and a sense of renewal. An important subgenre is the pastoral elegy, which has a rural setting and features shepherds and mythological references.

WH Auden's 'In Memory of W. B. Yeats' is a famous elegy from the 20th century. Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (1751) is a well-known elegy in the pastoral tradition. It takes the form of a general meditation on death rather than a lament for an individual.

Haiku

Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry with three lines and a fixed number of syllables in each line: five syllables in the first line, seven in the second line, and five in the third line. It captures an image or feeling in a very distilled form, often focusing on the natural world.

Two famous Japanese masters in the 17th and 18th centuries were Naitō Jōsō and Yosa Buson. Examples of their haikus are shown below.

Both plains and mountains
Have been captured by the snow
There is nothing left
(Jōsō)

An evening cloudburst
sparrows cling desperately
to trembling bushes
(Buson)

Limerick

The limerick is a witty, comic form of poetry with a regular pattern of rhyme and rhythm. The rhyme pattern is *aabba* and the main rhythmic foot is the anapaest, which consists of two unstressed syllables followed by one stressed syllable.

See page 220 for an example of a limerick.

Dramatic monologue

A dramatic monologue is a longer poem in which the speaker is strongly characterised and developed.

- The 'dramatic' quality of the poem comes from a situation described by the speaker, and in which the speaker is involved.
- There is more of a storytelling aspect to a dramatic monologue than in a lyric.

The Victorian poets Alfred, Lord Tennyson and Robert Browning wrote several dramatic monologues. 'Ulysses' (Tennyson) and 'My Last Duchess' (Browning) are two of the most famous dramatic monologues.

Epic

The epic is the longest and most narrative-driven form of poetry. Its subject is usually on a grand scale, encompassing events of a momentous nature and/or occurring over a number of years. English epic poetry generally follows the conventions of classical epics such as Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. Its main characteristics include the use of a hero who embodies the values of their society, a vast setting and a long time frame.

Paradise Lost by John Milton and *Don Juan* by Lord Byron are epic poems written in English.

A monument showing scenes from The Iliad *and* The Odyssey.

Imagery

Because of poetry's close focus on language, the multiple meanings of words are fundamental to the interpretation of any poem. When analysing imagery in poetry it is important to:

- carefully consider the connotations of words alongside their literal meanings
- analyse the significance and impact of images as closely as you would study the narrative or plot of a novel.

The main types of imagery used in poetry are defined and explained on the following pages.

Simile and metaphor

A **simile** compares two different things using 'like' or 'as'.

Elizabeth Bishop uses a simile in this quote from her poem 'The Fish':

> Here and there
> his brown skin hung in strips
> like ancient wallpaper ...

A **metaphor** describes one thing as if it is another thing. Another way of thinking about a metaphor is as a statement of equivalence between two different things.

William Shakespeare uses metaphor in his poetry and plays. In this example from Sonnet 116, a series of metaphors is used to describe true love:

> Love is not love
> Which alters when it alteration finds,
> Or bends with the remover to remove:
> O no! it is an ever-fixèd mark,
> That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
> It is the star to every wandering bark ...

Similes and metaphors are extremely effective in making us look at the world of familiar objects and experiences in unexpected and revealing ways.

Two special kinds of metaphor are personification and conceit. **Personification** is a metaphor that attributes human qualities to non-human objects or creatures.

Emily Dickinson personifies death in these two lines:

> Because I could not stop for Death –
> He kindly stopped for me –

A **conceit** is an extended metaphor that connects very different types of things in a way that is unexpected and witty. A **metaphysical conceit** combines an image from the cosmic or spiritual realm with an everyday object or concept.

John Donne uses a metaphysical conceit in 'A Valediction Forbidding Mourning' when he compares the souls of two lovers to a pair of compasses.

Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two;
Thy soul, the fixed foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

Symbol

A symbol is an image that stands for a larger or more abstract concept. Common examples include:

- the cross as a symbol for the Christian church
- the throne and crown as symbols for the monarchy
- a dove as a symbol for peace
- the colour white as a symbol for purity
- a red rose as a symbol for love.

An object can have more than one symbolic meaning. For example, a cross might symbolise death rather than the Christian faith, especially if it is accompanied by a wreath of flowers. A red rose might signify passion or lust rather than a more romantic conception of love. The context in which the symbolic object is used in a poem (or any other text) is crucial in determining its meaning – which can also be a matter of individual interpretation.

Some poets use certain images as symbols with specific associations and meanings. Such images only have those symbolic meanings within that poet's work. An example is the 11th-century Norman tower owned by WB Yeats, which Yeats used in his poetry as a symbol for Irish identity and history.

Film

CHAPTER
18

A film tells a story through moving images on a screen accompanied by a soundtrack. In analysing a film, you will consider many of the same narrative features as those you analyse in a novel, short story or play – characters, plot, narrative structure, settings and imagery.

However, the differences between film and print-based forms of literature are as important as their similarities. Literature depends on words to convey information and ideas. Film, on the other hand, relies chiefly on a different kind of language – the language of moving images.

Film language or *film style* is mainly visual, although it includes the use of sound. It has distinctive elements and conventions that can be used and combined in ways that are only limited by the filmmaker's imagination.

Any film analysis must include a careful consideration of its language or style, especially its visual features and the ways in which they impact on the audience and convey the film's meaning.

Visual features

This section explains the main visual features used in film and the techniques of creating and combining them.

Mise en scène

Mise en scène is a French term meaning 'putting on stage'; it refers to all the visual elements within the frame at a given point. There are four elements of the mise en scène: setting, lighting, costumes and acting style. These four elements are all present within the frame of a single shot. If they work together effectively, viewers usually do not notice them individually. When analysing a film, though, you need to show how the elements of mise en scène are carefully selected and used to create particular effects.

The table below will help you identify how the four elements of mise en scène can be used to produce desired effects in film.

Visual element	What to look for	Effects
Setting is the physical location of a scene. Note that settings can change several times in a feature film.	• Outdoors: Is the setting vast? Intimate? Lush? Desolate? If specific to a country, how is this indicated visually? • Indoors: Is the dwelling large? Well-lit? Cramped? Dark?	• The setting puts characters in context. • In conjunction with other factors such as lighting and sound, the setting can create suspense or set a mood. • The setting can establish specific genres (e.g. western, film noir).
Lighting is a complex element that can be manipulated to create a mood and draw attention to specific elements within each scene.	• Look for the colour and intensity of light; its source and direction; shadows and their effects; the impact of darkness. • Note how lighting contributes to atmosphere, mood, a sense of day or night and the seasons.	• The degree of clarity of the light (e.g. clear, hazy, murky) adds to the mood. • Dark lighting used in a wide-angled shot may suggest desolation. • A spotlight can draw attention to a significant character. • Dimming lights can help the audience to reflect on what they have just seen.
Costumes include characters' clothes, accessories, make-up and props.	• If costumes reveal the historical period and/or the characters' social contexts, are they consistent? If any costumes stand out as being different, why is that? • Are any personal props (e.g. a ring, crown, map) symbolic or functioning as motifs?	• Costumes help to show a character's social status and personality. • The use of colour in costumes helps to define a character. • Costumes use visual elements that can establish character types. • Costume changes can suggest a character's changing attitudes or life circumstances.
Acting style includes facial expressions, body language, posture and voice. The acting style of all characters is thoughtfully directed to help define each personality.	• Is the style natural, exaggerated or understated? • What attitudes and emotions are conveyed by the actor's facial expressions and body language?	• Key character traits can be established through exaggeration, or emphasised through voice and body language. • Acting style can indicate relationships between characters as well as the ways in which characters relate to their setting and social context.

Cinematography

Cinematography involves all aspects of the use of the camera to film the action. The **cinematographer** is the person who, under instruction from the director, sets up all the shots in the film, using various camera distances, angles and movements to tell the story and create the look and feel of the film.

The main elements of cinematography are outlined below.

- **Focus** – this can draw the audience's attention to particular characters, objects or elements of setting, or place equal emphasis on characters and their setting.
- **Camera distance** – close-up, medium shot, long shot etc. Changing the camera distance enables filmmakers to show both the wider context of characters and the smallest details of their physical interactions and reactions.
- **Camera angle** – low or high angles put the audience in the position of looking up at, or down on, characters and objects.
- **Camera movement** – panning, tilting and tracking. Camera movements are used to show more of the setting and to represent the changing position and viewpoint of a character.

Cinematographer Roger Deakins won the 2017 Academy Award for Best Cinematography for his work on Blade Runner 2049.

The most common camera distances and angles, and some of their possible effects, are summarised in the following table.

Type of shot	Example	Effects
Long shot: The main focus of the shot is far away, and background scenery is included in the shot.		• establishes the setting • can emphasise the vastness of a scene • can create an impression of isolation
Medium shot: This shot shows a person from the waist up with some background.		• shows the setting while keeping the focus on the subject • can suggest the nature of a relationship between two or three people
Close-up: The subject matter is shown in detail (e.g. part of the body, a face or an important object).		• draws the viewer in and makes them pay close attention to what's being shown • can show facial expressions in detail
Extreme close-up: This creates a more magnified image than a close-up.		• can be used to convey intimacy • can also be used to home in on an important detail or create a dramatic effect
Tilt-up (or low-angle) shot: The camera is placed below an object and faces upward at an angle.		• can emphasise the height or strength of a person • can create suspense

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Type of shot	Example	Effects
Tilt-down (or high-angle) shot: The camera is placed above an object and faces downward at an angle.		• can suggest that a person is vulnerable • signals the power of a person looking down
Tracking shot: The camera moves along with, away from or towards the subject.		• makes the viewer feel part of the scene • conveys a sense of movement and drama
Zoom shot: The camera moves in from a long shot, or a wide-angle shot, to a close-up in one continuous movement.	 	• isolates detail • can zero in on something the director feels is important
Crane shot: The camera is placed on a crane so it can move down and in towards the subject matter, or up and away.		• (moving down) brings the audience into the scene in a smooth motion • (moving up) can draw the audience away from the characters or location
Aerial shot: The camera films from above the subject matter (for example, from an aeroplane).		• establishes a scene and shows the broader context for the action • can create an impression of isolation or distance

Editing

In film, editing is the process of determining the length and sequence of shots. It also involves deciding which shots will be included, and which will be excluded from the finished film. Usually, the editor's goal is to make the transition from one shot to the next as seamless as possible, so that the audience will not notice the particular edit (such as a 'cut' or 'dissolve'). This continuity is often enhanced by the use of dialogue or music that continues from one shot to the next.

- Tension and excitement can be generated by brief shots and frequent cuts.
- A more reflective and slower-paced film would use longer shots.
- Editing helps to create not just the film's narrative, but also its style and feel – it therefore strongly influences the audience's responses to the film's characters and events.
- The **director's cut** is a version of the film that differs from the one that is initially commercially released, in which some of the director's editing choices may have been overridden by those who were producing or financing the film. The director's cut is the result of a different set of editing decisions, and can restore previously deleted shots or scenes (and delete others). This can subtly alter the meaning and impact of the film.

Sound

A film's soundtrack plays an extremely important role in the creation of a credible and believable world. It combines with the visual elements to tell the story and create the mood or feel of a film. The soundtrack includes the characters' dialogue, sound effects and music. Often, the use of sound in a film is so natural and closely integrated with the visuals that the audience do not notice it as a distinct element. However, it contributes significantly to the meaning of visual elements and to the audience's emotional responses. For example, the sound of a child's scream accompanying a shot of a child screaming in a park would lead the audience to think she is in danger. However, the same sound used with an image of a screaming child running happily into their parent's arms will have a very different effect.

The absence of sound can also be a powerful element of a soundtrack, and moments of silence should always be analysed for their effect. For example, silence in a jungle or on a battlefield effectively signals impending danger.

Sound effects

Sound effects are sounds that are artificially produced for use in film and other performance arts. They include sounds made by the characters (e.g. footsteps or a door being shut) and the typical noises of their environment (e.g. traffic, machinery, people who form part of a crowd or workplace scene, electronic media, birds and animals).

Some sound effects cannot be heard by the characters, only by the audience: for example, the sound of an old-fashioned cash register when a character thinks about money. These are less common and tend to have a humorous effect.

None of these sounds are present in a print text, and few are present in a performance of a play, in which there is less opportunity for characters to carry out everyday activities than in a film. This, along with the use of realistic settings, enables filmmakers to create a more fully realised world than is possible in print-based literary forms.

Music soundtrack

The music soundtrack is one of the most powerful elements in any film. Music contributes significantly to:

- the film's mood and atmosphere (e.g. by building suspense, releasing tension, or conveying a feeling such as sadness, triumph or joy)
- the cultural, social and historical context depicted by the film
- the film's appeal to its target audience.

Music can also contribute to the film's narrative, for instance by suggesting the nature of events (good or bad) that are about to happen, or accompanying a character in a way that reflects the character's role in the narrative (e.g. hero or villain).

Diegetic and non-diegetic sound

Diegetic sounds are sounds that belong to the world of the film, such as the dialogue and sound effects. **Non-diegetic sounds** are outside the world of the film: they cannot be heard by the characters.

The music soundtrack is usually non-diegetic: it is heard by the audience but not by the characters. However, the music in a film can be diegetic when the source of the music is part of the characters' world, such as a phone belonging to one of the characters.

Some films use a **narrative voice-over** to help tell the story. If the narrator is not a character in the film then the voice-over is non-diegetic; however, if the narrator is also a character then the voice-over is regarded as diegetic even though other characters can't hear it.

Narrative structure

The narrative structure of a film can be analysed in much the same way as that of a novel or short story. However, there is a particular structure adopted by many Hollywood films, including films from the past as well as contemporary releases.

Classical Hollywood narrative structure

The classical Hollywood narrative structure includes and defines the conventions that most Hollywood films follow. The main elements are summarised below.

- The main character is known as the **protagonist**; their actions drive the narrative forwards.
- The protagonist is motivated by their desire to achieve a **goal**. This can be as varied as obtaining a significant object, proving their innocence or finding happiness and love.
- One or more **obstacles** stand in the way of the protagonist achieving their goal; these obstacles create **conflict**.
- The protagonist must **change** in some way, or change an aspect of the world around them, in order to overcome the obstacles.
- In the film's **resolution**, the protagonist either achieves their goal or fails to – in both cases, the questions and tensions generated by the conflict are answered and resolved (i.e. a classical Hollywood narrative has a strong sense of closure).

Resisting the conventions of Hollywood cinema

Not every film uses the conventions of the classical Hollywood narrative structure. The following are some of the ways in which a film can resist or even subvert these conventions.

- There might not be an obvious central character – the film could explore several interlinking relationships rather than one or two main figures.
- The protagonist might not have a clear goal that they seek to achieve.
- The film's ending might be open-ended or ambiguous rather than generating a strong sense of closure and finality.

Knowing the elements of the classical Hollywood narrative structure will help you to discuss not only films that follow it, but also those that resist or subvert its conventions, as you will be able to consider the effects of altering or omitting its key elements.

Narrative point of view

Film uses a combination of sound and visual language to give the audience a multifaceted view of the 'world' of the film. This usually involves a blend of the following perspectives.

- The perspective of an omniscient observer – the audience can see the broad picture, including the characters' larger context (e.g. a city), and move freely in and out of various locations.
- The perspective of an invisible observer – the audience can see and hear everything that is taking place within a location as if they were present (a 'fly on the wall').
- The perspective of a character – the audience can experience events from that character's point of view and know how they are thinking and feeling.

Some of the main elements of sound and visuals that can produce these narrative perspectives are discussed below.

Voice-over

A narrative voice-over tells the audience about events being depicted in the film. It functions as an equivalent to a first-person voice in narrative fiction, although in a film we are usually able to observe the action from a more detached, external perspective than the inherently subjective viewpoint of a first-person narrator in a novel or short story.

- A voice-over gives the audience access to information that is not known by all the characters; this heightens the audience's awareness of what is at stake and quickly draws them into the world of the film.
- A voice-over is often used when the narrator is the film's protagonist; this provides greater insight into the protagonist's attitudes, feelings and motivations.
- When the narrator is also a character in the film, using a voice-over encourages the audience to see the events of the film from that character's perspective.
- A voice-over is also effective when the narrator is an external figure who comments on the action and provides the audience with significant information.

Camera distance

The distance between the camera and a character influences whether audiences see and hear the events of the film from their point of view, or from a more external perspective.

- Close-up shots show a character's face in detail; this leads viewers to focus on elements of their facial expression (especially their eyes and mouth), and gives the audience more insight into a character's private thoughts and feelings than the other characters have.
- Medium shots, long shots and wide-angle shots show the broader context inhabited by the characters, creating a more external point of view.

Point-of-view shots

Films can achieve the effect of a first-person or third-person limited narrative perspective through point-of-view shots. This means that the audience see and hear what a character sees and hears.

- When the editor links together different point-of-view shots showing the viewpoints of two characters, the effect is comparable to that of a third-person limited narrative in a novel that shifts between the characters' perspectives.
- Taken to its extreme, this technique gives the audience the impression that they are looking through a character's eyes (as though they are inside that character's head). This is known as a mentally subjective view and is the equivalent of a first-person narrator in narrative fiction.

Glossary

abbreviation A shortened word that contains the first letter of the original word and some subsequent letters, but usually not the last letter.

acronym A set of initial letters that is pronounced as a word.

active voice A sentence construction in which the subject of a verb performs the action.

adjective A word used to describe or modify a noun or pronoun.

adverb A word used to describe or modify a verb.

advertisement A text (usually combining words and images) promoting a product or service.

AIDA Acronym that stands for Attention, Interest, Desire, Action; these principles are used by advertisers when creating ads.

allegory A story whose real meaning is in a parallel, 'implied' story; individual events and characters thus have a wider significance than their literal or 'surface' meaning.

alliteration The repetition of consonant or vowel sounds at the beginning of words; often used in poetry, e.g. 'A slumber did my spirit seal' (Wordsworth).

allusion Reference to another literary or artistic work.

ambiguity Lack of clarity in meaning, especially between two alternative possible meanings.

ambivalence Being 'in two minds'; a state of uncertainty about whether something is true.

anachronism Something out of date, belonging to an earlier time and out of place in its current context (anachronistic, *adj.*).

antithesis Opposite (antithetical, *adj.*).

antonym A word opposite in meaning to another.

appeal to the audience A persuasive strategy that plays on people's emotions in order to get them to buy a product or agree to a certain point of view.

apposition A grammatical construction in which a word or phrase defines or expands on the noun or noun phrase that precedes it, e.g. Usain Bolt, *the famous Olympic sprinter*.

argumentative writing A form of writing in which the writer presents a point of view (or thesis) justified by the use of evidence and reasoning.

aside In a play, a short speech (a few lines only) delivered by a main character directly to the audience, and not heard by the other characters.

assonance Repetition of vowel sounds in words close together; often used in poetry, e.g. 'In the midst of this thine hymn my wilting eyes' (Keats).

audience The group of people reading, listening to or viewing a text.

autobiography An account of the writer's life.

auxiliary verb A 'helping' verb that gives more information about the main verb in a sentence.

ballad A poem traditionally sung; tells a story in a direct style, often with a dramatic element.

bibliography A list of articles, books and websites on a particular subject.

bildungsroman A narrative (usually a novel) that describes the protagonist's growth and development from childhood to early adulthood.

biography An account of the experiences, events, opinions and people in the life of a (usually well-known) person.

blank verse A form of poetry (also used in Shakespearean drama) in which lines have ten alternating unstressed and stressed syllables (i.e. iambic pentameter) and do not rhyme.

blog An online journal intended for public readership.

caesura A break in a line of poetry; often indicated by a comma or semicolon but can simply arise from the natural rhythm of the words.

caricature The exaggeration of a person or object's physical features to present them in a humorous way and to highlight certain characteristics.

cartoon A humorous drawing that may include a caption or speech bubbles.

catharsis Release of tension following the narrative crisis; crucial to the resolution of classical and Shakespearean tragedy.

citation A reference in a text to another work.

clause A group of words containing a finite verb.

cliché An expression that is well-worn, hackneyed, over-used, e.g. 'pretty as a picture', 'fresh as a daisy'.

colloquialism A casual expression used in everyday speech.

comedy In drama, a form that takes a positive view of society and human behaviour; often humorous; typically ends with a marriage (opposite of tragedy).

comma splice An error involving the joining of two main clauses by a comma (also called a run-on sentence).

common noun A noun that refers to an item belonging to a general group; it does not take an initial capital.

complex sentence A sentence consisting of one or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.

composition In an image, the arrangement or structure of the elements within the frame.

compound sentence A sentence consisting of two or more main clauses joined together by a conjunction.

conceit Metaphor in which one thing stands for another quite different thing; unexpected and witty.

conjunction A linking word that joins other words or groups of words in a sentence.

connotation A suggested or implied meaning of a word or image.

context The circumstances and environment in which a communication takes place; the parts of a written or visual text that precede or follow a given element.

contraction A shortened word made up of the first and last letters of a word, and usually some of the middle letters.

countable noun A noun that refers to a distinct object that can be counted, e.g. person.

couplet Two lines of poetry that can be grouped by forming a stanza on their own or by rhyming.

current affairs show A television or radio show covering topical issues in greater depth than a news program.

dangling modifier Occurs when a modifier (a word or phrase that gives more information about something) is separated from the word or phrase it is intended to modify.

definite article The word 'the', used to refer to a specific object.

denotation The literal or dictionary meaning of a word.

denouement The unravelling of tension or complications immediately following the narrative climax.

dependent clause A group of words containing a verb that cannot stand alone but requires a main clause to complete its meaning (also called a subordinate clause).

diary An account of events, opinions, experiences and people in the personal life of the author.

direct object In a sentence, the person or thing affected by the action of a verb.

documentary A factual television show or film about a person, place, situation, event or issue.

drama (television) A serious, scripted, fictional television show (often a series).

dramatic monologue A poem in which the speaker directly addresses an imaginary audience.

drawing A picture created using pen, pencil or crayon.

editorial An article written by a newspaper's senior editor or group of senior editors that expresses the newspaper's collective point of view on an issue.

elegy A poem in which the speaker expresses a sense of loss; often a lament for a particular person or event.

ellipsis The omission of a word or words, the meaning of which is implied.

ellipsis points Three full stops used to indicate the omission of a word or words; also used to indicate hesitation or incompletion, especially in fiction.

embedded clause A clause in which a subordinate clause is contained within a main clause.

enjambment The running-on of lines in poetry.

epic A poem that tells a story on a grand scale; usually thousands of lines in length.

essay A piece of writing in which the writer presents their point of view on a topic or issue, supported by evidence and logical argument; usually formal in style; can be serious and objective, or more personal and reflective.

euphemism An expression that substitutes for a more literal word or phrase in order to soften the impact of an event or observation, e.g. 'passed away' for 'died'.

expository writing A form of writing in which the writer explains and explores a topic from various perspectives.

ezine An internet-based magazine often focused on a particular subject.

feature article An in-depth examination of a particular issue or current event, published in a newspaper or magazine.

figurative language Language that uses simile, metaphor, symbol etc.

finite verb A verb that is modified to show subject (who or what is performing the action), number (whether the subject is singular or plural) and tense (past, present or future).

formal language A language register that uses a wide and sophisticated vocabulary, a variety of sentence structures and a generally serious tone.

forum A website or section of a website on which people can post messages and exchange views and ideas.

free verse A form of poetry in which there is no regular pattern of rhythm, rhyme, line length or stanza length.

genre A category of texts that share several conventions concerning plot, narrative, tone, characterisation, setting etc.

gerund The 'ing' form of a verb that functions as a noun in a sentence, e.g. I like *swimming*.

heteronym One of a set of words that are spelled the same but differ in pronunciation and have different meanings.

homograph One of a set of words that are spelled the same but differ in meaning and may or may not differ in pronunciation.

homonym One of a set of words with the same pronunciation but different meanings, origins and sometimes spellings.

homophone One of a set of words with the same pronunciation but different spellings and meanings.

hyperbole Obvious exaggeration, usually for comic effect.

ideology Set of ideas and beliefs that underpin behaviour; often used to refer to socially dominant and/or political beliefs.

image A visual representation of an object, person, place or idea; or, a mental picture created with words.

imagery Two main kinds are (1) the use of language to represent sensory experience (sight, sound, smell, taste and touch); (2) the use of figurative language (e.g. similes, metaphors).

inclusive language The use of language that aims to address as wide an audience as possible and to avoid marginalising or demeaning individuals or groups on the basis of their identity.

indefinite article The word 'a' or 'an', used to refer to a non-specific noun.

independent clause A group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence (also called a main clause).

indirect object The person or thing that receives the action of the verb in a sentence.

informal language A language register that reflects casual speech; often uses colloquialisms, contractions and simpler sentence structures.

initialism A set of initial letters that is not pronounced as a word.

intertextuality A reference to another text; can be either explicit or implicit.

intransitive verb A verb that does not require a direct or indirect object to complete its meaning, e.g. He *smiled*.

irony The two main types are (1) verbal irony – where the literal meaning is the opposite of the real meaning; (2) dramatic irony – where the reader/audience and perhaps one or more characters possess knowledge that the remaining characters do not have.

letter A piece of written communication aimed at one other person or a small group of people.

letter to the editor A short text written by a member of the public expressing an opinion on an issue or news article and published in the letters section of a newspaper.

lyric A relatively short poem in the voice of a single 'character' (the speaker); uses a personal tone to convey the speaker's private thoughts and feelings.

main clause A group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence (also called an independent clause).

malapropism The use of a similar-sounding but incorrect word for humorous effect; for example, in *Romeo and Juliet* when the Nurse says to Romeo, 'I desire some confidence with you' she really means, 'I desire some *conference* with you'.

memoir A record of experiences, events, opinions and people in the life of the writer.

metalanguage Specialised vocabulary for describing language use in particular contexts (e.g. in a literary work).

metaphor Figure of speech that describes one thing as if it is another thing, e.g. 'the black cloak of night'.

metre In poetry, a regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables with a fixed number of syllables per line.

mise en scène In a film or a production of a play, all the visual elements within the frame or onstage: setting, lighting, acting style and costumes.

mockumentary A humorous show presented as though it were a documentary but featuring fictitious characters and events.

modal verb One of a group of auxiliary verbs that suggest a degree of probability; the modal verbs are *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *shall*, *will*, *would*.

modifier A word or phrase that alters or limits the meaning of another word or phrase.

motif A recurring idea or image.

myth A story involving supernatural beings or gods; usually an account of an aspect of creation.

mythology A body of myths, e.g. ancient Greek mythology; Celtic mythology.

narrative The story; an account of connected events.

narrator The figure or voice that tells the story.

newspaper A print and/or electronic text published daily or weekly, containing current news, editorials, feature articles and usually advertising.

news broadcast A television or radio show covering current events as well as sport, entertainment and weather.

news report A media text giving information on an important or interesting recent event (also called news article if in a newspaper).

noun A naming word that refers to a person, place, object, quality or action.

noun phrase A group of words consisting of a noun and one or more modifiers.

novel An extended (book-length) piece of imaginative writing.

ode A lyric poem with a ceremonial, stately quality.

omniscient narrator Narrator who knows everything about the world of the text.

online comment A piece of writing published on a newspaper or magazine web page in response to an article and/or other comments on that page.

online newspaper A web-based text covering current affairs, sport, entertainment and weather; content changes throughout the day.

onomatopoeia The use of a word or phrase that imitates the sound associated with the thing it refers to, e.g. 'crackle', 'whizz', 'plop'.

opinion piece A persuasive newspaper text giving one person's point of view on an issue.

oxymoron An expression consisting of contradictory terms; considered a flaw in formal writing but can be used in figurative language, e.g. 'I burn and freeze like ice' (Thomas Wyatt).

paradox A statement that appears self-contradictory but contains a coherent meaning.

parody An imitation that 'sends up' the original by humorous exaggeration.

participle A word that is formed from the infinitive form of a verb; the two types are the present participle (usually ends in 'ing', e.g. dancing) and the past participle (usually ends in 'ed', e.g. danced).

passive voice A sentence construction in which the subject of a verb receives the action.

personal reflection An account of an incident, a place, a person or a time in the writer's life.

personification Figurative language that attributes human qualities to non-human creatures or objects, e.g. 'The candle/Gulps and recovers its small altitude' (Plath).

persuasive writing A form of writing in which the writer aims to convince the audience to agree with their point of view.

play script A literary text written to be performed on the stage.

plot The arrangement of events in a narrative in a particular order to generate interest, suspense, fear, humour etc.

poem A literary text that imaginatively expresses an aspect of experience in a condensed and often lyrical manner.

precis A concise summary of a text such as a book, article, speech or other longer form of writing.

predicate All parts of a sentence, except for the subject; the predicate expresses something about the subject.

prefix A word element added to the beginning of a base word to form or modify its meaning.

preposition A word that describes the relationship between things, e.g. how, where or when something occurred.

pronoun A word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence, usually to avoid repetition of the noun, e.g. The cat was sleeping by the window when *it* was startled by a sudden noise.

proper noun A noun that names a specific or unique person, place or thing; it requires an initial capital.

prose Ordinary written or spoken language in sentences.

protagonist The main character in an imaginative work.

pun A figure of speech that uses two or more meanings of a word, or which 'plays' on the meaning of a word by invoking a word with the same or a similar sound but different meaning (e.g. sun/son).

purpose The reason for a text being written; the writer or speaker's desired outcome.

reality television show An unscripted television show featuring non-actors in real-life situations.

reference list A list of the articles, books and web pages referred to in a piece of writing.

register The level of language use; the three main levels are informal, standard and formal.

report A document outlining the results of an inquiry, experiment or investigation.

résumé A summary of the writer's employment and educational history, and their professional skills, written for an audience of potential employers.

review A critical report on a book, play, film or other cultural form.

rhetoric Use of language to persuade.

rhetorical question A question to which the answer is implied but unstated.

rhyme Matching vowel and consonant sounds at the ends of words, e.g. catch/match; thought/fraught.

rhythm A feeling of movement or pulse produced by a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables.

satire A critique of an aspect of human behaviour or society; often humorous; often uses irony.

screenplay The script for a film or television show.

sentence A group of words that expresses a complete thought; it begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.

short story A creative work of narrative fiction generally under 10 000 words in length.

simile A figure of speech in which two things are compared using 'like' or 'as', e.g. 'the night was as black as a cloak'.

simple sentence A sentence containing a subject, one finite verb and a predicate.

sitcom A humorous episodic television show featuring a cast of recurring characters.

soapie An ongoing fictional televised drama series.

social networking service An online service (or platform) that allows users to post messages, share photographs or videos or chat in 'real' time.

soliloquy In a play, a speech given by a character who is alone onstage.

sonnet A 14-line poem; usually about love; often uses an established pattern of rhyme and metre.

speech A talk presented to an audience, often written out in full for formal occasions.

split infinitive Occurs when two parts of an infinitive – 'to' and the verb – are separated within a sentence.

stanza A group of lines in a poem, separated from other stanzas by a break.

stereotype Character that conforms to a fixed and simplistic type, e.g. 'the greedy capitalist'; 'the noble savage'.

style All aspects of a writer's use of language, e.g. imagery, sentence length and structure, register, word choice.

subject Who or what a sentence is about.

subordinate clause A group of words containing a verb that cannot stand alone but requires a main clause to complete its meaning (also called a dependent clause).

subplot A plot or storyline that runs parallel to the main plot, usually complementing or commenting on it in some way.

subtext A meaning that lies underneath the 'surface' of the text, implied rather than explicitly stated.

suffix A word element added to the end of a base word to form or modify its meaning.

symbol An object that stands for a larger or more abstract entity, e.g. scales symbolise justice.

synonym One of a set of words with the same meaning.

syntax The ways in which words can be combined to form meaningful phrases or sentences.

tautology The use of two or more words or phrases that mean the same thing.

theme An idea or proposition that is explored (usually implicitly) throughout a text.

tone The emotion or attitude expressed in a written or verbal communication.

tragedy In drama, a form that takes a serious and often dark view of society and/or human nature; ends with death or the destruction of relationships (opposite of comedy).

transitive verb A verb that requires a direct or indirect object to complete its meaning, e.g. She *dropped* the book.

uncountable noun A noun that does not refer to a distinct object, so cannot be counted, e.g. water.

viral advertising The spread of brand or product awareness through word-of-mouth or on the internet.

verb A word that indicates an action, an occurrence or a state of being.

wiki A website to which users can contribute content.

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References

Australian Government *Style Manual*, https://www.stylemanual.gov.au/

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