

Workshops

Grammar and Punctuations for Research Communication

Goal

This workshop series targets at essential grammatical structures and punctuations that authors of science must have good command of to avoid errors that hinder the readers' comprehension of their messages. Grammar and punctuations are governed by rules, and to master these rules, writers must invest time and efforts to fully internalize them. This workshop series aims to provide them with the rules and important exercises.

Topics

1. The Articles (a, an, the, or zero article)

Isn't this one of the most difficult grammar point to master? Isn't this one of the most elusive rule to understand? This session focuses on the *infamous* English articles (*a, an, the*, and zero article) to learn about their types, functions and *some* guiding principles that can help you choose the articles properly. We review the rules on day 1, and we practice using them on day 2.

2. Clauses and Phrases

Surprisingly, many authors are not so clear about the distinction between these two language units: phrases and clauses. When this knowledge is lacking, you may formulate incorrect sentences that are difficult to understand. This session clarifies the differences between clauses and phrases and point out frequently used clauses and phrases in research writing.

3. Verb tenses

In research writing, choosing the proper verb tense can be often tricky. This session tackles that issue. We review various verb tenses and examine how they are effectively selected to fulfil certain rhetorical purposes. We also discuss why verb tenses can vary discipline to discipline. This knowledge will help you immensely because you will finally see clearly why such preference exists and what you must consider to choose the best tense for your ideas.

4. Verb forms

Verbs change their forms depending on where they are placed. Sometimes, the verb must be in ING form whereas they must be written with "to" and in their base form. Sometimes, you must not add "to" or "ing" at all. To write accurately, we must not make errors with verb form. This session examines verbs and their forms.

5. Voices: Active or Passive?

This is one of the most controversial grammar points in research writing. This session clarifies the myths and presents facts about both the voices—the active and the passive. Come to learn how to choose the most optimal voice that best delivers your messages. We examine stylistic errors caused by poorly chosen voice and see how we can improve the clarity and style.

6. Conjunctions and Transition words

We use connecting words to reveal the logical relationship between sentences. This session examines types of connecting words in English—conjunctions and transition words. These two words follow different rules, so writers must understand the differences to avoid errors. We examine frequently used connecting words in research writing. The session also discusses the subtle differences between some confusing, often misused connectors. For example, we clarify the difference between these words: *and* vs. *moreover/furthermore*; *however* vs. *nevertheless*; *whereas* vs. *while*; *because* vs. *since/as*; *in contrast* vs. *on the contrary*, *so that* vs. *such that*, etc.

7. Adjective Clauses

Which or *that*? Do I need a comma before *which* or not? This session examines the difference between *which* and *that*. We focus on understanding the difference between restrictive adjective clause and non-restrictive adjective clause in research writing. This distinction is crucial in research writing because errors with adjective clauses can change your meaning greatly, thus misleading your readers.

8. Comma, colon and semicolon

If you feel unsure when you put a comma, colon, or semicolon, this session is yours. Poorly punctuated sentences obscure the meaning of your sentences and annoy reviewers, editors, and coauthors. We will review the rules and do exercises to master them. How does a colon differ from a semicolon? Do we need a comma when you have two verbs for one subject? Do we need a comma between an independence clause and a dependent clause? Why do we need a comma before these connectors (e.g., *although*, *whereas*, *because* etc.)? How does semicolon differ from a colon? This session will answer these questions.

9. Dashes, hyphens, and parenthesis

Another punctuation symbols you see a lot in research communication are — (*Em* dash), – (*en* dash), and – (hyphen). What do dashes do in our sentences? What is an *em* dash, and what is an *en* dash? How do they differ? How do parentheses and dashes differ? In this session, you will find answers to these questions.

10. Word order

This session examines some unique structures in English that uses inverted order. We learn about the types of inverted structures in these cases: with negative words (e.g., *nor*, *not only*, *little*, *rarely*) as the first word of a sentence; with adjective as the first word; with *than* in comparative sentence.

If you have further questions, email the instructor at lina.mynar@kaust.edu.sa