

Grammar summary

Introduction

In many assignments, one part of the marking is given to your use of grammar – the system and structure of language. It can be helpful to use online tools such as the editing function within your word processing software, or CDU's version of Grammarly to give a final check to your work. It is also useful to have a basic understanding of how English works.

Effective use of Grammarly

All students at CDU have access to a software program called Grammarly. You will find this in your student portal. It is important to note that you use ONLY this app, which has the Generative AI function disabled, if you want to avoid problems with AI matching in Turnitin. When using Grammarly, remember that it is designed to find your spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, as well as making some suggestions for improving the style of your writing. It cannot check if you are fulfilling your task requirements or that you are using critical thinking skills. It is also not suitable to check your referencing.

Words, phrases and clauses

Types of word

The major categories of words are

- Nouns – words that name things or concepts
- Adjectives – words that describe nouns
- Verbs – words that describe actions
- Adverbs – words that describe verbs
- Prepositions – words that tell us when or where
- Pronouns – words that replace nouns
- Determiners – words that identify which thing we are discussing
- Conjunctions – words that link ideas

Types of phrase

A phrase is a group of words without a subject and verb. The major categories of phrase are

- Noun phrases – groups of words that name things
- Verb phrases – groups of words that express an action
- Prepositional or adverbial phrases – groups of words that tell us when, where, how or why

Types of clause

A clause is a group of words with a subject and verb. The major categories of clauses are

- Adjectival clauses describe nouns
- Adverbial clauses express when, where or how

- Noun clauses name or identify things

Clauses and sentences

There are two common types of clause (independent and dependent) and four types of sentence (simple, compound, complex and compound-complex).

Independent clauses

These clauses are a complete idea. E.g. *The students worked hard.*

Dependent clauses

These clauses are incomplete. They need more information to make sense. E.g. *because they wanted distinctions.* We use conjunctions to link a dependent clause to an independent one to complete idea; otherwise, we only have a sentence fragment. E.g. *The students worked hard because they wanted distinctions.*

Sentence types

There are four sentence types.

- Simple sentences only contain an independent clause. E.g. *The students worked hard.*
- Compound sentences contain two independent clauses. E.g. *The students worked hard and passed their exam.*
- Complex sentences contain an independent clause and a dependent clause. E.g. *If the student hadn't worked hard, she would have failed her exam.*
- Compound-complex sentences contain at least one independent and at least one dependent clause. E.g. *Although the student had worked hard, she failed her exam, and this made her very sad.*

Common problems

If you are aware of the basics of grammar, and utilise spelling and grammar checkers, you can avoid making some of these common grammatical errors in your academic writing:

- Sentence fragments
- Run-on sentences
- Misplace modifiers
- Parallel structures
- Incorrect determiners and articles
- Incorrect subject-verb agreement