

WRITING SKILLS

In this section:

- Assessment and Report Writing
 - Engineering report writing
 - Technical writing
 - Answering assessment questions
 - Editing your assessment
 - Writing a critical review
- Paraphrasing, Summarising and Quoting
 - What is paraphrasing?
 - What is summarising?
 - What is a quotation?
- Punctuation

Assessment and Report Writing

The following resources can provide you with strategies to help you with your assessment writing.

Engineering Report Writing



You will be asked to write reports as part of the assessments. In a report you have to present a work that was carried out or review a topic in a convincing manner. A general structure that you can follow is shown below.

Report Structure

Title page

Provide a title to your report. An example of a title:

Design and Implementation of a Cascade Control Strategy for a Dye Injection Process

The title page also contains also your name and the date.

Abstract

Some reports, such as a thesis paper, need an abstract, but they are generally more widely used in technical reports or scientific documents.

The abstract, or executive summary, is usually written last and is placed on its own page before the table of contents. The abstract is around 200 words, but this can vary, and it aims to summarise the report.

By reading the abstract the reader should have an idea of the topic, the approach followed, the results obtained, and the key conclusions.

Table of contents

The table of contents lists the sections and subsections in the report. Sections and subsections are numbered using the decimal point system, such as:

1. Introduction	1
2. Literature Review	2
2.1. Subsection	3
2.2. Subsection	3
3. Proposed Method	4
3.1. Subsection	5
3.2. Subsection	5

The introduction section is usually given number 1 and it starts at page 1. The pages before the Introduction are numbered using Roman numerals (i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi ...).

Introduction

This section introduces the topic and/or what you have been asked to achieve, and provides a background. The introduction usually starts with broad perspectives by setting the context and gradually concentrates on the specific aims of the report.

Body of the report

This is the core of the work. Read the assessment guidelines and ensure that you cover all aspects. Use an equation editor such as Microsoft Equation to type equations.

When needed, use figures and tables. These are captioned and numbered as shown below.



Figure 1. Describe the content of the figure

Table 1. Describe the content of the table

Conclusions

The conclusion sums up the discussion and presents the findings. Include possible recommendations in this section (e.g. provide suggestions for further research), or they may form a separate heading if substantial.

The discussion in the conclusions should be linked to the aims presented in the introduction section. Depending on the report, you may highlight the significance of the work done and its impact, even if the findings weren't successful. Don't be afraid to note the shortcomings!

The conclusion usually ends with broad perspectives (as the introduction section starts with broad perspectives).

References/Appendices

All cited works should be listed in the references section. Use a suitable and consistent referencing style, such as IEEE.

It is important to note that you may paraphrase any information and content taken from other sources. The information should be re-written using your own words to demonstrate your understanding of the concepts. A clear distinction should be made between your thoughts, work, and ideas and those of the authors you cite.

Use appendices to present material that is too detailed to be included in the main report, such as the code of a program, or detailed mathematical derivations.

Abstract, Introduction and Conclusion - Know the Difference!

Don't confuse the introduction with the abstract or summary; they are different and have different purposes. The common misconception is that one is simply a smaller version of the other (that the introduction is a rewritten, chopped-up version of the abstract). However, this is not the case.

- An **abstract** is a brief statement which outlines the report in full; what was done, achieved, decided and concluded.
- The **introduction** is a section which states your aims and some required background knowledge. An introduction will also outline the body of the report (where you state what you will do).

Abstract

Example Abstract	
<p>A trailer rig was used to analyse the properties of an undamped system and experiment with a range of instrumentation. [1]</p> <p>It was found that two modes of vibration exist, these being longitudinal vibration and rotational. The damping ratio and natural frequency were calculated and are included in this report. The damping was found to be linear. [2] While the experiment was useful it did not closely resemble road conditions. Actual road conditions would result in successive bumps and constant vibration while the wheels rotated the whole time. [3] Finally, it was decided that given cost considerations, the XY</p>	<p>[1] Setup procedure</p> <p>[2] Initial findings</p> <p>[3] Conclusions</p> <p>[4] Recommendations</p>

plotter provided accurate results and manageable data. [4]

Introduction

Example introduction 1

This document compares a range of instrumentation of varying cost and sophistication and investigates the properties of undamped systems. [1] The natural frequency and damping ratio of these systems will give an indication of their behaviour when 'excited'. Furthermore, an analysis of the mathematical model as compared to actual road conditions must be completed and equipment suggested for further studies of the trailer. [2]

[1] Purpose
[2] Aim; part of a major report. Requires an outline of the steps you take.

Example introduction 2

Machinery and equipment in industry is heated up and brought on line gradually to avoid problems generated by thermal generated stresses. [1] In this experiment the severity of stress due to sudden temperature changes are examined. [2]

[1] Background
[2] Aim; it is not necessary to outline everything in a short of introductory report. Be succinct!

Conclusion

Example Conclusion

The results of the damping coefficient and the natural frequency of the system are fairly consistent given the small amount of data given and how prone this method is to error. [1]

In looking at the data provided by the pointer and scale it is surprising that the results were so consistent. The equipment was difficult to use and read and not really adequate for this type of testing. [1]

The LVDT transducer provided clear results for the XY plotter and the digital oscilloscope, both providing graphs that were very clear. I recommend the use of the

[1] Findings and what is achieved
[2] Recommendations

XY plotter over the digital oscilloscope due to their difference in price (\$4000 for a XY plotter and \$7000 for a digital oscilloscope). The XY plotter does not require the use of a computer and printer to get it into a hard copy form where the data can be analysed. [2]	
--	--

A note of caution

Do not use your abstract to write your conclusion or vice versa as the reader will believe you have not put enough thought into why you are doing your work. Remember the abstract, introduction and conclusion have different purposes, different emphasis and different structures.

Presenting a Report

How should I present my report?

- Read the assessment guidelines and notes in your assessment document and unit outline.
- Ensure your work looks like a professional report. You can do this easily with the help of word processing programs. Make sure to follow any templates or report structures provided within your assessment.

Remember, keep it simple!

1. What was the original question/task? Does your report fulfil the requirements?
2. When editing your report, retain what is important/relevant, delete what is not. Is there much repetition? Can you merge or delete sections?
3. Do your conclusions come from your findings and not from generalisations?

Report Writing Resources

WRiSE:

WRiSE stands for *Write Reports in Science and Engineering*, an online learning environment for students who are writing reports in the fields of science and engineering.

<http://learningcentre.usyd.edu.au/wrise/home.html>

Referencing:

For support with referencing, please visit the Referencing page on the eLibrary.

Scientific and Technical Writing

Language and Style

Scientific or technical writing is different from literary writing. Primarily, the aim of technical writing is to *inform* rather than to entertain. Hence, the style of writing is generally simpler and more concise.

An example of a literary sentence	The wind was blowing fiercely and the air outside was growing chilled.
An example of a scientific sentence	Onshore winds travelling at 45 km per hour brought temperatures down to 15 degrees Celsius.

Objective versus subjective writing

Given that informing an audience is the primary aim of scientific writing, emotive language is avoided. You should try to transmit information as *objectively* as possible.

Be **concise**

In scientific report writing, you should try to avoid too many long sentences. Where possible, break very long sentences up into several short sentences. Of course, a long sentence can be appropriate, for example if you want to include an example, a quote, etc.

An example of a long sentence	After consulting three manufacturers: Dribble Co., Sooky Ltd. and Bungle Pty, we have found that there are two types of vibration suppression devices for portable CD players and both are simple in design but have inherent drawbacks.
An example of a concise sentence	Three manufacturers were consulted: Dribble and Co., Sooky Ltd. and Bungle Pty. We found two types of vibration suppression devices for portable CD players. Both are simple in design but have inherent drawbacks.

Use words and expressions *economically*. If you can use one word instead of two or three, then chose the one word.

Two or three words	One word equivalent
The same as	equivalent
Get around	avoid
At this point in time	now

Be clear

Avoid being unclear and ambiguous. This can happen when you do not specify what you are writing about and can even depend how you use words like 'it', 'this', 'thing', 'way', 'some', etc.

An example of unclear expression	The way we did the experiment was not so successful. Some of what we needed wasn't there.
An example of clear expression	We were unable to complete the experiment. The glass tubing and tripods required for the experiment were not located in laboratory GO25.

Do not use *contractions* of verbs and pronouns as these are 'spoken forms'. The formal writing you will do at university and in the workplace will require the full form.

Contractions	Formal use for report writing
isn't	is not
they're	they are
can't	cannot

Be correct

Check your spelling, punctuation and grammar and make sure they are correct. If you use a computer spell checker, be careful. Make sure that you know which word to select. Many easily corrected errors in your written work will

affect your presentation and your marks. It is sometimes helpful to come back to your work after a day or two.

Abbreviations and Acronyms

In scientific and technical writing abbreviations and acronyms are common. The first time you use an abbreviation or acronym, you must spell out the full term followed by the abbreviation or acronym in brackets. Subsequent use of the term is then made by its abbreviation or acronym.

For example: The University of New South Wales (UNSW) is situated on Anzac Parade, Kensington. The best way to travel to UNSW is by public transport.

The use of an abbreviation or acronym is largely dictated by the number of times you are going to be using the term, i.e. if the term is only being used two or three times, it may be better to use the full term each time.

Using 'I'

There is no single easy answer to this question—it depends. It is always recommended that you check with your lecturer if and when you can use 'I' in your writing.

When 'I' is used too often it can make your writing sound casual or spoken in style rather than formal and objective.

Not using 'I' can make your writing more believable. The reader may interpret your use of 'I' to mean that you are not aware of formal writing conventions. The reader may also interpret your use of 'I' to mean that you are not aware or clear about what other experts in the field have done or think, so instead you are making your own choice.

Active versus Passive Voice

What is different about these two sentences?

- Male guppies advertise their attractiveness by displaying their colourful patterns (*active*)
- Attractiveness is advertised by male guppies by displaying their colourful patterns (*passive*)

Using active voice in your writing creates a direct and concise message, which also makes your writing easier to read.

It does not mean that you *cannot* use passive voice. Most writing will have a mixture of active and passive clauses depending on what word is chosen for the subject of a sentence.

Non-discriminatory Language

The use of non-discriminatory language is a legal obligation for all writers. It aims for truthful reporting of the facts.

- You should avoid statements that suggest bias or prejudice towards any group.
- You should also avoid making unsupported statements about a person's age, economic class, national origin, political or religious beliefs, race or gender.

For example, referring to all persons in an industry as 'he' can be inaccurate and misleading. It is best to name the profession using a non-sexist term (e.g. engineer).

[Answering Assessment Questions](#)

Glossary

Understanding the meaning of words, especially task words, helps you to know exactly what is being asked in an assessment.

Task words direct you and tell you how to go about answering a question. Here is a list of words that you are most likely to come across in your assessments.

Table of task words	
Words	What they (might) mean...
Account for	Explain, clarify, give reasons for. (Quite different from "Give an account of which is more like 'describe in detail').

Analyse	Break an issue down into its component parts, discuss them and show how they interrelate.
Assess	Consider the value or importance of something, paying due attention to positive, negative and disputable aspects, and citing the judgements of any known authorities as well as your own.
Argue	Make a case based on appropriate evidence for and/or against some given point of view.
Comment on	Too vague to be sure, but safe to assume it means something more than 'describe' or 'summarise' and more likely implies 'analyse' or 'assess'.
Compare	Identify the characteristics or qualities two or more things have in common (but probably pointing out their differences as well).
Contrast	Point out the difference between two things (but probably point out their similarities as well).
Criticise	Spell out your judgement as to the value or truth of something, indicating the criteria on which you base your judgement and citing specific instances of how the criteria apply in this case.
Define	Make a statement as to the meaning or interpretation of something, giving sufficient detail as to allow it to be distinguished from similar things.
Describe	Spell out the main aspects of an idea or topic or the sequence in which a series of things happened.
Discuss	Investigate or examine by argument. Examine key points and possible interpretations, sift and debate, giving reasons for and against. Draw a conclusion.
Evaluate	Make an appraisal of the worth of something, in the light of its apparent truth; include your personal opinion. Like 'assess'.
Enumerate	List some relevant items, possibly in continuous prose (rather than note form) and perhaps 'describe' them (see above) as well.
Examine	Present in depth and investigate the implications.
Explain	Tell how things work or how they came to be the way they are, including perhaps some need to 'describe' and to 'analyse' (see above).
To what extent...?	Explore the case for a stated proposition or explanation, much in the manner of 'assess' and 'criticise' (see above), probably arguing for a less than total acceptance of the proposition.
How far	Similar to 'to what extent...?' (see above)
Identify	Pick out what you regard as the key features of something, perhaps making clear the criteria you use.

Illustrate	Similar to 'explain' (see above), but probably asking for the quoting of specific examples or statistics or possibly the drawing of maps, graphs, sketches etc.
Interpret	Clarify something or 'explain' (see above), perhaps indicating how the thing relates to some other thing or perspective.
Justify	Express valid reasons for accepting a particular interpretation or conclusion, probably including the need to 'argue' (see above) a case.
Outline	Indicate the main features of a topic or sequence of events, possibly setting them within a clear structure or framework to show how they interrelate.
Prove	Demonstrate the truth of something by offering irrefutable evidence and/or logical sequence of statements leading from evidence to conclusion.
Reconcile	Show how two apparently opposed or mutually exclusive ideas or propositions can be seen to be similar in important respects, if not identical. Involves need to 'analyse' and 'justify' (see above).
Relate	Either 'explain' (see above) how things happened or are connected in a cause-and-effect sense, or may imply 'compare' and 'contrast' (see above).
Review	Survey a topic, with the emphasis on 'assess' rather than 'describe' (see above).
State	Express the main points of an idea or topic, perhaps in the manner of 'describe' or 'enumerate' (see above).
Summarise	'State' (see above) the main features of an argument, omitting all superfluous detail and side-issues.
Trace	Identify the connection between one thing and another either in a developmental sense over a period of time, or else in a cause and effect sense. May imply both 'describe' and 'explain' (see above).

References

- Maddox, H 1967, *How to Study*, 2nd ed, Pan Books, London.
- Marshall, L., & Rowland, F 1998, *A guide to learning independently*, Addison Wesley Longman, Melbourne.
- Northedge, A 1997, *The good study guide*, Open University, Milton Keynes, UK.

This checklist outlines questions to ask yourself as you are writing your final draft or editing your assessment.

Have I answered the question or task as fully as possible?

- What is my thesis/ central proposition/ main assertion?
- Do I make a clear argument or take a position about the topic? Do I state that position in my introduction?
- Does my introduction or opening paragraph prepare the reader for what follows?

Is my report clearly structured?

- Does my assessment have a clear introduction, a body and a definite conclusion?
- Does the assessment advance in logical stages?
- Are the major points connected? Are the relationships between them expressed clearly?
- Do the major points all relate to the topic and contribute to answering the task or question?

Are my paragraphs clearly connected and coherent?

- Does each paragraph begin with a topic sentence?
- Do the sentences flow smoothly and logically from point to point?
- Does each sentence clearly follow on from the one before?
- Does each paragraph state its case clearly and completely, or should there be more evidence/ detail?
- Are there adequate transitions between sentences and paragraphs? Are transitions varied or are they all the same kind?
- Are all examples and quotes relevant to and supportive of my answer?
- Are facts and opinions supported with examples or explanations where necessary?

Is my written expression appropriate?

- Have I used direct and clear language?
- Have I explained my ideas clearly and explicitly?
- Have I kept my audience in mind? Have I said all I need to say so that my reader can understand, or am I assuming they will 'know what I mean'?

- Have I written complete, grammatically correct sentences?
- In long sentences, have I separated related ideas with commas or semicolons for easier understanding?
- Is my use of tenses correct?
- Have I used non-discriminatory language?

Have I fully referenced my sources of information?

- Have I referenced all the words, ideas and information sources I have used in my assessment?
- Have I used a consistent referencing style?
- Is there a clear distinction between my thoughts and words and those of the author(s) I've read and cited?
- Are quotations properly introduced?
- Are they accurate?
- Are they formatted correctly?
- Do the quotations add evidence or provide an authoritative voice, or am I letting the author(s) speak for me? Would writing it in my own words be more effective?

Have I remained within or exceeded the set word limit?

I don't have enough words:

- Have I fully answered the question or task?
- Do I need to read more? Should I include more information or discussion?
- Have I provided enough evidence to support my argument/s?

I have too many words:

- Have I included only relevant information?
- Is there any unnecessary repetition in my assessment?
- Is my written expression as clear and concise as possible, or is it too 'wordy'?

Have I proofread and revised my assessment for errors?

- Have I checked my spelling? Have I read through my assessment and not just relied on a computer spell checker?

- Is all my bibliographical information correct?
- Have I used correct punctuation? Have I ended every sentence with a full stop?

Is my assessment well presented?

- Does the presentation follow any guidelines set by my lecturer or school?
- Have I included a cover sheet? (assessment cover sheets are available from your school office)
- Have I made sure my assessment is legible? Is it typed or written neatly?
- Have I used double-line spacing?
- Have I numbered pages and used wide margins?
- Have I kept an extra copy?

Writing a Critical Review

Purpose of a critical review:

A critical, or literature, review is a writing task that asks you to summarise and evaluate a text. The critical review can be of a book, a chapter, or a journal article. Writing the review usually requires you to read the selected text in detail and to read other related texts so you can present a fair and reasonable evaluation of the selected text.

What is meant by **critical**?

To be critical does not mean to criticise in a negative manner. Rather, it requires you to question the information and opinions in a text and present your evaluation or judgement of the text. To do this well, you should attempt to understand the topic from different perspectives (i.e. read related texts), and in relation to the theories, approaches and frameworks in your course.

What is meant by **evaluation** or **judgement**?

This is where you decide the strengths and weaknesses of a text. This is usually based on specific criteria. Evaluating requires an understanding of not just the content of the text, but also an understanding of a text's purpose, the intended audience, and why it is structured the way it is.

What is meant by **analysis**?

Analysis requires separating the content and concepts of a text into their main components and then understanding how these interrelate, connect and possibly influence each other.

Paraphrasing, summarising and quoting:

Quoting, paraphrasing and summarising are all different ways of including the works of others in your assessments.

Paraphrasing and summarising require analytical and writing skills. They allow you to develop and demonstrate your understanding and interpretation of the major ideas/concepts in the text, and to avoid plagiarism.

In all cases, you **must** attribute the information to the original source. For more details on referencing, please head over to the Referencing section of the eLibrary.

What is Paraphrasing?

Paraphrasing is a way of using different words/phrasing to present the same ideas.

It offers an alternative to using direct quotations and allows you to integrate evidence/source material into your assessment. Paraphrasing can also be used for explaining information in tables, charts and diagrams.

When to Paraphrase:

Paraphrase short sections of work only, i.e. a sentence or two or a short paragraph:

- as an alternative to a direct quotation
- to rewrite someone else's ideas without changing the meaning
- to express someone else's ideas in your own words

How to Paraphrase:

1. Read the original source carefully. It is essential that you understand it fully.
 2. Identify the main point(s) and key words.
 3. Cover the original text and rewrite it in your own words. Check that you have included the main points and essential information.
 4. Write the paraphrase in your own style. Consider each point; how could you rephrase it?
 - Ensure that you keep the original meaning and maintain the same relationship between main ideas and supporting points.
 - If you want to retain unique or specialist phrases, consider using quotation marks (“ ”) instead.
1. Review your paraphrase to check it accurately reflects the original text but is in your words and style.
 2. Record the original source, including the page number, so that you can provide a reference.

What is Summarising?

A summary is an overview of a text.

The main aim of summarising is to reduce or condense a text to its most important ideas. Leave out details, examples and formalities. Summarising is a useful skill for making notes, writing an abstract/synopsis, and incorporating material in assessments.

When to Summarise:

Summarise long sections of work, like a long paragraph, page or chapter:

- to outline the main points of someone else's work in your own words, without the details or examples.
- to include an author's ideas using fewer words than the original text.
- to briefly give examples of several differing points of view on a topic.
- to support claims in, or provide evidence for, your writing.

How to Summarise:

The amount of detail you include in a summary will vary according to the length of the original text and how much information you need.

1. Start by reading a short text and highlighting the main points.
2. Re-read the text and make notes of the main points, leaving out examples, evidence, etc.
3. Rewrite your notes in your own words; restate the main idea at the beginning plus all major points.

What is a Quotation?

A quotation is an exact reproduction of spoken or written words.

Quotes can provide strong evidence, act as an authoritative voice, or support a writer's statements.

For example: Litchenfield (1986) points out in his book, *The Philosophy of Sport*: "culture is never simply imposed 'from above' but is negotiated through existing patterns and traditions."

Use to quote:

- when you want to use the author as an authoritative voice in your own writing
- when the exact words are important
- to introduce an author's position that you may wish to discuss

- to support claims in, or provide evidence for, your work.

How to quote:

Quoting should be done sparingly and support your own work, not replace it. For example, make a point in your own words, then support it with an authoritative quote.

- Every direct quotation should:
 - appear between quotation marks (“ ”)
 - exactly reproduce text, including punctuation and capital letters.
- A short quotation often works well when integrated into a sentence.
- If any words need to be **omitted** for clarity, show the omission with an ellipsis (...).
- If any words need to be **added** to the quotation, put them between square brackets ([]).
- Longer quotations (more than 3 lines of text) should start on a new line and be indented on both sides.

Punctuation

Good punctuation is crucial for successful academic writing. By learning to use more, or all, of the available forms of punctuation you will be able to communicate and express your ideas and arguments more clearly.

Full stop (.)

Full stops have three distinct uses:

1. To mark the end of a sentence:

The cat is completely black.

2. To indicate abbreviated words; a full stop indicates an abbreviation, unless first and last letters of the word are shown.

The teacher will be Mr John Smith (B. Sci.).

3. To punctuate numbers and dates:

All assessments should be submitted by 6. 6. 04.

Colon (:)

A colon can be used:

1. To indicate that a list, quotation or summary is about to follow;

Buy these things: a packet of peanuts, two loaves of bread and a kilogram of steak.

Writing the assessment is not easy: to begin with you have to do a lot of research.

2. To separate an initial sentence/clause from a second clause, list, phrase or quotation that supports the first in a particular way.

The television set, as the icon of the information age, represents the realisation of a dream for humankind: that knowledge and experience can be transmitted and shared across the boundaries of time and space.

Semicolon (;)

A semicolon:

1. Separates two complete sentences that are, however, closely linked.

To err is human; to forgive, divine.

Don't go near the lions; they could bite you.

The semicolon can be replaced by a full stop, but the direct link between the two parts is lost.

2. Serves as a second level of punctuation in a series of words or phrases which already have commas making some internal divisions.

Only one paper, the Canberra Times, managed a regular daily edition on a Sunday; even there, Saturday's offered a better read.

She came out of the house, which had a long drive, and saw the police officer at the end of the path; but instead of continuing towards him, she hid until he left.

Comma (,)

Commas have a vital role to play in longer sentences, separating information into readable units.

1. A single comma ensures correct reading of a sentence which starts with a longish introductory element.

When Australia celebrated its sesquicentenary in 1938, there was a little of the confidence or enthusiasm of the centennial celebrations of 1888.

2. Pairs of commas help in the middle of a sentence to set off any string of words which is either a parenthesis, or in contrast, to whatever went before.

Yet in representing ourselves to ourselves, as film and television do, these media are constantly introducing and reinforcing the assumptions.

3. A set of commas is a means of separating items in a list.

The details required are name, date of birth, address and telephone number.

4. Sometimes a comma is needed between the last two items to ensure clarity.

The details required are name, date of birth, address, and telephone number.

Question mark (?)

1. A question mark is used at the end of a sentence which is a question.

Have the students completed the exam?

Apostrophe (')

There are two uses for the apostrophe:

1. Contractions: a shortened version of a word. An apostrophe is used to show that something has been left out, and where it has been left out.

don't (do not)

it'll (it will)

she'll (she will)

2. Possessives - An apostrophe is used to indicate ownership/possession with nouns. To show ownership by a single individual, insert the apostrophe between the noun and the 's'. To show ownership by more than one individual, use the apostrophe at the end of the word.

the dog's tail (belonging to a single dog)

the women's magazines

boys' football boots (belonging to more than one boy)

Einstein's theory of relativity

Avogadro's number

Note: Be careful: *It's* is the contraction of *it is*. *It's* is not a possessive (a possessive denotes ownership).

Hyphen (-)

When used correctly, a hyphen links two or more words, that normally would not be placed together, in order that they work as one idea. These are called compound nouns.

Stonier's post-industrial economy is a service economy.

There are four types of information-related machines.

Dash (—)

Hyphens should not be confused with dashes. Dashes are like brackets; they enclose extra information. A colon and semicolon would work just as well in the example opposite. Dashes are rarely used in academic writing.

1. Although often used in pairs, dashes can also be used singularly.

To the three divisions of the economy—agriculture, manufacturing, and service industries—Jones has added a fourth.

2. Although often used in pairs, dashes can also be used singularly.

Have an orange—or would you prefer a banana?

While the importance of sport to Pay TV is clear, the opposite perspective is less certain—the importance of Pay TV to sport.

Parentheses ()

1. Parentheses are brackets used to include extra or nonessential material in sentences. Parentheses should be used sparingly and always appear in pairs.

It was unusual to see Paul awake so early (as he often studied late into the night) and Jane greeted him with amazement.

2. In citation systems like Harvard, parentheses are used to include in-text references.

Larsen and Greene (1989) studied the effects of pollution in three major cities.

"Australia is a settler society" (Hudson & Bolton 1997, p. 9).

Exclamation mark (!)

An exclamation mark is used at the end of a sentence and indicates surprise, anger, or alarm. Exclamation marks should be used very sparingly and are not often used in academic writing.

The police stormed in and arrested her!

How disgraceful!

Ellipsis (...)

An ellipsis consists of three full stops. It indicates that material has been left out of a quotation. When quoting, it is sometimes necessary to leave out words or lines for reasons of relevance or length. Using an ellipsis makes any omissions known to your reader.

"But to be restricted to just two forms of punctuation mark ... is like building a house using only a hammer and a saw: you can do it; but not very well."